

## **Movement internationalism/s**

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The word internationalism originally referred to relationships between nations and states, but came quite early to mean relationships of solidarity between people and peoples across or despite national boundaries, inter-state conflicts and economic competition. Over the past few centuries it has been a constant feature of social movement practice, from the 1649 Leveller mutiny against joining Cromwell's campaign in Ireland to the 1984 – 87 Dublin shopworkers' strike against handling South African produce - or contemporary international solidarity with struggles in Mexico, Kobane or Ferguson.

International solidarity has been hugely important in changing the terms of politics. External supporters often provide crucial sources of legitimacy, publicity, funding or knowledge – but they also tell local activists that they are not alone, that what they do resonates on a world stage and that official attempts to dismiss their issues do not convince everyone. Conversely, supporting struggles abroad can be a tool for educating movement participants, thinking outside the particular state's political discourses and arrangements, and seeing other, more emancipatory possibilities.

It is not only that together we are stronger; as movements make links outside local power arrangements they come to define a different kind of power, spoken more on their own terms than on those of the national state, the local wealthy, the dominant culture, and so on. What is hegemonic locally is often shown to be a provincial peculiarity on a wider scale – and hence contingent, vulnerable to popular pressure. For all of these reasons, social movements regularly think and act in international terms.

At the same time, the practice of internationalism is anything other than straightforward. It exposes participants to particular pressures, from accusations of being foreign agents to isolation from the wider community; it can involve taking sides in often less than transparent internecine struggles of movements elsewhere; when successful, its effects are not always as expected; and the inequalities which often exist between participants can lead to bruising experiences.

Over the years, *Interface* has published several discussions of transnational solidarity as well as many pieces which *arise out of* internationalist activism and research; as a project, of course, it is programmatically international, geared towards “learning from each other's struggles” in different regions of the world – and organised on the basis of autonomous regional groups of editors. This

special issue, we hope, takes the theme further with a thought-provoking selection of pieces.

## **Dimensions and histories of internationalism(s)**

In an important recent book, David Featherstone (2012: 5 – 6) defines solidarity more narrowly, as a relationship forged through political struggle which seeks to challenge forms of oppression. This seems intended to distinguish a “good” solidarity from that of the welfare state, that between bankers, western state aid and so on. This normative sense of international solidarity involves five challenges: it is significant insofar as it constructs and / or transforms relationships between those concerned; is forged from below or from “outside”; surpasses nation-state identities; recognises that it implies uneven power relations / geographies; and is inventive.

Another approach might be to say that there are many kinds of international solidarity. Waterman (2001) distinguished six different kinds of internationalism: *identity* (“Workers of the World, Unite!”), *substitution* (trade union “development cooperation”), *complementarity* (we give you A, you give us B), *reciprocity* (we give you A now, you give us A later), *affinity* (“Labour Ecologists of the World, Unite!”) and *restitution* (solidarity for past injustice).

We might also think the problem in terms of changing internationalisms over time. Before “internationalism”, or at least before most nations had their own states, the eighteenth and in particular the nineteenth century saw religious universalisms – some with very long historical roots, but expressed in new ways in the age of imperial / Christian missionary activity in particular. Consider, for example, the remarkable figure of U Dhammaloka – an Irish-born migrant worker, sailor and activist who became a prominent figure in the pan-Asian and anti-colonial Buddhist revival around the turn of the twentieth century, organising from Ceylon to Singapore and from Burma to Japan against an imperial order conceived of in terms of “the Bible, the Gatling gun and the whiskey bottle” (e.g. Cox 2010).

This period saw the bourgeois liberal cosmopolitanism of elites that communicated and travelled across great distances and understood themselves as members of one and the same world – of polite society, of science, of industry, of literature and so on. It also saw the radical-democratic cosmopolitanisms of those – often but not always defectors from this world - who understood themselves as allied with the ordinary people of other places *against* their own dynasties and empires, priesthoods and officer classes, capitalists and conservative media, whether or not they framed this in terms of “peoples” and “nations”. This is the world of CLR James’ “Black International”, running from the Haitian Revolution to the struggles of the 1930s (Høgsbjerg 2014), of Linebaugh and Rediker’s (2000) plebeian internationalists, and of what we would now call the international solidarity networks in support of nineteenth-century Polish, Italian or Irish nationalism.

Labour and socialist internationalism, from the First International of 1864 onwards, recast these practices in increasingly well-organised and large-scale terms. Alongside unions and parties conceived of on the scale of the nation-state came the organisations of immigrant or ethnic minority workers, diaspora political networks and transnational networks of anarchists, socialists, (Jewish socialist) Bundists and the like. In opposition to racist forms of labour organising and pro-imperial kinds of socialism, the radical left defined itself (up to the victory of Stalin at least) in terms of hostility to a world of empires and slavery; while Pan-African and Third-Worldist internationalisms brought the argument further; and most trade unions today pay at least lip service to the principle of international solidarity. The self-definition of competing lefts in terms of competing internationalisms telling in this respect.

Put another way, this approach to internationalism, frequent in social-historical work, identifies it with early industrial capitalism, nation-state formation and the labour movement. Even in this period, however, there were other forms of organised internationalism. From the French Revolution and Metternich on, in fact, conservatives also organised on an international scale, whether in the nineteenth century through reactionary forms of Catholicism in opposition to modernity and democracy; in the twentieth century through alliances between fascist powers (Mariátegui 1973); or in the present day through fundamentalisms of all (political and religious) varieties which seek to constitute themselves as an international niche in the marketplace of global opinion.

Since the global uprising of 1968, more positively, new forms of social movement internationalism have multiplied – alliances between women’s movements, LGBTQ campaigns, disability rights activists, struggles of indigenous peoples, ecological groups, squatters’ networks or counter-cultural relationships. Between the 1970s and 1990s such processes took many forms: grassroots labour networking; “transnational advocacy networks” campaigning around specific themes; support for specific revolutionary movements such as the Zapatistas; state-sponsored internationalisms such as the Venezuelan state’s *Bolivarismo*; and community-level links between groups such as shanty-town dwellers or populations resisting the energy companies.

These initially distinct internationalisms have increasingly come to encounter one another in the context of the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement, whether this is understood in terms of the networks of resistance sparked by the Zapatistas, the moments of confrontation with the new world order symbolised by the 1999 Seattle protests, the more dialogical processes of the World Social Forum, the 2003 anti-war movement and for that matter the latest movement waves, which are anything but indifferent to each other’s struggles. The 21<sup>st</sup> century, it seems, is rich in internationalism/s (Waterman 2010).

### **The various “bearers” of internationalism**

Today we encounter many different actors embodying different kinds of internationalism. Within traditional international trade union contexts, we find solidarity between unions in north and south, as well as solidarity *from* north to south and the substitution of northern agency for southern organising. Much of this is dependent – politically, ideologically or financially – on inter/state bodies of various kinds.

Marginal service bodies which reproduce, rely on and / or address traditional unionism also exist: international union support groups such as TIE Amsterdam in the 1980s and international online pro-union services such as LabourStart and Union Solidarity International

There are also autonomous forms of organising: consider, for example, Via Campesina (Braga Vieira 2011), Streetnet (Gallin and Horn 2005), NetworkedLabour ([www.networkedlabour.net](http://www.networkedlabour.net)), the New Unionism Network (2012) or EuroMayDay (Mattoni 2012).

Women's and feminist internationalisms include the feminist dialogues at the World Social Forum (Desai 2013), the World March of Women ([www.marchmondiale.org](http://www.marchmondiale.org)), Encuentros Feministas in Latin America (Alvarez et al. 2003) and others.

Ambiguous relationships connect labour and the global justice and solidarity movement: at the WSF, for example, these include the ITUC and “Decent Work”, the “Labour and Globalisation” network and the Tunis 2013 call for a Global Union Forum (apparently forgotten as soon as it was proposed!) More generally we might mention the European AlterSummit manifesto ([www.altersummit.eu](http://www.altersummit.eu)), in which unions play a key role.

## **Movement internationalists**

Movement internationalisms cannot exist without movement internationalists, but this opens up another whole set of questions. It is not hard to come up with names for reflection in this area – for example, Flora Tristán, Marx and Engels, Emma Goldman, Tom Mann, Rosa Luxemburg, Marcus Garvey, Tina Modotti, Leopold Trepper, Che Guevara, Conny Braam (e.g. 1992), Rigoberta Menchú (1998), Ben Linder, John Saul (2009) or perhaps you, the reader – but how are we to think about this? What makes an internationalist?

We should certainly not restrict the category to the cosmopolitan, whether in their 18<sup>th</sup> century version (that we would have universal peace, justice and prosperity if everyone spoke French), or the contemporary version which seeks to export its own politics around the world with no reference to movements on the ground. Nor should we only focus on Tarrow's (2005) transnational activists – insofar as he sees these as *nationally*-rooted and identified, only transnational in their activity, and who think of movements and politics in fundamentally national terms.

Nor, of course, should we focus only on well-known figures. The backroom, backstreet or grassroots internationalists are fundamental to any genuine

movement, along with the international celebrities (whose relationship to movements is not always straightforward, either “at home” or internationally).

We could, for example, include those who recognise a cross-border or global identity or community of the oppressed, discriminated-against, exploited, marginalized or alienated; who are committed to and involved in overcoming these conditions; and whose “imagined communities” are global in extent.

We might also want to consider the disjuncture between globe-trotting activism (necessary for some kinds of practices, but in itself perfectly compatible with a purely national perspective) and the kind of internationalist practice which understands the “local” in terms of the “global” and acts accordingly, building links with people they may never be able to meet on the basis of related understandings of the world and compatible practices.

We are still left with definitional challenges, however. Should we privilege those who we approve of or identify with ideologically (as anarchists, Trotskyists, Maoists, autonomists, social democrats?) Should we include those whose internationalism is fundamentally restricted to a single problem or category (workers, women, blacks, GLTBQ, national independence, indigenous peoples, ecological victims, human rights etc.) – is it possible to be a single-issue internationalist? Or is it possible to be meaningfully internationalist if one’s politics is restricted to a single region or continent?

We favour a broad understanding insofar as it makes room for all of the above – cosmopolitans and liberals, Marxists and social democrats, single-issue and single-region internationalists – and to argue for our preferred practices amongst these. It is, perhaps, also important to note that internationalist *movements* may involve many individuals who are only partly or momentarily international in their thinking and action.

In the present day, internationalists may be anti-imperialists, feminists, pacifists, ecologists, labour solidarity activists, long-distance or virtual religious / ethnic / indigenous activists. In the new world disorder, we might also identify a category-in-formation of global solidarity activists, who might include any of the above but preferentially those recognising themselves as part of a more general movement and who recognise the necessary dialectic between socio-geographic locale, the national, the regional and the global.

Drawing on Eric Hobsbawm (1988), we might distinguish various historical periods: 19<sup>th</sup> century *agitators*, “changing their countries more often than their shoes”; 20<sup>th</sup> century institutionalised *agents* – of a state, political party, union or other organisation; to which we might add the 21<sup>st</sup> century *communicator* – an online or offline networker, cultural or media activist, educator, journalist, performer, musician, film or video-maker?

Of course these different types have often existed contemporaneously or within single individuals and movements; if we suggest a decline of the agitator and the agent, it is because both roles imply a sense of possessing the truth, the right practice, or exemplifying internationalism. However the communicator is faced with a new set of questions - what to communicate, to whom and how? – in a

world in which the objects of internationalism are, perhaps, increasingly likely also to be its subjects, capable of becoming internationalists themselves.

Discussing internationalists as individuals can, perhaps, help to avoid the universalistic ambitions and parochial failures of older internationalisms and contribute in some way to communicating internationalism in popular movements and radical-democratic communities worldwide. If it is possible to avoid hagiography, a critical approach which shows the problematic and ambiguous nature of internationalist lives may be able to humanise what is still commonly seen as exotic and enable those involved to become more self-reflective about their activities.

It is perhaps a small utopia to imagine a growing number of “ordinary activists”, armed with information, disposed to tolerance and flexibility, culturally sensitive and curious about the workings of new contexts, technologically equipped, ethically committed and creating global solidarity communities of their own: people who, rather than incarnating a truth or an organisation, inspire a response of not only “I understand her / him” or “I admire him / her”, but hopefully also “I should do that”, “I could do that” and even “I would enjoy doing that”.

### **Rethinking movement internationalism/s**

How might we think internationalism/s for the present and future, in the light of what has gone before? The idea that there is a single, privileged bearer of social change – whether the industrialised proletariat of the core countries, a more or less arbitrary set of oppressed nationalisms, women as a global category or whatever – has lost credibility in terms of organisational referents just as much as intellectually or politically. So too has the notion of nations, nation-states or states as the inevitable building blocks of social change – although cultural and historical difference remains a basic starting point for any real thinking about politics.

Elsewhere we have suggested speaking in terms of a global justice and solidarity movement (Peter) or a movement of movements (Laurence) in order to highlight not simply the global dimension but also the holistic one: not a monolithic proletariat without women and multiple sexualities, not industrial workers without precarious and rural labour, not a “developed” west as model for an “underdeveloped” east or south, not socialism without environmentalism, feminism, radical democracy, cultural diversity and so on. Of course, the *reality* of past movements (which are always, necessarily, alliances) has routinely been more complex both than their *imagery* and their *organisational practice*; it is past time to bring the latter in line with the scale of the problems we face, both externally and in trying to work together for social transformation.

Contemporary capitalist globalization attempts to impose a single worldview, reducing individuals to employees and consumers – often successfully. But it is also the latest phase of human *social* development, and as such bursts with profound contradictions, both life-threatening and life-enhancing. Once again,

we are condemned to think of surpassing the official reality by supporting the development of unofficial realities, creating “a world in which many worlds can flourish”, - to quote the Zapatistas, those arch-internationalists of the present.

Today, what alienated social category or community is not increasingly globally articulated (in both senses, as joining and as expression)? Within the single space of work, there are global movements for women workers in general, domestic workers in particular, rural labour (workers plus peasants), sex workers, urban inhabitants, precarious workers, street traders, fishworkers...

### **A new hope?**

Of course “new” does not automatically mean “good”, and such movements are just as capable as those of the past of becoming racist, patriarchal, paternalistic / maternalistic, fundamentalist or authoritarian dependent on context. Both the practice of internationalism in general, but in particular the formation of alliances across movements and issues, are crucial as counters to this – as is the shaking up of organisational hierarchies by the new waves of mass mobilisation around the world.

In the best case, radical-democratic movements “infect” each other globally, with each making reference to others (recently, both amongst Latin Americans, European *indignad@s*, Arab uprisings and Occupy and between at least some of these categories, spaces and places). In the nature of things, such movement waves cannot be planned by single organisations; it is a sign of hope that they also often resist the centralisation of power internally.

Any internationalist movement practice is necessarily grounded in the real conditions which shape other forms of global interactions – the relationships of capitalism, the global state order and unequal cultural and social orders – and has to find its way forward through and at the same time against these. This was already true in relation to Linebaugh and Rediker’s 18<sup>th</sup> century sailing ships and the problem has not changed. Each internationalism, perhaps, can be thought of as searching for *the* emancipatory medium: a free press (liberal and radical democrats), railways and telegraphs (Marx and Engels), the party newspaper and cinema (Bolsheviks), radio (Brecht) and so on. Put another way, the mode of communication and what it implies in terms of human relations can hardly be ignored as a primary reality shaping movement. As Mariátegui (1973) put it, communication is the nervous system of internationalism and solidarity.

If not always at the level of individual movements, the material underpinning of any contemporary global justice and solidarity movement or movement of movements – the practical condition of the kind of networking we are discussing here – is the space that might be called Cyberia. Such networking does not simply *use* the internet; it increasingly *inhabits* it. At the same time, Cyberia is just as much a disputed terrain as any previous creation of class society; if there is a massive emancipatory *potential*, the technology is systematically restricted, exploited, used for commoditisation, capital accumulation, surveillance, manipulation and warfare.

Movements have to struggle on this terrain too: not simply in opposition to these processes, but in opposition to the pressures to adopt these logics – “clicktivism”; control by brilliant individuals or marketing teams rather than us simple users, collectives or communities; control by technocrats speaking to each other; the exclusion, or control, of a dialogue of equals; self-subordination and self-limitation. Each new space for internationalism is at the same time a space of challenges in the attempt to develop emancipatory practices.

*Interface*, of course, takes its own space within this: if it is laid out like an old-style journal and follows those typographic conventions, it only exists online (Peter once printed a full copy and found that the binding would not hold its 529 pages). If it is determinedly internationalist and cross-regional, it avoids a party “line” and brings together editors and authors from many different movements, political traditions and academic disciplines – or, put another way, the “line” mandates communication between and across these (while avoiding any overly-narrow policing of this mandate so as to enable different kinds of communication). In this sense, it is a creature of 21<sup>st</sup> century movements, and embodies (we hope) some of the best of their practice while in our own small way contributing to movement reflection and development.

## **In this issue**

### **Themed items**

Our section on movement internationalism/s opens with two items from recent conferences on international solidarity. Cristina Flesher Fominaya’s keynote address on international solidarity in social movements beyond the labour movement discusses the challenge of developing solidarity across difference – of resources, power and culture among others, arguing for a reflexive approach to both similarity and difference. David Landy, Hilary Darcy and José Gutiérrez report on a 2013 Dublin conference on the problems of international solidarity. The report highlights the difference between political and humanitarian understandings of solidarity; the tensions between solidarity activists and those they work with; and the tensions between the universal and the particular.

We follow this with an interview with Peter Waterman, exploring the current crisis of international trade union bodies, how the changing world of work affects labour internationalism, the possibilities for other kinds of international labour solidarity and the importance of solidarity with Palestine in this context. Stéphane Le Queux’s article discusses the crisis of trade union politics, with particular reference to Australia, and asks how unions might learn from the alterglobalisation movement in relation to political alternatives, participatory democracy, cohesion and inclusion, and the renewal of activism.

Jean Somers looks at the tensions between southern and northern groups within the Jubilee 2000 transnational debt campaign. She argues that the struggle to develop and maintain solidarity between the groups concerned was often in tension with the different approaches taken to debt cancellation. Tomás Mac Sheoin’s account of the movement for justice in Bhopal discusses



relationships between local, national and transnational activism, highlighting the importance of *national* advocacy networks in the development of a very complex campaign.

David Landy's article explores tensions between international solidarity groups and those they are in solidarity with in relation to Palestine solidarity. The principle of non-involvement in internal affairs had perverse effects in promoting an uncritical nationalism and leading to a lack of communication and avoidance of transformative politics. Sriram Ananth's piece uses the call for solidarity from Palestinian civil society in relation to boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) to discuss Marxist and feminist approaches to solidarity.

Priska Daphi's article discusses the role of solidarity between movements in different countries and sectors in the global justice movement. Drawing on interviews with German, Italian and Polish activists, she shows the interrelation of international, national and sectoral issues in the construction of the movement. Melissa Schnyder's article explores the impact of domestic political opportunity structures (POS) on migrant inclusion organizations' activity at the supranational level in relation to the EU. She shows how both the general POS and issue-specific POS help to explain supranational-level activities.

The themed section closes with comments from solidarity activists on the concept and its discontents. Mike Aiken, Gregorio Baremlitt, Nicola Bullard, Carine Clément, Ann Deslandes, Sara Koopman and Sander Van Lanen responded to our questions on the meanings of solidarity, how it has changed, tensions arising from difference, the contrasts between local struggles and their international representation, and the differences between movement and other forms of solidarity. Ben Trott's reflections argue for the importance of placing shared political projects at the centre of solidarity practice and notes the trend towards "homonationalism", the incorporation of queers within nationalist projects. He emphasises the importance of joy and a shared desire to live well.

### **Non-themed items**

The general section of this issue opens with Gloria Novović's interview with Serbian nonviolent activist Srdja Popović about the strategies of recent movements globally. This is followed by Benedikte Zitouni's article on ecofeminist politics and women's anti-nuclear activism in the early 1980s. Focussing on actions in the US and UK, the article shows the importance of emotions and organising in constructing transformative and life-affirming events.

The Institute for Precarious Consciousness argue for a periodisation of social movements in which old social movements opposed misery, which they theorise as the dominant affect of early capitalism, more recent movements opposed the boredom of Fordism, and the challenge is to develop an adequate mode for resisting anxiety, as the dominant affect of neoliberalism. Rachel Kulick's article explores peer learning platforms in the independent Youth Media Action outlet

to see how youth explore and at times transform their perspectives about conflict and difference in the process of producing independent media.

Dominika Polanska's article shows the importance of cognitive work in constructing cross-movement alliances in the relationship between squatting and tenants' movements in Warsaw. Lindsey Lupo's event analysis explores the disjuncture in Occupy San Diego between overt support for its organisational strategies and informal discontent, and asks how these difficulties can be resolved.

Finally in this issue we have the following book reviews:

- Cristina Flesher Fominaya, *Social movements and globalisation* (rev. Catherine Eschle)
- Brian Doherty and Timothy Doyle, *Environmentalism, resistance and solidarity* (rev. Eurig Scandrett)
- Francis Dupuis-Déri, *Who's afraid of the Black Blocs?* (rev. Gary Roth)
- Íde Corley, Helen Fallon, Laurence Cox, *Silence would be treason* (rev. Amanda Slevin)
- B. Keniston, *Choosing to be free* (rev. Richard Pithouse)
- Dan Hancox, *The village against the world* (rev. Kenneth Good)
- Manfred Steger, James Goodman and Erin Wilson, *Justice Globalism* (rev. Ariel Salleh)
- Gwendolyn Hall, *A black communist in the freedom struggle AND Joshua Bloom & Waldo Martin, Black against empire* (rev. Mandisi Majavu)

Our next issue (May 2015) will be on the theme of movement practice(s) – we're looking forward to it!

The call for papers for issue 7/2 (November 2015, deadline for submissions May 2015) is on the theme of "movements in post/socialisms".

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