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Crises, social movements and revolutionary transformations

Alf Nilsen, Andrejs Berdnikovs and Elizabeth Humphrys

In every country the process is different, although the content is the same. And the content is the crisis of the ruling class's hegemony, which occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking, for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of broad masses … or because huge masses … have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution. A 'crisis of authority' is spoken of: this is precisely the crisis of hegemony, or general crisis of the state.

So wrote the Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci from behind the walls of Mussolini's prison, in his famous notes on "State and Civil Society". His words aptly describe the trajectory of crises in modern history — these are periods when the wheels of economic growth and expansion grind to a halt, when traditional political loyalties melt away, and, crucially, when ruling classes find themselves confronted with popular movements that no longer accept the terms of their rule and seek to create alternative social orders. The clashes between elite projects and popular movements that are at the heart of any "crisis of hegemony" generate thoroughgoing processes of economic, social and political change — these may be reforms that bear the imprint of popular demands, and they may also be changes that reflect the implementation of elite designs. Most importantly, however, crises are typically also those moments when social movements and subaltern groups are able to push the limits of what they previously thought was possible to achieve in terms of effecting progressive change. It is this dynamic which lies at the heart of revolutionary transformations.

Gramsci himself witnessed, organised within and wrote during the breakdown of liberal capitalism and bourgeois democracy in the 1910s through to the 1930s. Ours is yet another conjuncture in which global political elites have failed in an undertaking for which they sought popular consent, and as a consequence popular masses have passed from political passivity to activity. Since the middle of the 1990s, we have seen the development of large-scale popular movements in several parts of the globe, along with a series of revolutionary situations or transformations in various countries. There has been an unprecedented level of international coordination and alliance building between movements, and direct challenges not only to national but also to global power structures.

Each country has had its own movements, and a particular character to how they have responded to the neoliberal project. For some time many have observed that these campaigns, initiatives and movements are not isolated occurrences, but part of a wider global movement for justice in the face of the neoliberal project. In this issue of *Interface* we explore how social movements have responded to contemporary crisis and in particular the acute crisis that global capitalism entered into from late 2008. In order to contextualise this focus, it is useful to reflect on how crises and social movement struggles have coalesced to produce the current conjuncture.

Lineages of the Current Crisis

In late 2008, the world witnessed an economic crisis of such proportions that it has thrown the fundamentals of the neoliberal project into question. Even mainstream media commentators and representatives of the global capitalist elite made comparisons to the onset of the Great Depression of the 1930s — another crisis that followed a sustained period of unabated *laissez-faire* economics — and conceded the possibility that the bewildering architecture of global finance might be in need of some kind of public regulation.

The two moments of crisis are indeed deeply interrelated. The outbreak of the Great Depression in 1929 signalled the beginning of the end of the era of liberal capitalism — an era which had been consolidated under bourgeois hegemony in the nineteenth century. It was not just that the economic crash undermined the legitimacy of the liberal edifice that had prevailed during the Roaring Twenties; it also served as a catalyst for class struggles and social movements that had been ongoing since the closing decades of the 1800s (Silver and Slater 1999).

Allowing for brief periods of countervailing tendencies, the period stretching from the economic downturn of 1873-96 up to the First World War (WWI) was one of rising labour militancy (Silver 2003: 131-33). Although the early years of WWI saw a decline, it eventually proved to be a watershed as revolutionary crises spread throughout Europe (Halperin 2004: 283-5). During the years between WWI and the Second World War (WWII), there were several attempts by ruling classes to return to economic liberalism, but this merely triggered "a new round of social dislocation" in the form of the Great Depression of the 1930s, and unleashed yet another "vicious circle of international and domestic conflict", which culminated in the outbreak of WWII (Silver 2003: 142). Thus, WWII became a decisive turning point: "At its end, the region was wholly transformed. While previous conflagrations had been followed by restorations ... the decisive shift in the balance of class forces in Europe that had occurred as a result of World War II made restoration impossible" (Halperin 2004: 283). In place of the laissez-faire regime of earlier times, what emerged was a capitalist economy which — in the words of Karl Polanyi (2001) — was "embedded" in a series of social regulations that more or less effectively redistributed a larger share of the surplus produced to labour through rising wages and welfare provisions. In a historical class compromise, these concessions were offered in

exchange for industrial peace and political stability (Armstrong, Glyn and Harrison 1991).

The collapse of liberal capitalism was coeval with the end of European colonial rule throughout large parts of the world. Up until WWI, demands for national liberation in European colonies had largely been raised by native elites who "made little attempt to mobilise the mass of the population into the nationalist struggle" (Silver and Slater 1999: 200). During the interwar years, this changed as nationalist leaders extended the scope of opposition to colonial domination by integrating peasants and workers in their movements. Links were established between liberation movements, and the discourse of anti-colonialism was infused with demands for social justice and national development (Wallerstein 1990). The challenge of anti-colonialism resulted in a massive wave of decolonisation after 1945, which brought national self-determination to the countries of Asia and Africa (see Berger 2004; Prashad 2009). Although the Third World remained in a subordinate position in the global capitalist economy and its working classes saw less of the reforms that had benefited Northern workers after WWII, decolonisation did bring some significant concessions. It was evident to elite powers – in particular the USA as the newly emergent hegemonic state of the capitalist world-system – that sovereignty alone would not pacify the restive masses of the former colonies; it was also necessary to promote growth and development (Arrighi 1994). This compulsion was addressed through the establishment of the Bretton Woods system, which put in place an institutional framework for public regulation of international trade and finance. Allowing for the protection of home markets and support of domestic industries, this system granted some space for Third World states to pursue strategies of national development (Kiely 2007).

The form of capitalist accumulation that emerged after WWII, then – a regime of accumulation characterised above all by the embedding of the economy in structures of state regulation and control – was, above all, the outcome of a historical conjuncture in which "[s]uccess for the world's anti-systemic movements now seemed for the first time within reach" (Wallerstein 1990: 27). The origins of the present crisis can be traced back to the attack that global capitalist elites launched to disembed the market from regulation and control as economic stagnation set in towards the end of the 1960s (Harvey 2005).

The decades of the 1950s and 1960s were, on the whole, a "golden age" for capitalism in the sense that states across the North-South divide witnessed significant growth rates and increases in the standard of living of substantial sections of their populations (Armstrong, Glyn and Harrison 1991). However, by the end of the 1960s, the advanced capitalist countries had begun to descend into what would turn out to be a structural crisis: unemployment and inflation soared, productivity and profitability dwindled, and fiscal crises undermined the position of the dollar in the world economy (Kiely 2007). This occurred in the context of the rise of militant workers' struggles and new social movements that challenged bourgeois hegemony on multiple fronts (Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein 1989; Watts 2001). In this context, "[t]he upper classes had to move

decisively if they were to protect themselves from political and economic annihilation", and they did so through the project of neoliberal restructuring (Harvey 2005: 15). The first and crucial step in this direction was taken by the Nixon administration when, in 1973, it abandoned the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates. The effect was "to dis-embed financial capitalism from the embedded liberalism ... of the post-war agreement" and to lay the basis for the spiral of financialisation which has fuelled the current crisis (Kiely 2007: 61).

The neoliberal project gained a decisive footing in the 1980s. By the onset of the decade, the militant movements of the late 1960s and 1970s had either been defeated or fragmented, and the social-democratic left in the North was incapable of shouldering a credible alternative to its traditional Keynesian policy regimes. In the South, the developmental states that had been at the core of radical Third Worldism had collapsed under the weight of the international debt crisis, which erupted as advanced capitalist countries turned towards restrictive fiscal and monetary policies from the late 1970s onwards. In the North, the neoliberal agenda was advanced by and through both conservative and social democratic parties that came to power in the early years of the decade; in the South, it progressed through the imposition of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) administered by the World Bank and the IMF and supported by emergent elites seeking closer integration in global circuits of accumulation. Across the North-South axis, neoliberal policy regimes were fairly similar, and centred on restrictive monetary and fiscal policies as well as reduced public expenditure on welfare programmes, tax cuts, privatisation of publicly owned enterprises, and deregulation of industry and the labour market (Harvey 2005; Klein 2008). The question is, what was achieved through the entrenchment of this agenda?

The neoliberal counterrevolution essentially took aim at reversing the victories won by popular movements in the aftermath of WWII, and in doing this it succeeded in transferring wealth from popular classes to global elites on a grand scale. In a crucial survey of the achievements of neoliberalism, David Harvey (2005: 156) notes that the agenda of liberating the market from the constraints of state regulation has not succeeded in reinvigorating economic growth and productivity, and unemployment is at an all time-high. The sole success of neoliberalism in this respect, he asserts, has been to curb inflation. However, neoliberalism has nevertheless been a success from the point of view of capitalist elites across the world in that a key outcome of the project has been to "transfer assets and redistribute wealth and income either from the mass of the population towards the upper classes or from vulnerable to richer countries" (Harvey 2006: 153). This has been made possible through a range of mechanisms that he refers to as "accumulation by dispossession" – that is, through mechanisms such as privatization, which converts public assets to commodities and open up "new fields for capital accumulation in domains hitherto regarded off-limits to the calculus of profitability" (2006: 153). Through this process, neoliberalism has restored the class power of capital and enabled global elites to regain the ground that was lost to popular movements after 1945. In the process, inequalities within and between countries have escalated

dramatically, developmental advances in the global South have been undermined and in some cases reversed, and ever-larger sections of humanity have been marginalised from the orbits of production, accumulation, and consumption (Dumenil and Levy 2004; Davis 2006; Taylor 2008; Castells 2001; Hoogvelt 2001; Wade 2004; Waquant 1999).

A key mechanism of accumulation by dispossession is "financialisation" (Harvey 2005) – the proliferation of new financial trading models that followed in the wake of the unravelling of the Bretton Woods system and the consequent liberalisation of global finance. The scale of this proliferation is evident in the fact that, from 1980 to 1995, international currency transactions increased six times more than world trade – the ratio of currency transactions to total world exports increased from 8:1 in 1980 to 48:1 in 1995 – and in the equally astounding fact that the ratio between international currency transactions and total world GDP increased from 2:1 in 1980 to 11:1 in 1995. By 2001, the daily turnover of financial transactions in global markets had reached $130 billion – compared to $2.3 billion, which was the annual turnover in 1983 (Harvey 2006: 154). As John Bellamy Foster (2008) has pointed out, this represents a qualitative shift in the position of finance in the overall economy:

> By the end of the [1980s], the old structure of the economy, consisting of a production system served by a modest financial adjunct, had given way to a new structure in which a greatly expanded financial sector had achieved a high degree of independence and sat on top of the underlying production system.

Financialisation is a strategy that has worked to the distinct advantage of global capitalist elites. As Harvey (2006: 154) has pointed out, deregulation has enabled "the financial system to become one of the main centres of redistributive activity through speculation, predation, fraud and thievery" - whether it is through stock promotions, Ponzi schemes, structured asset destruction through inflation, asset stripping through mergers and acquisitions, debt incumbency, corporate fraud, or dispossession of assets through credit and stock manipulations.

Financialisation was also, of course, at the core of the crisis of 2008-2009, which originated in the US housing market. By the late 1980s, trading in financial assets had become increasingly central to Wall Street banks. New trading models that focused on exploiting short-term differences and shifts rather than promoting long-term investments emerged – and these models would, if necessary, create asset price bubbles in order to influence price levels in their favour. Gradually, these new models were consolidated in what Gowan (2009) called "a shadow banking sector". The shadow banking sector consists of new form of banks – for example, hedge funds, private equity groups, and special investment vehicles – that engage in speculative arbitrage without regulatory control. These banks in turn focus their activities on new forms of financial products and practices, especially the credit derivatives market, where they buy and sell collateralised debt obligations (CDOs)[1]. These new banks

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[1] CDOs are bundles of securitised house mortgages, which combine high, medium, and low risk mortgages, along with other types of debt, with high credit ratings.

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discovered a lucrative business in converting consumer debt into securities and selling these to pension and mutual funds. However, in order to finance this the banks took on more debt against the wager that returns on securities would remain above the cost of borrowing. For some time, the prospects for this seemed good: lowered interest rates combined with generous repayment schedules produced a bubble in the sub-prime housing market as low-income groups were able to buy houses even when prices were rising. The mortgages of these low-income groups were in turn sold on a large scale in CDOs: in 2005, the amount of sub-prime mortgages had risen from $56 billion in 2000 to $508 billion in 2005. The bubble burst, however, when, in the last quarter of 2006, the interest rate was hiked in order to protect a falling dollar, causing major banks and investment firms to collapse like what they had increasingly become, namely castles made of sand (Blackburn 2008; Foster 2008; Gowan 2009).

The collapse of the sub-prime housing market and the crisis it triggered did not only lay bare the contradictions of the growth model of the capitalist heartland — a growth model centred on consumer demand driven by credit expansion in a context of stagnant and declining incomes and a lack of new investment[2] — but also seemed to vindicate the indictment of the global capitalist economy that had first caught the world's attention on the streets of Seattle ten years before, when massive protests played a key part in shutting down the WTO ministerial conference in November 1999 and signalled the crystallisation of a "movement of movements" that challenged the hegemony of neoliberal globalisation. Looking back at a decade of efforts to organise anti-capitalist resistance at a transnational scale, Katharine Ainger (2009) writes about the crisis and its significance for social movements:

> The movement was like the child in the crowd as the emperor of global neoliberalism wheeled by, pointing out that his cloaks were woven from financial fictions and economic voodoo. They must now be credited for their prescience. Today, everybody can see the emperor has no clothes … We are entering a singular moment of climate chaos and food shortages, a social and energy crisis as well as financial meltdown.

The question we have to ask ourselves, and the question posed in this issue of *Interface*, is of course what challenges and opportunities the crisis has offered to movements in their specific locales of struggle, and how and to what extent movements have responded to these challenges and opportunities. Ainger is indeed right in pointing out that the current crisis is composite, and that it goes to the very heart of capitalism as a system of economic, political, social, cultural, and ecological organisation. It is also evident that global capitalist elites are responding to their loss of hegemony with increasingly coercive strategies — this is evident not only in the increasingly brutal policing of protest and the onslaught on civil liberties as a result of the "war on terror" after September 11, but also in the increasing criminalisation and penalisation of poverty and the containment of so-called failed states (Gill 1997; Wacquant 1999; Duffield 2001). Yet as Gramsci reminds us, "[i]t may be ruled out that immediate

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[2] See Brenner (2003).

economic crises of themselves produce fundamental historical events. They can simply create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life". It is therefore necessary to question whether the "movement of movements" has mobilised effectively to exploit the crisis of legitimacy that is engulfing global neoliberalism, in order to decisively advance an agenda of progressive social change, either in the form of substantial reform, or in the form of revolutionary transformation, as popular movements did when the liberal capitalist order crumbled in the middle of the twentieth century.

Scenarios of Resistance

Francis Fukuyama's thesis, that the new era would involve globalisation victorious and the acceptance of liberal social and economic organisation universally (1992), was in crisis at the end of last century. As the "movement of movements" grew, social movement participants argued and imagined quite a different future to that offered by the current world system.

In Mexico the Zapatistas raised grievances over sovereignty and repression in Chiapas, and the Water Wars were fought in Bolivia. Demonstrations over poverty and foreign debt grew, and in 1998 a significant demonstration of approximately 70,000 protesters at the G8 Summit in Birmingham remonstrated that third world debt should be forgiven. On the same day, in other locations, there were solidarity actions and over 30 events where activists under the banner of Reclaim the Streets "took back" parts of their cities (Grenfell 2001: 243; Klein 2000: 319 – 320).

While there were growing protests and disquiet, it was the blockades at the Seattle WTO Summit on November 30 1999 that launched this new movement on to a global stage (Cockburn, St. Clair and Sekula 2000; Starr 2000). Building on the campaigns of the previous decade around third world debt, corporate responsibility, environmental justice and poverty, the protests blockaded the WTO meeting venue and prevented access of delegates to the building. The importance of Seattle was that campaigns and movements involved in raising political grievances that were often seen as peripheral moved to the centre of political debate. In that moment it became clear that what were previously viewed as marginal concerns on the globe's fringes, had a distinctly urban representation and had moved (or marched) to the heart of political life. This new urban character was underlined by the use of urban streetscapes as fields of contestation, with chants such as "Whose streets? Our streets!" and "*This* is what democracy looks like". Questions were raised about global democracy and the sustainability of the current economic system. The legitimacy of the current order was in question, and a crisis of authority was clear.

Dissent was diverse, from movements in the developed world such as Jubilee 2000 and in the developing world such as Via Campesina. While the organisations and campaigns had specific aims – such as debt forgiveness or land justice – they were also enmeshed with a growing global critique of

globalisation, and behind the protests there were three critical socio-economic elements involved in the development of the movement. While all usefully described as criticisms of neoliberalism, three distinct forms exist: critiques of the Washington Consensus; critiques of globalisation; and critiques of the commodification of identity.

In 1989 John Williamson had coined the term the 'Washington Consensus' and detailed ten agendas that he believed the Washington elite agreed should be implemented in almost all Latin American countries to ensure their economic viability – from fiscal discipline and trade liberalisation to privatisation and deregulation (Williamson 2003: 10). Those criteria formed the basis of the agenda promoted by the Bretton Woods institutions and endorsed by Western Governments globally (Ellwood 2001). The criteria were, however, seen by the developing movement as only in the interests of the global ruling elites and in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 cracks appeared in this consensus from both above and below. Previous influential advocates, such as Harvard Economist and former advisor to the IMF Jeffrey Sachs and former Chief Economist of the World Bank (WB) Joseph Stiglitz, became increasingly and publically critical of the implementation of the agenda (Stiglitz 2002). The criticisms were on the basis that not only had the agenda failed to deal with the extreme poverty and social disadvantage in the South, but also that the agenda itself had been responsible for exacerbating the problem. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Tiger Economies, where "more of the same" was being promoted as the appropriate cure, resistance grew (Callinicos 2003a: 8).

The 1990s had also seen an unprecedented shift in the dialogue regarding economics in mainstream debate and the academy, and it was talk of globalisation that dominated (Kiely 2005: 1). As detailed above, in relation to the developing world this took the form of the Washington consensus and was imposed in part from the outside. A similar project known by various names existed in the North, such as Thatcherism in Britain, Reaganism in the United States and economic fundamentalism in New Zealand. The term globalisation was used to reflect a range of processes and claims regarding the economic, political, cultural and technological transformations within society. For some, globalisation was bound up in the rapid technological advances related to the Internet and satellite circulation of news and culture. Alternatively, others saw it as related variously to economic interconnectedness or global governance. Various definitions and understandings flourished, and the appreciation of globalisation reflected the political position and general discipline of the writer or activist (Starr 2000: 5 – 6).

But rather than simply being seen as a greater interconnectedness of the world economy or technology alone, most activists in social movements used the term colloquially to mean a process underpinned by the contested implementation of the neo-liberal and "free trade" project facilitated largely by the governments of the global north and institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO (della Porta et al. 2006: 3). It was the questioning of globalisation that was at the heart of this growing movement. Importantly, and as Alex Callinicos argues in *An*

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Anti-Capitalist Manifesto, the debate around globalisation is the contestation of the phenomenon along two dimensions — an explanatory debate around what it is and the extent to which it is occurring, and a normative debate as to whether it is "a good thing" (2003a: 144). As he points out, the views on one axis do not imply a certain view on the other. This is an important insight as it allows somewhat disparate actors, in terms of an understanding of what globalisation is and whether it is as significant, to join forces in a campaign against its perceived excesses and implications. Excesses which were receiving wide publicity in he mass media, arising from reports such as one in 1998 from the United Nations Development Program that noted the world's 225 richest people had a combined wealth of a trillion (US) dollars, and that this was equivalent to the combined annual income of the world's 2.5 billion poorest people (United Nations Development Program 1998: 30).

Alternatively, some of the foundation to the new movement resulted from concerns around the commodification of identity and culture. Released just moments after the Seattle demonstrations, Naomi Klein's book *No Logo* was in part a portent of the rising movement of movements (as it was conceived of and finalised before Seattle) and alternatively a cohering force for activists involved within it. Its words and enormous popularity gave heart to activists. In *No Logo* the movement found a theoretical scaffold for many of the concerns that were articulated at Seattle and the subsequent protests in Melbourne, Prague, Quebec, Gothenburg, and Genoa. Klein focused her book on the question of branding and the corporate multinational agenda of lifestyle creation, reflecting on the paradox this creates when one considers the outsourcing and sweatshop labour used to create the products. Klein saw this dilemma intractably linked to the practices of multi-national corporations, who seek the greatest profits through the lowest overheads. Klein argued that while once the resistance to the practices of multinationals was from protectionist quarters, who sought to protect local profits and industries, "connections have formed across national lines...[where] ethical shareholders, culture jammers, street reclaimers, McUnion organisers, human rights hacktivists, school-logo fighters and Internet corporate watchdogs are ... demanding a citizen-centered alternative to the international rule of the brands" (Klein 2000: 445 – 6).

Of course the counter movement took action as well, and activists faced brutal repression at protests. For example on the second day of the s11 protests in Melbourne, Australia, demonstrating against the World Economic Forum, the police force committed dawn and dusk assaults on blockades, using batons and fists on protesters (Burgmann 2003; McCulloch 2000 – 1). Only days later at the Prague protests against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) almost one thousand protesters were arrested, and Amnesty International claimed the police abused human rights and in some cases their actions verged on torture[3]. Nothing of course prepared protesters for the murder of Carlo Giuliani by the Italian Carabinieri at the Genoa protests in

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[3] See Amnesty International 2001 reports at http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/czech-republic?page=5. Viewed 4 May 2010.

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2002 (della Porta, Peterson and Reiter 2006: 19 – 20). As the movement grew it was clear that the global elites would continue to deploy the force of the police and military to deal with the movement's willingness to the test the limits of allowable civil disobedience and legal protest rights.

It was, however, the events on September 11 2001 in New York and Washington that provided the greatest challenge to the new movement as it attempted to deal with this change to the global political sphere, whilst also mounting a campaign against the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. September 11 had the immediate effect of pushing the movement off the streets. The protests scheduled for the IMF/WB annual general meeting in Washington on September 28 – 30, 2001, were called off even before the meeting itself was cancelled (Callinicos 2003b). A number of planned actions were re-cast by protest organisers as anti-war demonstrations (Podobnik 2004). In the wake of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the rise of US military action, activists were contemplating what the *Wall Street Journal* has asked far earlier in an editorial:

> Remember the antitrade demonstrations? They were the top item in the news before terrorists attacked the World Trade Centre. Now they have receded to the netherworld where we have tucked all the things that seemed important then.[4]

Many activists felt that the event that turned the movement of movements from one on the offensive to one on the defensive, and in response to the attacks many movements were turned to a focus on the wars in the Middle East and responding to the widespread racialising occurring in the West. The space for debate in the mainstream media about neoliberalism and globalisation was squeezed out and "the political events following the September 11 attacks in 2001 gave rise to a dramatic shift in the consent/coercion balance of the neoliberal world order" (Stephen 2009:487).

September 11, however, did not mark the end of social movement struggle, but simply a change to its form. Moreover, on a global scale dissent exploded in the form of opposition to the wars waged by the US on Afghanistan and Iraq. The combined numbers of protesters on street demonstrations between 3 January and 12 April 2003 is estimated at 36 million by French academic Dominic Reynie (2005). Thus, in terms of sheer numbers, the mobilisation against the latter invasion was the largest political protest ever undertaken, leading the *New York Times* to call the anti-war movement the world's "second superpower".

In some Latin American nations struggles have taken a different path to those in other parts of the globe. There, social movements campaigning over the implementation of the IMF project spilled over into anger with the local democratically elected governments of several countries. In this context, mass involvement of the rural poor joined with urban working classes and others to heavily shape national politics. There was a direct impact on the political situation at the top of society in Brazil with the election of Lula da Silva, in

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[4] "Adieu Seattle?" as quoted in *The Threat to Reason* by Dan Hind (2007).

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Venezuela with the election of Hugo Chávez, and more recently in Bolivia and elsewhere.

While Lula was elected on a wave of disquiet from the struggles of the about neo-liberal austerity measures, in particular the struggles of the MST (Brazil's Landless Rural Workers' Movement) and Via Campesina, he has maintained what might be called "market friendly policies" (even if relations with the United States have cooled during his incumbency). Although there have been growing concerns about his failure to lead change on certain systemic issues, and there is dissent within Lula's own Workers Party, in a context of a quicker-than-expected recovery from the GFC he remains popular despite his inability to run for a third elected term under the Brazilian constitution.

In Venezuela Chávez has attracted the attention of many involved in the movement of movements, as his election came on the back of the defeat of a military coup and the lockout of the foreign run oil industry. Chávez famously launched a plan to create "socialism in the 21st century" and has continued to critique and attack global elites, in particular on the global stage at United Nations meetings. However a political crisis has opened up in the face of corruption, bureaucratisation and the slow pace of change. The inability of Chávez to deliver on the hopes of the social movements that brought him to power has created increasing disillusionment internally and recently a victory for the right wing opposition in referenda and local elections. The direction of political struggle is uncertain in such a period of crisis.

In the global South, neoliberal restructuring has been under attack from popular movements since its initial introduction through SAPs in the early 1980s. Average per capita income fell by 15 per cent in Latin America and 30 per cent in Africa – the two continents of the global South that were the first to enter into the ambit of neoliberal restructuring – and poverty rates showed alarming increases. Unemployment rose rapidly in the same period, food prices escalated dramatically, and public spending on health and education plummeted. As the developmental states in the global South lost whatever limited ability they once had to undergird people's livelihoods through public spending, they also lost legitimacy among their citizens. This was reflected in the dramatic mushrooming of so-called "austerity protests" and "IMF riots" across countries in the South in the 1980s and the early 1990s: more than 150 protests took place to challenge the impacts of structural adjustment and defend the rightful entitlements of low-income groups and the poor (Walton and Seddon 1994).

Financial crises continued, of course, to rock the countries of the global South throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. The early 1990s witnessed India turning to the World Bank and the IMF in order to be bailed out of a dramatic balance of payments crisis. The Chiapas uprising was less then a year old when Mexico was plunged into a dramatic fiscal crisis in December 1994. After several years of financial liberalisation, the so-called tiger economies of East and South-East Asia plunged into crisis in 1997. This crisis enabled the extension and consolidation of neoliberal restructuring in the region, but also provoked some

of the most dramatic popular riots in recent times in the region, forcing, among other things, the resignation of President Suharto in Indonesia. In December 2001, the economy of yet another "star pupil" of the IMF and the World Bank collapsed: Argentina experienced a dramatic economic crisis and, concurrently, popular protests that within a span of two days had succeeded in forcing the president to resign. During this period, the character of social movements in the South also changed, from defending the rights and entitlements that were entrenched in the developmental state towards envisioning and constructing alternatives to the processes that have done so much to deprive and disempower the popular classes – whether in the form of radical agendas for land reform, workers' control over factories, or alternative models of development (see Motta and Nilsen forthcoming).

Although, since the middle of the 1990s, we have seen the growing opposition to the neoliberal project and the crystallisation of the movement of movements in several parts of the globe, there are areas remaining largely untouched by these processes. For example, there is still a lack of left and emancipatory social movements in many countries of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The situations vary from state to state in these regions. On the one hand, there are quite a few social movements in the Balkans and the countries of Central Europe which correspond ideologically and programmatically to movements in the West or the South. On the other hand, most of the former Soviet Union countries have not been affected much by the wave of intense international networking between global justice and solidarity movements during the last fifteen years. Instead, there has been another, more regional networking which has embraced many countries of the area.

In contrast to the West and the South, many social movements and direct action groups in the ex-Soviet region did not originate from anarchist, progressive or green worldviews. Instead, they often either represent radical forms of right-wing nationalistic and xenophobic political culture, which has dominated most of the ex-Soviet area during the last twenty years, or they have developed varieties of Red-Brown ideological mixtures (National Bolshevism, Autonomous Stalinism, various domestic forms of Third Position, New Right etc.). Genuinely left and emancipatory groups in the region remain small and still a marginal force. In some countries, for example, in Latvia, there are no observable leftist groups at all. This perhaps is the explanation of why, despite the fact that the present crisis has hit Latvia harder than other countries of the European Union, there are still neither massive popular protests nor Labour mobilisation. The only massive crisis-related demonstration in Latvia, in which the protesters reached around 14000 people, was organised on 18 June 2009 by the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia against the amendments to the 2009 State budget prescribing substantial decrease in expenses related to social sector (Berdnikovs 2009). It is noteworthy that there has not been significant protest or campaign against the Latvian government's deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

As a counterpoint to this, it is clear that in some countries in Eastern Europe this has not been the dominant trend, for example in Poland. There, successive waves of neo-liberal shock therapy have been met with significant trade union and worker resistance as well as unprecedented electoral backlashes against successive pro-market governments. There have also been very large protests against Poland's involvement in the war on Iraq as well as a 10,000 strong demonstration against the Warsaw Summit of the WEF in 2004 (Hardy 2009: 184 − 205).

Iceland, Greece and Thailand move

Political passivity, though, is not the common feature of the period. In the context of the present crisis, there are societies responding resolutely to anti-popular policies of their governments and international financial institutions. The nationwide referendum in Iceland in which more than 90 percent of voters resoundingly rejected debt repayment imposed by the banks, is a good example. Many voters appear to have paid little heed to warnings that without the debt repayment agreement, Iceland will be unable to raise loans from the IMF or succeed in a bid for fast-track membership of the European Union (Quinn 2010).

In Greece, broad masses of the people have moved decisively into intense activity. Following the youth revolt of December 2008, Greek movements responded to the government's cuts packages with a wave of strikes and demonstrations. Thus there was a series of general strikes against the cuts imposed by the IMF, European Union and the Greek government, which led to a violent response by the state. Despite the brutal repression by the Greek police, the protests were the largest seen in recent decades, and prefigured the current resistance to attempts to impose savage austerity measures on the Greek working class in the name of reversing a sovereign debt crisis to the satisfaction of the bond markets.

Finally, the deepening economic crisis has also exacerbated a chronic political impasse in Thailand, pitting a radicalising mass movement of the urban and rural poor against the forces of the Thai political elite and military in a virtual civil war situation.

While these flashpoints have attracted the attention of both alternative and mainstream media, there is a paucity of discussion and analysis on how other social movements across different regions have responded to the present crisis or have used it to advance their agendas. In this issue of *Interface*, we encouraged submissions that explored the relationship between crises, social movements and revolutionary transformations, the character of the current crisis and how social movements have related and responded to it.

In this issue

The articles in this issue highlight aspects of the present economic crisis, the relationship of social movements to it and possibilities of revolutionary transformations. In addition to the themed articles dealing with these issues, there is a special section in response to David Harvey's piece "Organising for the Anti-Capitalist Transition", which discusses the opportunities for an anti-capitalist movement in the current crisis setting. As in previous issues of *Interface*, there are a number of non-themed articles on aspects of understanding social movements.

This issue begins with Hilary Darcy's interview with Ashanti Alston, a former member of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army. The piece focuses on gender politics within the Black Panther Party and the role of women, queers, womanist and feminist groups within contemporary radical black politics. The interview also examines the heritage of Malcolm X from a unique point of view, in particular the influence of his teaching on the role of women within the Black Panther Party.

The interview with Ashanti Alston is followed by a testimony to Tim Costello, a worker-intellectual and a former truck driver who became a leading labour advocate and theorist. The testimony from Jeremy Brecher, an activist, writer, historian and long-time friend of Costello, reveals many interesting aspects of his friend's life. Brecher tells of his first meeting with Costello in New York around 1969, talks about their collaboration on different books, and discusses Costello's relationship with the radical student movements of the late 1960s.

John Charlton's article was written in 2000 as a follow-up to Charlton's classic "instant" oral history of the Seattle protests, "Talking Seattle", published in 1999. The article is enriched by an introduction that Charlton wrote in May 2010, examining important events since the year 2000 such as Bush's victories, 9/11 and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the bank crisis of autumn 2008 and the protests in Greece.

The next articles touch on the issue of revolutionary possibilities, from different points and perspectives and in reflection of various challenges and risks. Colin Barker examines critical moments in the history of Polish Solidarity. He argues that Solidarity was, at least potentially, a social-revolutionary movement, but that compromises with the ruling regime, misplaced trust in "mediating forces" and abandonment of the goal of taking political power led to failure.

Kirk Helliker then analyses the issue of social transformation by focusing on two radical conceptions of emancipation. The first is based on a state-centred approach and proclaims the possibility of emancipation within, through and by means of the state. In contrast, society-centred emancipation speaks of developing counter-power inside civil society despite and without the state. By using this broad dualistic distinction, Helliker examines different notions of civil society, looks at particular struggles and discusses the politics of emancipation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Samuel R Friedman's article addresses a fundamental question: how to create a radical social transformation without establishing equally bad or worse systems

of domination? Experience has shown that reformist social democracy leaves capitalism and state bureaucracies intact and that revolutionary movements have created or been transformed into non-democratic state bureaucracies. The author offers for discussion 14 theses that outline actions, formations and ideas that are needed for a real socialism-from-below.

Jean Bridgeman's piece links the practice of self-organised community learning to the possibility of structural transformation. As a working-class activist, community educator and researcher, Bridgeman discusses her findings from an action-research project that she has been making among working-class drug users in a small town in Ireland. Gaining people's trust, using their own lived situations as starting points, sharing common experiences and critical questioning are crucial for both positive community transformations and the development of resistance to class power.

Alfredo Duarte Corte contributes to the debate on whether it is possible to "change the world without taking power". By discussing some autonomous experiences in Mexico, the author reflects on the possibilities of developing anti-capitalist practices outside traditional institutional politics and the state.

Peter Waterman's article discusses the 2009 Belém World Social Forum, the first World Social Forum since the current financial crisis of capitalism. In his review of this event, Waterman distinguishes between the presence and programmes of the traditional national/international union organisations and that of the small, if growing, "alternative" Labour and Globalisation network.

In her event analysis, Maria Kyriakidou continues on the theme of gender politics, drawing upon the example of Greek leftist feminists who undertook action against sexist perceptions underlying the political formations of the Left in which they participated. According to Kyriakidou, there is an inherent contradiction in the fact that one can fight against the capitalist state and war as part of a movement within which that person embodies and reproduces the power structure, authority and hierarchy of patriarchal societies.

Anne Elizabeth Moore focuses her action note on the 2009 Winter Unlympiad that was organised against the attempt to bring the 2016 Olympic Games to Chicago. Given the expected negative impact of the construction of the Olympic Stadium and Olympic Village on the local community, groups of artists and activists made a creative response by organizing the Unlympic Games. The purpose was to raise public awareness and questions about the prospect of a 2016 Chicago Olympics.

Beth Gonzalez and Walda Katz-Fishman discuss their event analysis in the context of the present crisis and its implications for revolutionary action in the United States. The authors assess the underlying economic processes and anticipate new openings for social movements in the U.S. Gonzalez and Katz-Fishman believe that the current moment holds tremendous revolutionary potential and that the struggle for the immediate needs of a broadening section of the American people can be done in tandem with the struggle for a consciousness of actual interests.

Interface: a journal for and about social movements　　　　　　　　　　Editorial
Volume 2 (1): 1 - 21 (May 2010)　　　　　　　　　　Nilsen, Berdnikovs, Humphrys:
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Crisis, movements & transformations

This is followed by a special section "Debating David Harvey", devoted to the discussion of David Harvey's recent essay "Organizing for the Anti-Capitalist Transition". The section begins with Harvey's piece, which the author kindly allowed us to reprint. By using political economy analysis, Harvey argues that the current crisis offers a window of opportunity to reflect on how the transition to socialism or communism is to be accomplished. He continues by developing a co-revolutionary theory and points to five "broad trends" that can contribute to revolutionary transformations.

We present six responses by activists and scholars from different parts of the globe. The first is written by a long-time activist, Wille Baptist, who endorses Harvey's critique of capitalism but suggests that effective resistance to the system will have to be led by the poor. Relying on his experience in organizing amongst the poor for more than 40 years, the author argues that, historically, successful social movements have been led by those most affected by the problems they are working to resolve. A united struggle of the poor will require a massive program of training poor people as political leaders.

A K Thompson criticises Harvey for dismissing the local level and situated experiences. Although he finds Harvey's account of the current capitalist crisis to be mostly correct, he has some concerns with Harvey's co-revolutionary theory. Rather, Thompson believes it is necessary to open up dialogues about the political importance of daily life and begin from a dialectical analysis of the relationship between daily life and the trans-local processes that organise it.

Benjamin Shepard argues that it is hard to imagine a more coherent articulation of what is wrong with an existing state of affairs than Harvey's. However, he questions Harvey's prescription for solutions. The tension remains in how to connect the systemic analysis with movement practices and a feasible strategy toward action.

Laurence Cox criticises Harvey for focusing so much on structural analysis and political economy, while ignoring and trivialising actually-existing movement practice. According to Cox, the structural analysis does not tell us where people are suffering and about to enter the struggle, and how we can make links with them and what form those links might take. The fundamental question "what should revolutionary actors do?" is left untouched by political economy.

Anna Selmeczi responds to Harvey by examining the "living politics" of Abahlali baseMjondolo, the largest South African shack-dwellers' movement. The author asks if Harvey's commitment to scaling up the level of political action, alongside a project of political education, risks removing politics from the grasp of the people who are currently struggling to restore their right to political speech and imagination.

The article by Marcelo Lopes de Souza discusses a "right to the city" concept which has been developed by Harvey elsewhere. He tries to show the limits of Harvey's approach and considers what a "right to the city" could be from a libertarian point of view. The author argues that, from such a point, Harvey's

words sound very much like an attempt to see partially new phenomena through old lenses: namely through the lenses of statism, centralism, and hierarchy.

In our key document section, the group of authors (Romina Veliz, Luciano Zdrojewski, Pablo Cortés, Ana Guerra, Ezequiel Adamovsky, Martín Baña y Aldo Chiaraviglio) discuss alternative modes of practicing people's history (*divulgación de historia*). Since modern history has been written by the ruling elites in order to legitimate their rule, there is a necessity for new historical narratives, as well as new historians capable of articulating these narratives.

Emma Dowling reviews the book *The Will of the Many: How the Alterglobalisation Movement Is Changing the Face of Democracy*, written by activist and researcher Marianne Maeckelbergh. Dowling argues that the book unpacks the alterglobalisation movement's practices of organisation and decision-making in order to demonstrate how prefigurative politics work in real life. In contrast to previous social movements, it is forms of organisation — as opposed to ideals or goals — that are alterglobalisation movement's ideology.

Adrianne Showalter Matlock reviews Daryl J. Maeda's book *Chains of Babylon*: *The Rise of Asian America*, which examines the influence of the Asian American activist and identity movement of the 60s and 70s on the formation of Asian American identity. Since the importance of Left and radical groups has not been discussed widely in previous research on the Asian American community, the book makes a valuable contribution to the scholarship on both the formation of this community's identity and the activism of the 60s and 70s.

In her review of Rory McVeigh's book *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, Allison L Hurst emphasises that the importance of understanding right-wing movements, especially those that construct racist and nationalist frames to explain massive social changes, has perhaps never been more urgent than it is today. McVeigh's book provides persuasive arguments that some of the current social movement theories are inadequate to explain right-wing movements or social movements that originate with the privileged.

Donagh Davis reviews Mastaneh Shah-Shuja's book *Zones of Proletarian Development*, which represents an innovative approach to analysing contemporary social movements and popular contention against the capitalist order. According to Davis, Shah-Shuja deserves credit for the novel initiative to bring the theories of Soviet writers such as Bakhtin, Vigotsky and Volosinov to discuss contemporary protest activism and revolutionary politics.

Long time anarchist Deric Shannon highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the book *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* by Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt. Shannon argues that the authors try to represent class struggle anarchism, sometimes called revolutionary or communist anarchism, as the only anarchism, and this is both a major strength of the book, but also one of its weaknesses.

Janeske Botes reviews the book *Contesting Patriotism: Culture, Power and Strategy in the Peace Movement*, in which Lynne Woehrle, Patrick Coy and Gregory Maney analyse the discourse of 15 North American peace movement

organisations throughout five conflict periods. Botes believes that, apart from its academic merits, the book is able to benefit peace movement organisations worldwide in the construction of messages aimed at the public.

The issue is closed by Israel Rodríguez-Giralt's review of the anthropologist and activist Jeff Juris' book *Networking Futures: The movements Against Corporate Globalisation*. This book explores the political and cultural practices involved in the construction of transnational networks by activists who oppose neoliberal globalisation. For these activists, the network as such turns into a powerful cultural ideal and into a primary organisational logic that models and inspires new forms of radical direct democracy.

We hope that these various pieces, which are written by both movement participants and academics, contribute to a dialogue between academia and activism and provide a living interaction between the different notions on the relationship between crises, revolutionary transformations and many other aspects of social movement activity.

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Be careful of your man-tones!
Gender politics in revolutionary struggle

Ashanti Alston in interview with Hilary Darcy

Anarchist Panther Ashanti Alston came to Ireland March 2009 to speak at the 4th annual Anarchist Bookfair in Dublin[1]. Growing up in Plainfield, New Jersey, during a turbulent and politically charged time, Ashanti's life reads like a timeline of recent revolutionary history. Inspired by the 1967 rebellions across the United States, Ashanti joins the Black Panther Party at age 17 and takes part in setting up a chapter in his hometown. Two years later, with comrades facing the death penalty, he decides to join the Black Liberation Army and organises to break them out of jail. In 1975 he begins an 11-year sentence for a "bank expropriation" and spends his time self-educating. He has visited the Zapatista movement, organises with Anarchist People Of Colour (APOC) and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, and is co-chair of the Jericho Amnesty Movement while also travelling widely to share his experiences with radical movements.

This interview[2] took place on the 4th of March 2009 and focuses on gender politics within the Black Panther Party and beyond. In particular I wanted to understand what forces shaped and changed the patriarchal nature of the Black Power movement in the late 60's from a time where women were viewed as a threat to the strength of masculine self-realisation, as detailed by bell hooks, to a point where women held leadership positions in the Black Panther Party.

Thanks for taking the time to meet with me, Ashanti. Could we begin by talking about masculinity with the Black Panther Party, in particular the influence of Malcolm Xs teaching on the role of women within the Party?

I think a part of me is going to feel this is a challenge in the sense that, man, I know there's a lot of experts on Malcolm X, I ain't amongst them but I think that I do have a good understanding of him and I can also speak about his impact on me. And then as the years go on when I get into learning and studying other things I begin to understand his impact on the movement even broader.

One of the things happening that I think is really good is almost a resurgence of academic interest in Malcolm X. It's been good in the sense that you get to

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[1] A video of the talk Ashanti gave in Dublin 7th March 2009 is available to view here http://vimeo.com/3954733.

[2] Ashanti made minor edits to the transcript of this interview.

understand Malcolm as more than just the Black Nationalist leader because, at this point, you have the Black Womanist perspectives on Malcolm. You have the people who are doing the progressive, radical, psychological analyses of Malcolm. Even schools of Rhetoric will do studies of Malcolm's speeches for style and deeper meanings in terms of his choice of words and what they meant.

But I don't remember Malcolm's death for example. I don't remember when he got assassinated but it was '65 so I had to be like ten, eleven years old. But '67, there's the rebellions[3] all over the United States and I know that Malcolm's words were really big. In the living room my older brother Joe had the autobiography of Malcolm X. I never paid it any attention but the cover of the old original paperback was this picture of Malcolm; finger pointed in what for us was a traditional way, pointing at something authoritatively and the subtitle said *"former pimp, hustler, robber, who becomes leader of the Black Revolution'.* It's what really got me because it was saying people that come from that kind of background can play a heroic role in the struggle.

So the rebellions happened and Plainfield[4], my home town, has a really great rebellion, 6 days, but the fact that black people could take over the black community for 6 days with guns meant a lot to me because it gave me an image of black men and women in heroic roles in our community crashing all the myths about us being "niggers", all that stuff.

Then I come to find out more and more, I'm trying to read the autobiography, I'm struggling with it every day. It's hard but the more I understand it the more I understand our oppression, my life in this society through Malcolm X's autobiography.

But at this time there was nothing that would give me an understanding of the role of women. There was nothing that would give me an understanding of such concepts he may have spoken about in terms of socialism or the really more advanced anti-colonial struggles coming out of Asia, Africa, Latin America; I'm going to get this as time goes on. But from that moment on whenever there were struggles coming out of communities and organisations were popping up, Malcolm was the iconic figure of that more nationalist movement, more so than Martin Luther King. For a lot of us who was young, it was just like, we don't want integration, we don't want nothing that sounds like we have to even ask the white man for anything. So the language played a big part because of him coming out of the Nation of Islam[5]. The Nation of Islam's impact on the black community was broad but it was never covered by the media so they kind of slept on the influence of Nation of Islam. But in our communities when we heard somebody speaking about the white man and white man being the devil

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[3] In 1967 National rebellions which took on a political and anti-colonial character rose up in Black ghettos across the United States.

[4] Plainfield, New Jersey. Site of one of the most significant rebellions of 1967.

[5] A Black Muslim religious nationalist organisation established in 1931 and based in the United States.

and the black man needing to have his own, that language was there. Our oppositional language was shaped in sexual terms. It was the *black man's* struggle for our dignity, for our rights and it was just supposed to include everybody and I mean we didn't challenge that. I know I didn't. I didn't have anything that would give me a way to challenge it until I joined the Black Panther Party[6].

So, by '69, 70 we began learning about the Black Panther Party. When we started reading about the Black Panther Party we saw that this group called themselves *"The angry children of Malcolm X'* and what I understood of Huey Newton, Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver is that they wanted to take Malcolm's teachings to the next level and some of that meant like, OK, he obviously was changing his opinion on certain things; his positions around nationalism, around violence/non violence, around coalitions, the possibility of coalitions with white people primarily.

So, the Panther Party saw that even around women his position was changing. When he left the Nation of Islam, when he formed the Organisation of African-American Unity (OAAU, after the Organization of African Unity)[7] there was women in leadership positions in that and he was also building relationships with political women activists from the South; Fannie Lou Hamer[8]. So the Black Panther Party was trying to bring that to this more revolutionary level. A revolutionary nationalist and socialist organisation basing itself eventually on a Marxist/Leninist interpretation, fighting sexism within the party and actually making policy that we must combat sexism within the party and actively building coalitions with other ethnic groups, even white activists.

It was different from Malcolm from what I understood because I used to go to the Nation of Islam meetings, I just never became a member. I wasn't keen on white people myself, I hated white people but it was coming into the Panther Party where I began to learn that that's not cool; you just can't hate a person because of the colour of their skin and they're your oppressor, you know. You learn about John Brown[9] and all these other people. Panthers would come to my home town with this one white woman in particular who was an ally and I

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[6] Founded in 1966 by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale (Eldridge Cleaver joined later that year) and advocating the right to self-defence against police brutality rampant in black communities, the Party's focus evolved to incorporate socialist, communist and nationalist doctrines. At its high point the Party had a 250,000-newspaper distribution while also running survival programmes, which included free breakfast for children programme, ambulance service, medical clinic, drug and alcohol rehabilitation and education programmes. Following a continued state crackdown against the Party the group dissolved in 1976.

[7] A black nationalist organisation established in 1964 by Malcolm X to fight for the human rights of African Americans and promote alliances between Africans and African Americans.

[8] Fannie Lou Hamer was an African American civil rights leader and voting rights activist and later became the vice-chair of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

[9] John Brown, was a white American abolitionist who organised with former enslaved Africans to end slavery and advocated to use of armed insurrection for this end.

would see her and I wasn't really that open to her but the fact that she was cool with them and she was about supporting them I watched her and I found her to be an honest for real person so with them talking to me about my own hatred, anger more, I said, well shit I can't hold on to this! And so I began to allow myself to appreciate her and like her and then all the anti war activists and you're going to anti-war demos to support the anti war movement and you're meeting all these other people. We felt like all of that was taking Malcolm's teachings and putting them into practice though we were clear as Malcolm was clear that our primary responsibility is to black people and black people's liberation.

All them things was in place and even the anti sexism, it was in place but it wasn't... I mean this in retrospect too. I mean Eldridge Cleaver himself who wrote *Soul on Ice* and in *Soul on Ice* there's certain parts in there where he's actively raping women. He wanted to rape white women as an act of rebellion and a lot of people found that controversial. But in the Panther Party he was one of the main leaders who at least pushed for us to be anti sexist not necessarily meaning that he was anti sexist himself but I think that he knew that it was important.

In the Panther Party when I joined I'm just 17 years old. I felt like my own machismo was still forming. So it wasn't really solid. But I'm coming into the Panther Party and it's saying you can't treat women as objects, you've got to treat them equal. I come in and find out that women in New York and New Jersey are in positions of leadership, men in the chapters are supposed to do work that's traditionally for women from washing the dishes to sweeping the floor to helping to take care of any kids that's in there and I'm like, well shit! I'm inspired, you know and I know that that wasn't everybody's experience but I think I was one of those people that was like, wow! This was just so great because at the same time that we're being this way in the communities, we're standing up to the police and all of that.

But I knew that there was also a lot of sexism in the party. I can't say that I even had a consciousness of how deep mine still was and I didn't begin to see it until later when I went to prison. I thought we did pretty good and when I talk to former members years later, even when you talk to the sisters in the Black Panther Party, the stories are mixed. Some of them are really harsh on the sexism within the Black Panther Party. Others... the stories are just as harsh but they felt that the Panther Party gave them a way to be different women because they were in a sense empowered to fight sexism and partly around the fact that everybody was armed. Sisters would tell you that because everybody had guns there were certain ways that they could tell a brother, "you're not going to fuck with me, I'm not going to be your sexual object because I got a gun'. Others in the party would create a condition where women who had skills or who had abilities to be in leadership positions, they was there and brothers who didn't accept that, there was ways that they were disciplined.

That's 1970, "71, '72. By "74 I go to prison for a long time. I don't come out until the end of '85. So this is when I'm reading feminism, radical psychology, critical

theory, the anti-authoritarian stuff, the anarchist stuff, sitting in this prison now with no choice but to reflect. First I've got to reflect on me because those things allowed me to see me as more than just *Ashanti the Panther, Black Liberation soldier,* I had to see me as even that kid in the nuclear family who had pops, moms, they was the authority. I come out of a Baptist church but I come out of a tough neighbourhood too and pops used to be a prizefighter.

I used to think of all this stuff while I am reading, Wilhelm Reich and all this stuff was telling me that your family also prepares you for this very authoritarian sexist person you're going become so I'm like, if that's me I know that's a lot of my comrades in the Panther Party and then to be able to see how that's the leadership of the Black Panther Party too and the leadership's relations with those of us who were the field workers. Whatever is said up top, there was no real way that we could integrate our opinions into the decision making process so I'm like, well shit! There was a lot of sexism within the party that we didn't have either theoretical understandings of or better cultural practices within to help us really break it down. I just feel like we did the best we could.

What were the organised efforts to create changes within the aims of the Party that would challenge patriarchy, addressing family structures, addressing masculine & feminine roles?

There were several things. One we had to read about other people struggles and when you read about these other liberation struggles you know you find that these anti-sexist struggles **within**[10] those struggles is really powerful. So when we read about Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, struggles in South Africa, in Asia and Latin America that the more Marxist, Maoist-influenced liberation movements was actively fighting sexism. You would see women not only with the guns, women guerrillas next to the men guerrillas, but you would find out that some of them was even in positions of power. Those things was giving us one way of reinforcing that we got to also replicate that.

Other things was like, we had to do domestic stuff. The men did, you know. We were not to sit around and let women do stuff; cooking, cleaning and that was important too because that was not the role we was coming up with in our communities, especially that lumpen culture is like, "that ain't the role for men'. We wanted more flashy shit, "that's what women do', but now it's like "no, we do that?' and it's enforced and things was in place where you were disciplined if you were falling in those areas. I can remember one thing; to be late for a meeting, if you're late for a meeting you may be doing some runs around the block and if it's a New York meeting it means it's a very big block. But whoever came late, men or women, we all had to run and the first time I did that I was very

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[10] Emphasis added by Ashanti here and elsewhere in the transcription.

surprised that, one sister in particular, Safiya Bukhari[11] was kind of big, and like the rest of us she lead the way. It was seeing things like that that was like, oh right on! I think my age had a lot to do with that. I think that impressionable 17, 18 and it's like they're saying, "This is what the new man is going to be like. This is what the new women is going to be like'.

If a woman felt like she was being pressured for sex she had to let somebody know. And when she let somebody know there was a stop to it right then. A lot of the times. Some things I didn't necessarily see but I heard about later on. There was one case in particular where one brother was being very abusive to his partner to the point where he beat her in public. I think there was a court date in Brooklyn and the police had vamped on the Panthers in Brooklyn and they went to court and one day in court he jumped on her and beat her for what ever reason and that Panther chapter banned him from New York State, they told him he couldn't come back any more. When that story was told and it would get to us and it would tell us how serious this struggle is. We did good but man there was so much we didn't know and because of that there was (like with the cultural practice that I know now), god if we knew stuff then what we know now, god we could have been more effective.

There were alliances between the Black Panthers and the White Panthers[12] and the SDS[13]. Were there any alliances between Black Panthers and factions within the feminist movement?

I think that there were some but it was more nominal, it wasn't really developed relationships and I think that one of the mistakes of the Panther Party was that it was limited to the white feminists. We didn't really make the same outreach to black feminists.

Or if there was some kind of gathering like the Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention[14] where there was all the different groups even the queer groups, it's like there's space for the white queer organisation but the Black Panthers organisation because of the homophobia wasn't outreaching or trying to find out who was the black feminists or black queer folks in the struggle. So I think it was more that, we knew that we had to be in an alliance or a coalition with all kinds of different forces but how much it actually worked, I don't think that they actually worked.

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[11] Safiya Bukhari aka Bernice Jones was Communications Secretary of the Harlem Black Panther office. Ashanti Alston and Safiya Bukhari married in 1984. See *The War Before*, her autobiographical writings (just published, 2010).

[12] An anti racist, revolutionary, white American political collective founded in 1968 following an interview with Huey P Newton in which he was asked, what white people could do to support the Black Panthers. He replied "Form a white panther party".

[13] Students for a Democratic Society, a student activist organisation.

[14] Initiated and led by the Black Panther Party, it brought together a really broad array of activists from different "colonized nations," movements and issues whose objective was to write a new people's constitution envisioning a new America. 1970.

And even with Jean Genet[15], he is a French lumpen rebel, whose support of the movement was well known, did a lot of his writing in prison but when he came to the United States he was a big supporter of the Panthers. I read some accounts of his experiences among Panthers and it was kind of mixed. There were some panthers (like Zayd Malik Shakur[16]) who fully embraced him. Others who knew or saw that he was this gay man they were a little, eh! Except for the public appearances. But behind that was like, eh (shrugs)!

So I think it was things like that where we knew that we were supposed to be a much different nationalist group because we were always a revolutionary nationalist group. But I think that the effort to really build relations with feminist groups of all nationalities and queer groups of all nationalities, I don't think we put real effort and probably because the phobias mean that you are a little scared of that which you don't know. What it might mean in terms of your image to your community or what it means for you, how it might make you look a bit insecure. But those things I learnt sitting in the prison cells having a chance to read and reflect from all these different readings so it just told me that you know them things like that meant that there were some real divisions, that whatever looks good in public is not necessarily the essence of the relationship. So it means that your movement doesn't have these strong unities going on unless you can figure out a way to deal with the things inside you that block the possibility of real unities, whatever that might mean for you, because definitely any real unity is going to question who you are.

I mean for me to work with white folks it was not easy. But I had to question who I was, you know, why I was hanging on to it (this anger) and then later on when I began to understand my own sexism, it's a challenge. The more you understand your own sexism, it's a challenge. Then you've got to ask your self are you willing to take the challenge. I felt like for me and for many people in the movement but definitely for me, Malcolm became such an iconic figure because his life was one that was willing to change, willing to challenge beliefs that he had held and then got shaken on but was willing to go through the struggle no matter where it might take him. So that became more important, that part of Malcolm became more important for me.

bell hooks has written a lot about how Malcolm X was a figure or an icon of black masculinity. How much of a figure would Angela Davis have been not just for women but also for men within the Black Panther movement?

Angela was very important, maybe there was two things; one she was a smart women, you just got that from her, here's a smart, black woman and a good speaker. I think it was less important or maybe a little bit ignored that she had

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[15] (December 19, 1910 – April 15, 1986) Early in his life he was a vagabond and petty criminal, but later took to writing. Became a prominent and controversial French novelist, playwright, poet, essayist and political activist.

[16] Black Panther and Black Liberation soldier.

these connections to the Communist Party because I think a lot of people in the black community were still either phobic about the Communist Party or if you were in the movement you would ask yourself "why is she in the Communist Party?' But the image of her was of this beautiful black woman who was smart and willing to speak out in terms of the issues in society. You had her and you had Kathleen Cleaver, same thing.

But Kathleen Cleaver was one of the leaders in the Black Panther Party and her figure in the Black Panther Party was really important because she held a high position. So she was not just Eldridge Cleaver's wife but she held her own and she wasn't just a stand back person she was really active in her leadership. She brought a lot to the Black Panther Party and then on local levels you had other figures who became important like Afeni Shakur[17] at the New York Black Panther Party. Afeni was one of them figures who commanded a lot of respect in the local chapters in New York and then later on people like Safiya Bukhari and in other places, women who were good speakers, or were good speakers and good organisers and they knew how to wield leadership. So their images from the national one to the international one like Kathleen and Angela to the more local one who may not have been known as well or as broadly but at local areas they was like, you look to them, you were inspired by them.

One area I'd like to move on to is the complicated combination of race, class, and gender. These different terms in some ways define political strategies so it's difficult to be politically active holding that triple framework. It's really hard to find politics that addresses these. Have you found a framework that does?

I think I have more of a grip now. The prison experience allowed me the time to think about our struggle and its complexities. Whereas on the streets we learnt so much quickly, broadly, deeply and directly. It's unbelievable how much we learnt from being local to our communities to joining the Panther party and the whole new world but now in prison you are beginning to look at that world in it's complexities. So reading the feminism allows me to see how important anti-sexism is in the picture. Readings on authoritarianism allows me the see the same picture but differently, you know the role of anti-authoritarianism. All the cultural and social mechanisms in place that just kind of breathe authoritarianism like it's just second nature. And so if you're in this struggle you are not just in this struggle to overthrow or to stop some oppressive body over there but you begin to recognise like the anarchists say, *there is a cop in your head*, the internal oppression, and then to understand anti-colonial psychology that says those mechanism are still in you too. Franz Fanon becomes important again. So you've got understanding racism, understanding sexism, understanding anti authoritarianism.

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[17]One of the Panther 21 trial defendants and held position in New York City Black Panther branch leadership. Best known today as the mother of Hip Hop artist Tupac Shakur.

At some point I began to understand more of homophobia and that was just from having a very close queer friend. I said something to her one day kind of innocently but it was really fucked up, so homophobic. So she said, *Ashanti I've got something I want you to read.* So the next day we're going to work and she gives me this book *Queer Theory* and it's like, queer theory! I have struggled to be a good ally but now she's asking me to read this book. So I am on the subway with this book (laughing). I am so conscious that I have this highly charged title and so I don't hold the book like I do normally, I reading it like this (holds the book cover down), now I'm holding it down so people can't see the title and I'm conscious of myself doing that.

At the same time as I'm reading this I'm beginning to understand queer theory and what's the importance of it in terms of understanding people's identities and what that means in our struggles, understanding what all of this is around me, different sexualities and stuff like that just brings more lenses for me to see. Not only our struggle outside of me but how those struggles are inside of me as well. Those intersections that you are talking about now (race, class, gender). But for me too, I never put aside the anti colonial perspective because for me our struggle in the United States especially for people of African descent, we're still in an anti colonial struggle and for me that's going to be the struggle until we're free.

It keeps in my mind all the different systems of oppression that we have to fight so I began to understand more when I got out of prison; I began to work with other people and to interact with other folks. Then to watch how mainly the anarchist movement & the feminist movement would have practices that incorporate more of these things because they were more concerned that there was all kinds of oppressions that we have to deal with, how they are all still trapped off into us, how we manifest them and how they can really poison our relationships inside these movements while we're trying to destroy them on the outside and that shit wasn't working.

For example, first time I went to this anarchist meeting and before the meeting started it was like laying down some of the conditions for the meeting and one of them was directed towards the men and it was some simple shit like *men have to take a step back and men have to shut up*, not for the whole meeting. It was like men have to know when to shut up, like you've said your piece. Be careful of your man-tones and when you've said it shut up and let somebody else speak or say what you have to say and step back. And damn that's really it, that's really good; we didn't do that back then.

Or like when it was time to get into the strategy sessions and make the decisions, these groups seemed to be very concerned about who has been historically excluded, who's voices and how to make sure that we bring them in. I'm like oh, this is really great! Because these meetings were like mixed meetings and I know a lot of times black folk in a meeting with white folks, we would just automatically just be kind of quiet, and then here's folks in there saying make sure that we hear from everybody or make sure that there's space for those that may be not feeling comfortable, say what you've got to say. So even things like

that gave me a way to see that we were looking for and experimenting with different inclusive practices. It reminded me of things I had read about the early civil rights movement which stood out, stuff around participatory democracy. Just to include everybody. And then to understand that that's the Zapatista way too[18], figuring out how to include differences, get out of the thinking that we have to be the same, the monolithic stuff, that's it's ok that there are differences, from differences of opinion but to differences of culture, spirituality, sexuality, analysis. So that made me hopeful because it's like we can do this, because all of these things have divided us for so long, we can take this thing down and turn it around.

Let us talk a little about APOC, Anarchist People of Colour[19] - are there anarcha-feminist groups within APOC?

APOC is not an organisation; it just seems to be how we identify ourselves. So every city where there is APOC, it may be just a way that they meet and get to know each other to some places where they decided to form organisations. So I'm not sure though if there is anarcha-feminist groups within APOC but I do know that from the beginning, say the first conference 2003 in Detroit[20], the first conference was a majority women and queer folks and usually wherever queer folk gets together those voices are strong. Not saying that we don't got a lot of work to do but I think that there is a tendency especially for the women and the queer folks within APOC spaces to make sure that those issues are dealt with, that people be on point about sexism, homophobia and stuff like that you know.

I think it does good but a self criticism or criticism for men within APOC is, where are the men's groups at? I've been to like 4 or 5 men's groups before and none of them ever last long and I think that if we're going to deal with things that we have historically done that's fucked up we need to have men's groups (that are learning how to live anti-sexist, dick-traitor lives). We're always finding other things that we have deemed important to do that we have not come to terms with how deep our shit is nor with how critical it is for our movements in terms of sustaining our movements and really building and having some successes. We haven't grasped that yet so I think that it has to happen if we're going to be really serious. I know that in New York some of the men want to have a men's group. When that happens I'm always happy to hear that. But then I know my own personal schedule right now, I'm all over the place right now but I want to be there and I will always encourage them to do it and I'm going to have to figure out a way to be there.

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[18] Zapatista style of inclusion and multi-dimensional organizing and struggle.

[19] APOC became the name that identifies and recognizes people of colour within the anarchist movement and the left in general.

[20] The first conference that pulled together anarchists and anti-authoritarians of colour in the US with over 200 people in attendance.

But it's real simple to me at this point, if you can't build those really good healthy even joyous relationships with your comrades who are queer, who are women, then what are you doing? You just want to get into some combative thing against the system outside of us, there is something wrong there. I think APOC folks in general are more eager to move in them directions then others I've seen though and I think that we've even developed good alliance with some of the other white radicals and I would even say white anarchists, who also want to move in that direction and who know that it's really important that we do this and not just give it lip service.

Could you tell me about any womanist or feminist groups active within contemporary radical black politics?

One is a great group in New York called Casa Atabex Aché[21], great group, they are like a women of colour group who don't identify as anarchists but it's like they're there. And for me it doesn't matter. They are big supporters of the Zapatistas. They been there several times and it's like they get so much inspiration from them. They're really good, to interact with them is like, you see powerful women of all sexualities who you come out learning something. So if there was one group you would want to know about it would be them. I'm a general member of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM)[22] in New York City.

It is a revolutionary nationalist organisation, the closest I feel that follows in the spirit of the Black Panther Party. They have *six principles* including fighting sexism within organisation and in the community. They are in the process of developing a seventh principle around being anti homophobic, anti-heterosexist. It's been a struggle but they are like, *we're in this*! And I think because of it, even for a revolutionary nationalist group to take a position on sexism is big but to take the next one in terms of being anti homophobic it's really unusual and unique but I think because of it they've actually had queer activists coming in to the membership now. They've finally got a space to come in. There's a lot of nationalist folks out there who are queer (or "In the Life") but never have felt comfortable in the regular Black Nationalist organisations. So within MXGM, knowing what they're fighting for that they can come in and help create that space for the first time you have an organisation that's changing in a really revolutionary way.

You've described how women in the Black Panther Party could assume certain power because they were armed; they had authority behind the gun. It reminds me of an article called "Gendered

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[21] House of Womyn Power, a healing space for womyn of color in the South Bronx, New York City.

[22] http://mxgm.org – "The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement is an organization of Afrikans in America/New Afrikans whose mission is to defend the human rights of our people and promote self-determination in our community".

Revolution' in the second edition of the Irish anarcha-feminist magazine RAG[23] in which the author compares the experiences of women in the Spanish civil war with the Sandinista revolution. She argues that despite achieving gender equality through participating fully in physical combat and political organising in the earlier stages of the movements, patriarchal relations soon returned segregating women to pursue what was deemed to be "women's issues". She explains that part of the political aims of revolutionary struggle must also include ending a gendered division of labour.

De-gendering revolution would surely involve deconstructing the patriarchal, macho, warlike images that are so much a part revolutionary iconography for men. Is there a tension here and how would you begin to resolve it?

I think we've still got to figure that out. I mean Angela, Kathleen, Afeni, Assata Shakur[24] especially because she's like the most well known figure from that period of being this woman who was in the Black Liberation Army, the newspaper called her mother hen of the Black Liberation Army but people loved Assata Shakur. She's been in Cuba now for 30 years. She is such an important figure in our struggle because of that image of her. We need images of people who fight back but there are some pitfalls to it and I believe today you need women who had access to a gun if they got to defend themselves. From stories I heard, women having guns in the Black Panther Party made some men back up.

But then you really got to see at some point that it still fits into these iconic roles that are really constructed by men, so how do we deal with that? I'm not sure we've quite figured that out.

Today it concerns me that a lot of young brothers who come into the movement, they're not critical of these images. They see those images of Malcolm, Huey Newton sitting in a wicker chair with a spear and a shot gun or they'll see Jonathon Jackson[25] rolling up into the courtroom and I love all of them images but now you've got a culture of violence for real! You've got to really look at that.

With the gun culture in the United States and this seeming love of guns and what guns can do, how much do you really want to uncritically promote them images and I don't want young revolutionary brothers coming into the movement thinking that the rigid macho image is what we're striving for.

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[23] Contact RAG at ragdublin AT riseup.net.

[24] Former Black Panther and soldier in the Black Liberation Army. Liberated from a women's prison in 1979, and eventually given safe haven as a political exile in Cuba. She presently has a million dollar bounty on her head.

[25] He was the 17 year old brother of imprisoned Black Panther field marshal George Jackson, who died leading the legendary Marin County courthouse raid to free 3 Jacksonites on trial. The state shot down the escaping van killing all inside except for prison revolutionary Ruchel Magee. August 7, 1970.

I think that my lesson from the prison is that we need to be soft. We need to be soft with the capacity (if we need to), to fight.

So you've groups like The New Black Panther Party[26] and everyone is real rigid, mean. They don't bust a smile, they look like they're gritting on you, you know they'll kill you in a minute. Parts of that I'm like, ok, I understand it and I appreciate the fact that they'll even fight the police. But that's not where I'm at today in terms of what I would want them to really know.

And you can hold Malcolm up (on a pedestal) because it gets to the point where he is beyond question. But the feminist question him, (beyond) good leader or good spokesperson, but was he a good father? Was he a good partner to Betty? Ask Betty. Betty would say that sometimes she thought about leaving him. Betty raised those four daughters, Malcolm was being a leader and I want people to be critical of that so that even in our relationships I want people to see how important our personal, family, social relationships are, because we didn't do that well back then and that played a part on weakening our power as a movement, as an organisation. You can't put that in the background, they need to be in the forefront, and I think that says a lot about how we're really seeing this movement and our ability to create a new world by how we even look at our relationships.

But I did confess in Belfast, some guy said, well what's my relationship to my children and I said, not good, not good because I'm a grandfather now. But do I take time out to spend quality time with my grans? Do I go see my children, spend time with them? (Shakes his head) I think a part of it is because for 14 years....I never had a chance to do it but then when I came out (of prison) it was almost like, *the man revolutionist addiction* stops me from doing it because at some point I've got to stop and develop relations with my children and my grans, go see my mama and my brothers and sisters more, as part of being a revolutionary, just being a human being who develops a fuller life.

...and that part of oneself doesn't have to exclude revolutionary activity, it can be just as revolutionary.

Not at all! Put it on the same level as revolutionary activities. I learnt that from the sisters in the Black Panther Party afterwards. They had to raise kids in this environment and they would tell you in a minute that was revolutionary. The things they had to do; what they had to impart to the kids, a lot of time the kids wouldn't understand why the parents were the way that they were; teaching them all this stuff. If that can get put in the picture instead of getting put in the back (because it's deemed what mothers do) then we might be getting to look at all of those as part of the struggle.

I guess it goes to the whole thing too of how we look at political struggle as the struggle and social struggle as subordinate to that and I think the thing I liked

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[26] A black nationalist organization in the US which takes the name of the Black Panther Party but works in a different ideology and style.

about anarchism when I began to really understand it was that anarchism talked a lot about social struggle. It didn't put all that priority on political struggle. It's like the social struggle and the social revolution and the more I understood that I'm like, yeah that makes sense! And it confirms a lot of stuff coming out now around cultural studies and these universities things that really focuses on how people live on that day to day or what's the cultural aspect of people's lives and how important that stuff is, I think compared with Marxism, anarchist thinking was always directed more to how people really live or how people really are, so I found myself thinking that's where I want to be.

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URL for this article

http://groups.google.com/group/interface-articles/web/3Alston.pdf

Tim Costello: Worker-Intellectual

(Born: June 13, 1945, Died: December 4, 2009)

An appreciation by Jeremy Brecher

It's not every day that anyone connected with the American labor movement, let alone someone who has never held a high leadership position, is even mentioned in the *New York Times.* But the day after Christmas, 2009, the *Times* gave a full length feature obituary to Tim Costello, who it described as "a truck driver who became a labor advocate and theorist, the co-author of four books and the founder of an organization that fought globalization." It added:

> Mr. Costello was hailed by many academics and labor advocates as a bona fide worker-intellectual. A genial, mustached native of Boston, he drove fuel-delivery trucks, worked as a lobsterman, founded a group that battled against the fast-growing use of temporary workers and developed close links with labor advocates in China, Italy and Mexico.

[For the rest of the *Times* article, memories and reflections about Tim from people all around the world, and listings and samples of Tim's writing, see http://laborstrategies.blogs.com/global_ labor_strategies/in-memory-of-gls-founder-tim-costello/]

I first met Tim Costello in New York around 1969. A small group of us were holding meetings to start the magazine *Root & Branch.* Most of us had been influenced in one way or another by Paul Mattick, a German-born machinist and writer who for many decades had been the leading voice of Council Communism in the US. Tim used to show up occasionally at the meetings and kind of hover around the fringes of the group.

Tim seemed like something of a mystery. We knew that he was a truck driver, that he drove a fuel oil truck, and that he worked an incredible number of hours, often twelve to fourteen a day six or seven days a week. Usually he was pretty quiet, but occasionally he would regale us with stories about the drivers' class struggle on the job. He told us how they would steal time, often hours each day. This required cooperation among drivers to establish their own work rates for the various jobs. Tim stole his share: He set up an office in the back of his truck and spent several hours of each working day reading and writing.

You can get a sense of Tim's approach in those days from an article he wrote for *Root and Branch* under the name "Mac Brockway" called "Keep on Truckin'." It provided a detailed account of informal resistance on the job at a fuel oil company. It described a threatened work stoppage that forced the rehiring of two fired militants (one of them, one might guess, the article's author). His approach had a big influence on me; I was working on a book called *Strike!* about mass strikes in the United States, and from Tim I got a sense of informal worker self-organization on the job that I presented as the force underlying great upheavals.

At that time there was almost an apartheid wall between America's radical students and the American working class; Tim seemed to be something that we just didn't know: a real-life, in-the-flesh, worker-intellectual.

Tim had participated in, but also maintained an ironic detachment from, the radical student movements of the late 1960s. In the last couple of years before the demise of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), working class opinion turned against the Vietnam war, and kids at working class high schools and colleges began forming SDS chapters, often with little or no contact with the divided and tottering national organization. Tim connected with them and somehow ended up at the last SDS convention in Chicago in 1969.

As the group that would later became Weatherman prepared to march out of the convention, Bernadine Dohrn called together their faction in one part of the hall. As Tim told the story, she announced, "Everyone should assemble here who supports the black liberation struggle, the Black Panther Party, the right of national liberation, the North Vietnamese, and the Vietcong." At that point Tim and his friends began shouting, "Enver Hoxha! You forgot Enver Hoxha!" (Hoxha was the Communist leader of Albania, who had managed to quarrel first with the Yugoslavs, then with the Soviets, and finally with the Chinese, and who claimed to lead the only true Communist state). Bernadine obligingly added, "and Enver Hoxha!" to her litany. I think Tim was flabbergasted anew every time he told the story.

Tim and I both landed in Boston at the same time, crashing in the living room of Paul Mattick, Jr., son and chief interpreter of Paul Mattick. We both needed a place to live. We decided to look together and ended up renting a railroad apartment in Summerville. He told me later that Somerville then was regarded as a very bad place by respectable working class Bostonians, a place where you might end up with a corpse on your door in the morning. (It had recently had some politico-gangland slayings.) His aunt had told him, "Tim, you don't have to live in Somerville, I'll give you some money."

Tim went to work delivering oil for Metropolitan Petroleum and continued to hover around the edges of *Root & Branch*. I remember Paul Mattick asking, "Does he read?" and Paul Jr. recalling to his father that when they had all been discussing the longevity of dogs, Tim had pointed out that the dogs in the *Odyssey* had lived for 24 years – so at least he had read the *Odyssey*.

I gradually learned more about Tim's background. His family came from Ireland and Scotland via the Canadian Maritimes and was about as mainstream Boston working class as you could find. His father had been a railroad worker and head of his local union for 30 years. As a child, Tim had laboriously typed the local's correspondence on his father's manual typewriter. When his father was laid off and went to work as a construction laborer, Tim had worked beside him "playing the banjo." (He had to explain to me that this meant digging with a shovel.) Tim says that his father "preached unionism," but that he always saw "the union" less as an institution than as an activity that you engaged in.

I felt I was finally beginning to understand Tim when he mentioned that his father had wanted him to become a lawyer. I waited for the conventional next line: "So you won't have to be a working stiff like your old man." Instead it was: "So you can get the

bastards." (Tim's daughter Gilly became a labor lawyer, although, when I told her this story, she swore she knew nothing about it.)

Tim's father had died when Tim was in his early twenties. My mother had died when I was about the same age, and I think it was always an unspoken bond between us, or at least gave us a certain common understanding.

Tim's lifelong commitment was not to any political ideology, but rather an identification with people who have to get up in the morning and go to work just to survive. As it happens, that fitted perfectly with Marx' description of "those who have nothing to sell but their labor power." I think this identification was so unshakable for Tim because it was rooted in loyalty to the working class roots of his family and especially to the memory of his father.

Tim went to Goddard College, where he studied political philosophy and Marx' Capital, among other things. He found it less than satisfying and dropped out. But he always continued to study. He had a strong bent for philosophy. He loved Herbert Marcuse, especially *Reason and Revolution*. Whenever we got down to fundamental questions about why some approach was good or bad, he would quote Aristotle: "The virtue of a thing is its use."

Tim didn't have much use for conventional conceptions of leadership. He believed in the capacity of ordinary people to act on their own behalf. He thought of social change in terms of an on-going effort by working people to understand and affect their world. He saw his own efforts to spread information and understanding as just one more contribution to that process.

Tim's favorite formulation was Jean-Paul Sartre's analysis of "the series" and "the group" from the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. He used to say that all he did all day in on the job and in the bars was explain to people about the series and the group.

The series, as Tim explained it, was represented by Sartre's famous account of a line of people waiting for a bus. They all relate to the bus, but they don't relate to each other except through the bus. The series is the normal condition of workers -- they relate to each other only through their relation to the boss.

But when people face a common threat or a common interest, they may form themselves into a group. Sartre's classic example was the action groups that formed in poor Paris neighborhoods at the start of the French Revolution. These initially formed as a response to the threat of military repression, but then decided to go on the offensive and storm the Bastille. Such a transformation from a series to a group lies at the core of what people need to do to achieve their own liberation.

Unfortunately, the group tends to develop leadership and structure that turns its members back into a series. Tim used this analysis to explain how unions that had been created as an expression of groups of workers had become instead bureaucracies that often blocked their members from acting on their own behalf. When that happened, workers had to turn themselves back from a series into a group, even if they had to do so against the opposition of their own recognized leaders.

Meanwhile, we were living in the midst of what we can in retrospect see was the mass strike of the early 1970s, spearheaded by rambunctious young workers. Indeed, the

revolt of young workers — symbolized by a big strike at the new Lordstown, Ohio, General Motors factory — was headline news. Tim and I decided to take a few months, travel around the country interviewing young workers, and write a book about their situation, experiences, and revolt.

When I met Tim he had already begun informally interviewing the people he worked with to find out how they thought about things. We had no training in interviewing or oral history when we went on the road, but Tim's practice stood us in good stead. Those techniques provided the starting point for the discussions we had with more than 100 people around the country about their lives, work, ideas, and observations. The result was *Common Sense for Hard Times*.

Tim and I wrote together for the next forty years. Collaborating with Tim was one of the most fun things I ever did in my life. Most of our work together took the form of talking. We would talk on the phone or, if we could get together, in the flesh — best of all on long walks. (If Tim couldn't go for a walk he would often pace around the room while he thought and talked.)

We used to take turns telling about something we had thought of, read, or observed. Even more often, one of us would pose the other a question — anything from "does a more complex division of labor make it harder for workers to envision workers' control of production?" to "why is public belief in global warming declining and what does it mean?"

Tim would often draw on his observations and informal interviews to address these questions. When we were working on *Common Sense for Hard Times*, we constantly discussed how workers could overcome all the divisions of immediate interest and background. One day Tim called to mind a discussion he had had with a worker who himself asked this question and then said, "The only way I can imagine people ever really getting together would be if everyone had the same beef." Bingo. We called the chapter where we quoted his rap "The Big Beef."

The process was highly dialogic. We — especially Tim — would play Devil's advocate, taking a contrary position to tease out the issues and problems with something that basically we both agreed on. This flexibility was highly supportive of creative thinking and coming up with new approaches. It grew out of Tim's often-noted ability to consider with detachment even something he cared deeply about.

A result was that each of us would often be forced to confront the complexity of an issue and recognize that it had more than one side. Tim and I rarely if ever had a political disagreement that lasted more than a week or two. Often we would return to a previous point of contention only to discover that each of us had reversed our position in the meantime!

When we were working on a piece of writing, we'd start with what needed to be said. Then we'd try to figure out how to say it in a way that would communicate to the kind of people we were writing for. I remember we were once using the word "milieu" and I asked Tim if it was a meaningful word for our audience; he thought for a moment and then said, "We'll make it a word." For the first few years I did almost all the writing, trying to capture the ideas and language we had worked out in our conversations; but

over time Tim came into his own, writing on his own and doing much more of the writing in our collaboration.

Tim worked off and on as a commercial lobsterman, often with his friend Larry Stepenuck in Rockport, Mass. He had always been a runner (he was a regional cross-country champion in high school) and he loved to run in the woods known as Dogtown that filled the interior of Cape Ann. When a developer came up with a proposal for a major project in Dogtown, claiming it would create jobs, Tim and Larry began organizing fishermen and other workers to oppose the development. They and a number of allies formed the organization Save Open Spaces (SOS). Their big problem was that, although local working people tended to be skeptical about the proposed development, they also tended to be antagonistic toward well-off environmentalists. So Tim and Larry began inventing a new kind of "proletarian environmentalism." They demanded to know not only how many but also what kind of jobs the developments would create, and made an issue of the fact that they would be low-paid, low-skilled, and often short-term. They organized by talking up this issue in the fishermen's bars in the area, then turning out their constituency as needed for public hearings. Their slogan was, "Keep Cape Ann a place where you can be poor with dignity."

Lobstering gave Tim a useful metaphor. He used to say, "If you want to catch a lobster, you have to learn to think like a lobster." His drive to understand how people think, the way they frame questions, and the language they use was one of his strongest characteristics. Whether he was writing, organizing, or fundraising, he was always trying to figure out how to "think like a lobster."

While reading up for *Common Sense for Hard Times*, Tim and I discovered the concept of family and community networks in Michael Young and Peter Willmott's book *Family and Kinship in East London*. We began applying the idea of networks to the structures of working class life, and to present them as an alternative to more hierarchical forms of organization. Many of the labor-community coalitions we wrote about in *Building Bridges* took the form of networks, and in *Globalization from Below* Tim elaborated the idea with elements taken from *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* by Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. The way Tim used the network form for organizations he helped to found like Save Open Spaces, the North American Federation for Fair Employment, and Global Labor Strategies, represents some of his most creative contributions, and opens the way for social action that is highly organized without being hierarchical.

Tim was always fascinated by the realities of work and working life in other countries.

During his brief stint in college he went to Puerto Rico, lived with a rural family, and wrote it up for school. When he married a Danish woman and spent several months with her in Denmark, he willingly took a job on a construction crew with guest workers from Eastern Europe and, as usual, interviewed those he worked with about their job experiences.

During the 1980s, Tim and I began noticing the early effects of what has come to be known as economic globalization. We saw the power of American workers being undermined as corporations increasingly threatened to move their operations abroad. As we tried to figure out how workers could respond, Tim conducted an extensive

research project on labor movement organization and collective bargaining practices in other economically developed countries. He concluded that the systems were so different that international labor cooperation was unlikely to take the form of joint collective bargaining. Then he began studying the attempts to develop international labor standards and solidarity within the EU.

Tim and I eventually collaborated on two books about economic globalization. The first, *Global Village or Global Pillage*, focused on globalization itself. The second, *Globalization from Below*, focused on the emergence of transnational social movements embodying what we called "globalization from below." Much of our strategic perspective grew out of Tim's earlier work on comparative industrial relations.

During a brief stint working for Congressman Bernie Sanders, I had worked closely on globalization issues with a young staffer named Brendan Smith. Brendan began working with Tim and me, co-authoring *Globalization from Below*. He started working with Tim in North American Federation for Fair Employment (NAFFE). He was part of the team from the start of Global Labor Strategies, and travelled with Tim to China, Europe, and Latin America. He developed his own partnership with Tim, as well as functioning as the third of the "Three Musketeers."

Tim knew the importance of job security from the repeated unemployment in his own family. The 1980s saw the start of a change in American working class that shifted the majority of workers from relatively secure job structures and thrust them into a semi-casualized, "contingent," labor market. Tim saw the erosion of "steady work" as a transforming force in working class life. In the early 1990s he began trying to figure out how to make it the focus of an organizing campaign. In 1996 he started the Massachusetts Campaign on Contingent Work which helped give birth to the NAFFE.

During the eight years that Tim headed NAFFE (1997-2005), it acquired more than 60 member groups, ranging from an AFL-CIO department to local organizations of immigrant day laborers and including members in Mexico and Canada. It had spawned several overlapping networks, including the major organization of academic contingent workers. It had provided information and support for its members and also organized campaigns of its own. It had conducted negotiations with one of the largest global temp staffing agencies. It was recognized by the media as the primary representative of contingent workers. It had helped to reframe the way contingent work is seen locally and nationally.

Meanwhile, Tim watched in frustration as workers around the world were played off against each other in what we called a "race to the bottom." Many in the labor movement became concerned about globalization, but the barriers to real global labor cooperation seemed very difficult to overcome. Tim came up with the idea of creating a bridge-building organization whose specific purpose was to encourage cooperation among unions and their allies across national borders. He asked Brendan Smith and me, along with a Latin America labor and environmental organizer named Claudia Torrelli, to work with him on what we dubbed Global Labor Strategies.

One morning in 2006 I got an email from Tim with a news article from the *South China Morning Post* about a new labor law the Chinese government was proposing. The article began, "Plans for a new law regulating employment contracts have sparked

protests from foreign companies concerned it will put more power into the hands of the government-backed trade union." It went on to say that "foreign companies have already started lobbying" the National People's Congress against the law.

The Chinese labor legislation, let alone the corporate efforts to oppose it, had barely been mentioned in the U.S. press. Tim, Brendan, and I immediately sensed an opportunity to tell a new story about China. We launched into a crash investigation of the proposed law. A friend leaked us a 42-page document submitted to the Chinese government by the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai (AmCham) demanding changes in the draft legislation. Based on this and other sources, GLS produced a report titled *Behind the Great Wall of China: U.S. Corporations Opposing New Rights for Chinese Workers. Opposition may harm workers in the US and other countries.*[1]

Tim and Brendan developed a media strategy around the report and managed to interest David Barbosa, the New York Times reporter in Shanghai, resulting in a front page article in the Times based on our report. Meanwhile, Brendan and Tim organized an international campaign against what was increasingly seen as a corporate scandal. International trade union organizations condemned the corporate lobbying. Human rights groups polled global corporations on their actions regarding the law and posted the results on the web. Brendan mobilized the leaders of the Progressive Caucus in Congress to issue a statement and draft legislation criticizing corporate influence. The report was translated into Chinese and Spanish and widely circulated on the web.

This campaign had a significant impact. Nike issued a statement dissociating itself from the AmCham lobbying. Under pressure from the European labor movement, the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China issued a "clarification" giving the legislation a hearty endorsement and claiming – notwithstanding its previous statements -- that it had never opposed the law.

Tim felt that of all the things he had done in his life, this effort to support Chinese workers had perhaps done the most to improve the lives – and increase the power – of ordinary people. Professor Liu Cheng of Shanghai Normal University, who drafted the law, wrote after Tim's death, "I will never forget his contribution to Chinese Labor Contract Law. He is a friend of Chinese working people. The Chinese labor legislation is the turning point from deregulation to reregulation. So Mr. Costello's work is also a worldwide contribution. Working people of the world shall remember him forever."

Friends of Tim who spoke or corresponded with him during his final illness were sometimes surprised when he said or wrote things like, "If you can take it with a Zen attitude it's not so bad, and so far I've been able to do that."

In one of our early conversations, for some reason the subject of Zen Buddhism came up. It turned out that Tim had read quite a bit about it and we found we both had taken a lot from Zen. Tim was in no way into it (or anything else) as a religion, however. In fact, he described to me a group of Zen fisherman he had read about who declined to become monks, or even consider themselves practitioners of Zen, because they believed the most Zen thing would be to just be fishermen and not be Zen at all.

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[1] http://laborstrategies.blogs.com/global_labor_strategies/files/behind_the_great_wall_of_china.pdf

Many people have noted how committed Tim was to his political values, and yet also noted his detachment. That was Tim's Zen aspect. Tim and I would often sum something up in an ersatz koan, like, "Take yourself seriously; but don't take yourself seriously."

When we were working on *Building Bridges*, I suggested that we dedicate it to the memory of our respective parents. Tim was extremely unsentimental, and I wasn't sure he would go for the idea. He paused for a moment and then said, "Yes. People's names should be remembered."

There is little danger that anyone who knew him will forget Tim's.

About the author

Jeremy Brecher, writer and historian, was born and lives in the United States. He has been active in peace, labor, environmental, and other social movements for more than half a century. He is the author of more than a dozen books on labor and social movements and has received five regional Emmy Awards for his documentary film work. He is currently writing about labor and the environment, US war crimes in Iraq and beyond, and responses to the global economic crisis. His next book, *Common preservation in an era of mutual destruction*, presents what he has learned over the past half century about how social movements make social change.

URL for this article

http://groups.google.com/group/interface-articles/web/3Brecher.pdf

"Another world was possible"?
Anti-capitalism in the year 2000

John Charlton

Editor's introduction

In 1999 John Charlton published what has since become a classic, "instant" oral history of the Seattle protests, "Talking Seattle", available online at http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj86/charlton.htm. The article below was written as a follow-up in 2000 but never published. We wanted to include it in Interface *both as a companion piece to the 1999 piece and as a contribution to this issue on "crises, social movements and revolutionary transformation", offering us an unusual chance to look back at ten years of anti—capitalist organising and take stock. [LC]*

Author's introduction, May 2010

The article below, which I wrote in 2000, seems enormously upbeat. It relates in considerable detail what I saw then as the birth pangs of a new many facetted international movement. It saw the demonstration at the World Trade Summit in Seattle in December 1999 as the catalyst which had seemed to bring together a myriad of smaller campaigns. Different genealogies and even contradictory tactics seemed to have entered a trajectory where difference might dissolve into a more coherent approach to the world's big problems. The 2000 Porto Alegre Social Forum seemed a significant if problematic first step.

Exactly a decade on in the spring of 2010 it is at first sight obvious that the project was blown right off course. The optimistic take on the events could not foresee the effects of some seriously important events: Bush's victories, 9/11, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and the Bank crashes.

An Al Gore victory in 2000 might just have made 9/11 less likely and kept the movement's focus on "saving the planet" issues. Bush in the White House surrounded by his gang of Dr Strangelove types had disaster written all over it. And so it turned out. Their vulgar characterisation of muslims and the growing threat to Iraq, certainly contributed to 9/11. Among its impacts was at least a temporary shut-down of anti-capitalist protest.

The count-down to war against Iraq revived activity but in a different form; almost universal anti-war protest producing the biggest demonstrations in modern times. The London demo of March 2003 brought onto the streets whole new constituencies. The reported 2,000,000 on the street for example probably represented a tenth of those exercised by anti-war sentiment. However it is probably in the nature of mass movements that failure to deliver the objective (in this case stopping the war) leads to a degree of despair and demoralisation

especially amongst first time activists. The war itself has been deeply messy for protest. Issues round it have been fragmented. For example the campaigns to defend individual dissenting soldiers, whilst important, do not have the purchase to foster mass involvement. Then a media apparently hostile (in 2003) to the war at large have shifted the focus to patriotic support for 'our boys'. And, not least, the marginalisation of news of the war has made it increasingly difficult to sustain high levels of activity involving large numbers. What has been true for Britain has probably been true elsewhere too, including the USA.

The great bank crisis of autumn 2008 was another moment with potential for producing big protest. The cynical manipulations of the bankers throws light on the workings of the core of the system more sharply than most other issues. Yet, possibly the linkages are too abstract to engage the rage of the masses. Queues of small investors outside banks and building societies did not really excite mass sympathy.

So, more than a year passed without popular protest scaring the bankers and politicians. Indeed the apparent passivity has enabled the politicians to switch the blame for the crisis from a scandalously unjust system to government bale-outs and rising public expenditure. As I write the closing day of the British General Election is underway. The uncertain outcome is overhung by the threat of cuts on a scale never contemplated or undertaken before. They are proposed as the only solution. In other words the mass of the people will have to pay for the iniquities of the ruling elite.

Meanwhile fifteen hundred miles away in Athens tens of thousands of Greek people are massing at Parliament in an attempt to prevent the social democratic government from voting through a massive austerity programme effecting education, health and social services. The ability of the Greek government to push through the measures will impact on governments everywhere when they bring austerity measures to their electorates in the very near future.

We can't gauge whether or not the Greek situation will go forward from protest to rising or what effects it will have on the rest of us but it does confirm an important part of the argument in the 2000 article. Though the issues may change and gather different focuses we are in a period of profound instability in the capitalist system. In 2000 I was optimistically describing a rising struggle and a new movement taking shape. Well, despite the apparent diminution of mass action from 2003 to 2010 the instability has grown more intense. The compelling pressures which drove, say the Cochabamba peasants into societal revolt against the water companies seem to have hit mainland Europe with the Greek crisis. There is no reason to believe that it will not continue.

I brought the 2000 article to an end with the following paragraph:

> The big questions need discussion. Can the capitalist agencies be reformed, indeed can the capitalist system be reformed? What is the agent of change? What organisational forms are appropriate to push the movement forward? Is a coherent international organisation possible or even desirable? What sort of society do people want to live in? These are

all old questions which have long been part of socialist discussion. In recent times at least they have been mostly abstract because a truly mass audience did not exist. *Now they have become real questions in a living movement.*

And now we are in 2010. Sadly the same questions may be more abstract than they were a decade ago. Firstly there is no significant *"living movement."* Neither can we look forward to the international gatherings — demos and conferences — the forums for vital discussions. However that is to assume the continuation of what looking back seems a rather leisurely progress of educational debates — this year in Brazil, next year in Paris and so on. The contrary may be true. The intensity of the capitalist crisis with the promise/threat across the globe of savage cuts in social expenditure may be expressed like Alex Glasgow's famous song, the Socialist ABC:

> "For X, Y, and Zed," my dear daddy said,
> "Will be written on the street barricades."

All kinds of initiatives and organisation can get people to "the barricades". What they do when they get there is a question of a different order. If the authorities fight one kind of solution is needed. If they retreat another is called for. Participants may summon up historical experience to seek answers. What has worked in the past and what has not worked. Then there's the question of how the news and experience is carried to others. And who are the interpreters and who are the carriers?

I finish by offering a tentative lifeline. In the decade since Seattle many thousands in many different countries have participated in a wide variety of movement initiatives. Circumstances have taken most out of action, some perhaps permanently. In a new upsurge many will bring their past experience to bear on present problems. A new argument round the old questions will take place. Different answers will be proposed. The most active and the best informed will seek to convince and win people to their case. We might call them a party. In my view that's the best hope in 2010, as it was in 2000.

"Another world is possible": from Seattle to Porto Alegre (2000)

At the end of January this year a remarkable assembly took place in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre. 3000 delegates from 150 organisations and 120 countries met in the World Social Forum (WSF) backed by 10,000 demonstrators on the streets. They assembled to debate the impact of globalisation, methods of resistance and alternatives to the madness of the market. The WSF was established to stand in sharp contrast to the World Economic Forum which had met annually in Davos, Switzerland for almost twenty years.

The contrasts were indeed sharp. The Davos event was the meeting of sharp suited bankers, financiers, corporate bosses, politicians, representatives of the United Nations and, for the first time, this year, a small cohort of trade union leaders. They met behind police barricades. Their brief was straightforward enough: how to most effectively prosecute the spread of neo-liberal policies globally. This year it carried a fresh nuance: how to achieve that goal whilst evincing social concern. This was a calculated response to the escalation of popular resistance in the year following the collapse of the WTO convention in Seattle in December 1999.

Porto Alegre represented the polar opposite of Davos. It was the child of Seattle, Washington DC, Okinawa, Melbourne, Prague, Nice and the plethora of strikes and community actions which took place across, Latin America, Africa and the Far East in 2000. Though large, boisterous and contentious it needed no policing. It bore the marks of anger, freshness, diversity, rapidly forged alliances and a belligerent self confidence which has thrown the Davos gang on the defensive for the first time in decades.

However whilst all of this must be celebrated the debate at Porto Alegre and the positions which are now emerging from that debate need careful analysis if the movement is truly to progress towards building "another world". The discussion of strategy is still undeveloped, the assessment of the movement's strength tending to be overblown and the impact of events on the rulers somewhat over-estimated.

These are the big questions which the WSF has brought into sharp focus but we must not lose sight of another feature of the event: that it is remarkable that anything on its scale should have even taken place[1].   Only a year and a bit ago it would have seemed a mere pipe-dream.

Out of the nineties

From a radical point of view the 1990s were not an encouraging decade. Globally there were few mass challenges to the capitalist ascendancy. However at a deeper level profound changes were taking place in the consciousness of, at least substantial minorities for which there were a number of sources. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 the Western media celebrated the triumph of capitalism and the death of socialism.

Ten years on the record of triumphant capitalism is looking very tarnished. Large areas of Eastern Europe and Russia have been serial war zones. Privatisation has led to the growth of a system of bandit enterprise fostering only violence and poverty. Aerial bombardment and economic sanctions, the western response, had only created devastation and accelerated the refugee

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[1] Whilst talking to people in Britain about the Social Forum it was striking to note how limited knowledge still is of the rapid escalation globally of resistance to the neo-liberal project. In the important constituency of disillusioned Labour activists, let alone voters there still exists a lack of confidence in the possibility of change.

crisis. In the Middle East the Iraqi population suffered eight years of bombing to protect oil interests and much of Africa was cynically left to starvation and Aids. Latin America looks more and more like the front line in the assault of neo-liberalism. There the states act as clients of the international agencies and the multi-nationals in their determination to accelerate unrestricted market development at the expense of indigenous peoples, small farmers and the working class. The resistance of desperation is met by massive and unrestrained violence reminiscent of 18th and 19th century Europe and North America in the early days of industrial capitalism.

In Europe the election of Labour/Social Democratic Parties has done nothing to halt the drive to neo-liberalism. In fact the contrary is true. Even previously left wing politicians like Clare Short in Britain have become out-front advocates of market solutions to the problem of grinding poverty. Only in France has the process been slowed down and that has not come from the intentions of "socialist" ministers but from the belligerent bloody mindedness of the working class. Everywhere in the liberal democracies the experience has been more authoritarian management and less job security, the demonisation of beggars and refugees and the erosion of public services. Finally, despite the warnings of scientists, the wanton assault on the global environment continued, its consequences increasingly obvious to all in radically shifting weather patterns.

The nineties produced a cocktail of growing disillusionment with conventional politics and more widely with the system at large. There was resistance in many parts of the world throughout the decade and quite substantial at times. The Anti-Poll Tax campaign in Britain (1990), in France the repeated mass strikes of workers (1995, 98, 99), the strikes involving 1 million school students, (1998) and the anti-fascist demonstration of 50,000 in Strasbourg (1997: Wolfreys 1999), several big strikes in the USA (e.g. UPS 1997), mass strikes in Greece (1996, 97 & 98), the Zapatista revolt in Mexico (1994-2000), the bringing down of Suharto in Indonesia (1998) and the Narmada Dam Campaign in India (1998) are just samples. The list of organisations that turned up at Seattle is a formidable testament to this resistance as were the at least 60 supporting events across the world.[2] There were perhaps 100 organisations represented[3] some of which had histories reaching back twenty years. Each had drawn hundreds, sometimes thousands of activists around them protesting one or other of the many crimes of capitalism.

Though the resistance was widespread and numbered thousands it had not become generalised.   Some on the left began to describe the emergence and growth of what they dubbed an 'anti-capitalist mood,' predicting that the

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[2] **Summary of Actions on November 30th 1999 - Some Global Reports,** posted at http://www.freespeech.org/inter. Now online at http://www.elbblickfueralle.de/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/seattle/n30/index.htm. [NB that several online sources cited in 2000 are of course no longer available.]

[3] Among the best known were the Sierra Club, Jubilee 2000, Global Exchange, Drop the Debt, WDM, Greenpeace, Earth First, Rain Forest Network and Students Against the Sweatshops. A very good source for organisations and their agendas at Seattle is Danaher and Burbach 2000.

episodic moments of fight back present in the last decade would ultimately become generalised. It now seems clear that the event in Seattle was the catalyst for the spread and growth of the movement of resistance, which in 2000 would become a genuine anti-capitalist movement.

The meaning of Seattle

Back in December 1999 many observers of the battle of Seattle predicted that there would be an ongoing "Seattle effect." So triumphant was the feeling of those participating and those across the globe who watched, that such predictions could simply have been born of excitement and hope. Indeed some cautious spirits at the time minimised the achievements and counselled care. One Internet correspondent, drawing attention to the alleged reactionary position of labour union leaders said, "we've been here before. I've seen too many false dawns." Twelve months on, it does seem that the optimists were right. In analysing the succession of events taking place in 2000, Seattle must play a central part in explanation. A number of factors combined to give that event its resonance across the world.

There were the numbers participating. Fifty to seventy thousand people converging on that northwest city was itself startling given the logistical problems of travelling there from almost every part of North America and the recent modest history of radical demonstrations in the USA. There was the political and social composition of the participants. It brought together dozens of environmental, ecological, third world debt and social justice campaigns. These were campaigns, which had worked separately for years in pursuit of sometimes quite narrowly defined objectives. In terms of broadcasting the message the presence of campaigners from India, South East Asia, Africa and Latin America ensured that its messages were heard first hand across the planet and not simply via the media however important that might have been.

There were the labour unions. For more than fifty years, in the grip of reactionary business unionism workers were steered away from political protest. The ruling class assault and de-industrialisation had ravaged the membership rolls marginalizing union leaders and drawing them into the critical stance which brought some of them to Seattle to protest the effects of liberal economics. No matter that a substantial chunk of them demonstrating to keep China out of the WTO brought a tinge of economic nationalism with them. Their very presence in large numbers was in itself significant. However the thrilling aspect was the charge by rank and file members through lines of their own stewards to join demonstrators being beaten up by the robocops. This was the conjuncture on everyone's lips.

Perhaps most importantly there was the stunning success of the demonstration in actually preventing the World Trade Organisation carrying out its business. Symbolic it may largely have been, but a victory on the streets over one of the key agents of global capitalism was a moment to be celebrated.

There were also those who argued after Seattle that it was simply another event in a long struggle waged for years by many campaigners. Indeed an Earth Firster speaking at a Conference in New York in April actually argued that Seattle was a disaster to the ecological movement because the focus on it had completely stopped recruitment to his project of creating an alternative and superior society in unspoiled regions of the American west!

Some of his disappointment was understandable. He belonged to a varied cohort of activists who had toiled for years to bring to public notice the multitude of crimes committed by corporations on the global environment and to peasants and workers in the third world. In many ways they could be said to be what stood for opposition to the system in the decades following the collapse of the anti-war movement and the growing obsession with identity politics. Such activists had never given much time to the exploited and oppressed in their own countries. Nevertheless they had often demonstrated resolution and great courage in attempts to prevent the destruction of say giant redwoods in Oregon or areas of natural beauty like the woods round Newbury on the North Downs in England assaulted by motorway developers. So, some activists felt sidelined. However, the evidence is that many more were like the young woman at Seattle who said, "I came to save the turtles and left hating capitalism". She, and people like her were taking a first bold step from fighting at the *sites* of spoliation to fighting the corporate power itself as represented by agencies like the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank.

In "leaving the tree tops", so to speak, protest on these issues was undergoing a qualitative change. Firstly, in terms of those who could take part it became more inclusive. Activism had often required physical fitness, a commitment to direct action, the space in one's life for long term settlement at a site of action and a high probability of arrest. For a street demonstration in an urban centre anyone could participate. Activities could range from locking on, through street theatre to more conventional modes like marches and rallies. Though all could have physical confrontation thrust upon them by the forces of the state no one needed to attend with that as their central presumption.

Secondly, the boundaries between different types of campaign tend to dissolve in the crowd. Even where protesters arrive in separate contingents the very act of meeting with others and sharing a target, both physically and ideologically produces an interaction across those boundaries. This process of interaction is sharply accelerated where the police intervene. Seattle had all of these characteristics the latter one massively heightened by the outrageous response of the police and the city authorities. The photograph of the Lesbian Avengers of Santa Cruz linking arms with hard-hatted Teamsters was one of the most powerful images of Seattle and has most certainly contributed to the ongoing impact of the event in the months which have followed.

A further important factor is the impetus given to the movement by victory. In the urban setting this too is potentially greater than a victory at a site of depredation. Road protest for example may extract concessions from the authorities but at most they are likely to be minor. Since the struggle is likely to

have been long and the participants relatively few even partial victory is likely to have been exhausting. And its local nature is likely to limit its wider effect and power to generate emulation. The halting of the deliberations of the WTO was achieved by massive numbers in a matter of two or three days in the maximum glare of publicity. The beatings by the police and the mass arrests served to generate anger not disappointment. The arrested were heroes not victims. People left Seattle with triumph in their hearts. This was the fuel for moving into further action--the true Seattle effect. They fanned out over America moving within weeks into new coalitions aiming at related or fresh targets.

Varieties of resistance

By the end of 2000 resistance had touched five continents taking a variety of forms (see table 1) reflecting, the local impact of neo-liberal policies and the strengths and weaknesses of specific labour and radical movements.

Big set pieces

First there were the large anti-capitalist demonstrations taking place at Seattle, Chiang Mai (Thailand), Windsor, Prague, Okinawa, Melbourne, Seoul and Nice aimed at capitalist institutions - the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, G8, UNCTAD, the OAS, the EEC Ministers. Of the same character was Millau, which, whilst protesting the prosecution of José Bové and others in a provincial court in France, was understood by those taking part as explicitly targeting the same institutions. In addition to these large events there were several others including the remarkable battle in the Swiss winter at Davos in mid-January, the March demos at Florham Park, New Jersey and New Orleans, the Boston mobilisation against genetic engineering in April, the several May Day 2000 events, and the Hague demonstration at the World Climate summit in November. Closely related were the turnouts for the Republican and Democratic nominating conventions and the anti-Haider demonstration in Vienna.

Eight large demonstrations taking place in the Northern Hemisphere and S11 Melbourne had much in common but also had significant differences, some of which showed important developments in the movement's progress over the year. All were organised by coalitions of many different groups assembled up to three months before the event. All posted web sites and listservs where would-be participants solicited participants, openly communicated intentions, and discussed tactics. All willingly accommodated both direct action initiatives and conventional marches. All to some extent disrupted the events around which they were organised but none achieved the scale of success of Seattle in that respect. All engaged in battles with police forces operating with accumulated intelligence passed on from force to force across national boundaries. In terms of composition all had large numbers of students and young people under 25 though all age groups were strongly represented and thus people of wide previous experience of demonstrations and movements.

It is also possible to note differences in composition and in the issues thrown up by the character of the event. The week of demonstrations against joint IMF-WB meeting in Washington DC in April (A-16) was the first very big explicitly anti-capitalist event to follow Seattle. It was strongly influenced by that event. The first meetings of the assembled coalition took place barely a month after and three months before DC. Discussion of Seattle was a regular feature on the A-16 Lists with topics ranging from the actions of the black bloc (Direct Action), the alleged lack of colour at Seattle,[4] to the involvement of the labour unions.

The event itself was a great success. Around 30,000 people participated on April 16th and perhaps as many again in the events of the week leading up to it. It was smaller than Seattle yet some ten times as big as the 1998 demonstration against the same target (IMF-WB) in the same place. The absence of large cohorts of labour unionists explains the main numerical difference with Seattle though it should also be pointed out that the Washington police Chief luridly talked up the threat of violence beforehand. This probably deterred many sympathisers from attending on the day. After Seattle this factor must always be taken into account and though the growing numbers prepared to defy such threats is immensely impressive it sharply underlines the need for extending the range of activities beyond the set piece mass demonstrations.

This lesson was drawn from another aspect of the DC event. Successful though it was in causing the Conference some disruption and making considerable publicity in the media the activities of the WB-IMF were not halted and neither could they be by any single mass demonstration or even series of them. All capitalist organisations carry on their work daily by other means including small unpublicised meetings and telecommunications facilities. The events in DC probably brought this understanding to all participants. That such activities are largely symbolic and are means to draw people together in thousands is valuable in itself. To actually close down or disrupt functions is an added prize which encourages greater participation. It may also throw the institutions on the defensive where they may demonstrate their essential vulnerability by making apparent concessions to the demonstrators arguments. This is what President Clinton did after Seattle and various officials of the IMF-WB have continued to do so since.

Another debate which surfaced after A-16 was the question of organising methods in general and specifically in relation to the conduct of demonstrations. In "The Vision Thing", Naomi Klein described the new movement as a spider's web, wheel and spoke construction paralleling the structure of the Internet, proposing ongoing decentralisation creating a swarm which may overcome the enemy.[5] One of the strengths of the new movement in North America has been in the nature of the basic unit, or in movement

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[4] Elizabeth Martinez, "Where was the color in Seattle?" Online at
http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/seattle/color.htm and elsewhere.

[5] See Naomi Klein's "The vision thing", published widely in June on the Internet and a critical but friendly response by Sam Ashman in *Socialist Worker,* 5 August, 2000.

parlance, the affinity group which, within broadly agreed parameters, was autonomous. Building an affinity group of like-minded people helped to take demonstrators to DC and subsequently Philadelphia and Los Angeles. It has been a movement building strategy in a country with a history of authoritarian and sectarian leadership on the left in which Maoists were prominent. It had left an alienating mark upon a whole generation of activists many of whom had found their way into environmental and identity politics campaigns from the 1970s to the 1990s.

It is possible that the philosophy underpinning such organisational form - decision by group consensus - could survive relatively unchallenged in discussion circles such as were common in the feminist and gay movements and even perhaps in numerically small scale actions like defending redwoods. It is however decidedly questionable whether it could stand up for long the rigours imposed by mass demonstrations. There instant decisions are required dictated not by some movement general but by ebbs and flows created by the unexpected or unpredictable. The state authorities might change a conference venue, change a means for delegates to get access or brutally attack a section of a march. The autonomous affinity group may be paralysed by indecision or some of its members will seize the initiative 'imposing' their leadership for good or ill. Such a situation occured in DC where groups were pre-assigned highway junctions to block. When a particular action became redundant by an act of the Chief of Police the group occupying it was thrown into confusion. Half were led off to a more useful site.   Half stayed because that was what had been previously agreed. Ceding the overview to the authorities and the facility to change direction quickly cannot make sense.

In an even more extreme version of individual autonomy S11 (Melbourne) activists have been debating on the Internet the role of demonstration stewards. Some condemn stewards as 'demo police' and threaten to attack them physically. Such views completely ignore the value of integrated and well conducted demonstrations. Others have argued for pre-elected stewards. Indeed the argument for stewards who have authority to take decisions according to the circumstances seems essential to the successful conduct of demonstrations. The big European events have moved with more assurance in these areas due to more than one factor. At Nice the massive attendance of trade unionists from several countries ensured that the demonstration would be amply stewarded and largely orderly and, as such quite menacing to the authorities. Participants remarked on the invisibility of the police on the large December 7th demonstration. At Prague the collaboration of two big blocks, the IS Tendency and the Italian Ya Basta group played a part in conducting militant but disciplined assaults on the respective conference centre. For those who participated in these activities internal discipline ensured a minimum of casualties from excessive police violence.

At Windsor, Ontario in early June 5000 demonstrated against a meeting of the Organisation of American States which activists saw as a further attempt to drive the neo-liberal agenda across the Americas. Canadian labour was involved

with a big demonstration focussing upon NAFTA issues, which was followed by a direct action attempt to close down the meeting. Protesters were treated to heavy, even savage policing with many arrests and threats of imprisonment against organisers. The organisation question was again to the fore. At a certain point the direct action section was isolated and in serious danger of being smashed by superior police forces with the certainty of mass arrests. The socialist group intervened conducting a "spontaneous" debate successfully persuading them to abandon their action and join the main march. Avoiding a "massacre" meant avoiding likely demoralisation. People left feeling that the whole event had been a great success.[6] Another important feature of the Windsor event was the contingents from Central and South America which helped to strengthen links between anti-capitalist protesters in the North and those on the sharpest end of neo-liberal policies in the global South.

The demonstrations in Philadelphia and Los Angeles at the Presidential nominating conventions both continued to build the new movement.   They were clearly hybrids. They included education, welfare, tax and political process reformers, campaigners against the death penalty as well as the "Seattle constituency" attacking corporate America for its scant concern for environment, ecology of the planet, indigenous peoples and exploited labour. Both events were organised by coalitions of activists hostile to corporate America's values and practices but crucially the scale of protest and the composition of protesters would not have happened without the galvanising experience at Seattle six months

They helped to keep momentum going, "linking the nooks and crannies" (Brecher et al. 2000) after A-16, bringing more people into the movement. The coalitions formed to organise the days of demonstrations again drew people from a wide geographical area especially important for the West Coast where the August event was the first mass activity since Seattle. The turnouts at both, of over 20,000, disappointed some activists but they were nevertheless impressive confirmations of the upward trajectory of the new movement. Both may have suffered from difficulties of maintaining campus organisation well beyond the end of the summer semester. And there was also the expected reluctance of national trades union leaders to risk bringing their members especially to the Democratic Convention. Already Ralph Nader was speaking to union members and achieving his first serious hearing after thirty years of campaigning. Damage to the Gore campaign was a primary consideration. Nevertheless many union locals did support the demonstrations.

Perhaps the best measure of change on the ground post Seattle comes from comparing anti-convention demonstrations in 2000 with those in the past. They were incomparably larger than any since Chicago 1968 and only the Republican Convention in Detroit in 1980 (Reagan's nomination) had brought substantial numbers on to the streets at all since then. However the biggest achievement of the rolling movement in the US was the Ralph Nader Campaign.

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[6] Personal discussion with Canadian activists, July 2000.

The vote he attracted of 2,750,000 was impressive considering the degree of hostility he engendered among Gore activists. At the time of writing the campaigns were moving on into 2001 with a first stop at the Presidential Inauguration in January, a marvellous opportunity to unite on the streets the active left including disappointed Gore supporters.

From the end of June the focus of protest widened geographically from North America to Europe, Asia and Australasia. "Seattle on the Tarn" was how the remote French town of Millau was referred to when 60,000 people travelled from across France and beyond to protest the trial of local farmers for dismantling the town's McDonald's. There were two days of exciting debate on globalisation and the means for defeating a system, "where people are sacrificed to the interests of the giant companies. It means freedom is destroyed in the interests of money." [7] The scale of the protest in Millau was a strong affirmation that the new movement had taken root in Europe too. The event's success provided inspiration and impetus for the subsequent European demonstration in Prague and Nice.

In early September the World Economic Forum's Asia-Pacific Summit met in Melbourne. This was the first test for the anti-capitalist movement in Australia. To the surprise of even some of the organisers 20,000 people turned up. It was overwhelmingly young (14-24) including droves of high school students who walked out of school. Only three Australian unions endorsed the action, some union leaders actively counselling their members not to join in. Nevertheless many rank and file unionists did join the protest. Evidence has emerged since (Barrett 2000) of a highly orchestrated politician-police-media conspiracy to undermine the protest by unsubstantiated allegations of intended violence by protesters. It was the biggest turn out organised by the far left in Australia for a generation.[8]

Anti-capitalist protest spread to Japan and South Korea in July and November. The G8 countries met in Okinawa in late July. Despite immense difficulties in travel and high intensity security 10,000 demonstrated against neo-liberalism and the continued occupation of the island by American forces. In November 10,000 turned out against the meeting of the Asia-Europe summit. Led by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions the demonstrators faced off the strongest and most violent security presence of any of the set piece actions in the year. 10,000 demonstrators were ringed by an armed cordon of 30,000 soldiers and police. However both events underline most strongly the degree to which the new anti-capitalist movement has relentlessly targetted every public appearance of the agencies seen to be running the globalisation project.

The first announcement of an event in Prague in September was made on the Internet in mid-May. From the start it was seen in Europe as a magnet for anti-capitalist activists. It was accessible from most parts of the continent. It was in

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[7] P McGarr in *Socialist Worker*, 8 July, 2000.

[8] Information on S11 supplied by David Glanz of the Australian ISO.

Eastern Europe giving an opportunity to check the penetration of anti-capitalist ideas in the former Stalinist sphere where in the wake of the fall of the BerlinWall capitalism and the market had been hailed as the great hope.   The IMF and WB went to Prague to wave the flag of neo-liberalism at a moment when enthusiasm for the project was in serious decline.

Demonstrators went to Prague from every country in Europe and from Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Columbia, Nicaragua, India, Thailand, Canada and the USA. Its international flavour was its most distinguishing feature. Large contingents travelled from Germany, Greece, France, Italy, the UK and Poland. Despite a massive harassment at border check points and the airport 20,000 people got to the centre of Prague participating in a series of disciplined illegal marches, threatened the closure of the conference centre and held three counter conferences. Sean, from Newcastle, said "I was inspired by the internationalism, German, French, Italian, Polish, Turkish flying in from all angles. All for the same cause"[9] despite the crude brutality of the Czech police.

Alice from INPEG reported !Our medical volunteers gave basic help to 350-400 people in the streets. Most of them had broken noses, loss of hearing, unconsciousness, injuries of face, head, neck, arms, breast, leg, complications from tear gas or shock."[10] The organisation and discipline in the face of such attacks marked a triumph of co-operation between often opposed political and human rights organisations. The gathering was weak on official trade union representation though from most countries there were many active trade unionists often representing their local branches. Boris Kargarlitsky (2000) saw Prague as a turning point. "The ultra left groups unexpectedly proved capable of not just uniting and working together on a European scale but showed that masses of young people are once again pouring into their ranks."

Many of the activists travelling to Prague went to Nice in December. Many like Kristin from Norway went "to show I am against EU policies. I am against privatisation and the undemocratic policies. They put profit before people. I want to unite with other people who think like me. I want to be part of this movement, the movement of hope and change." [11] Nice was a fantastic ending to the year of anti-capitalist activity. Endorsed by the CGT in France and most of the other European trades unions it was likely to be big despite it being held in the depths of winter. Readily accessible to much of Europe, activists whetted their lips in anticipation. The top European politicians were heading to Nice with two big agendas: to extend the EEU to include much of Eastern Europe and Turkey and to make easier the prosecution of neo-liberal policies throughout the area. In the event over 100,000 people travelled to Nice creating a monster demonstration international and impressive. Peter from Norwich saw "big delegations from Spain, Portugal, France, smaller size ones from Turkey, Greece" and Jake from Manchester, added "Slovenians, a Kurdish contingent,

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[9] Sean K, Newcastle delegation, personal interview.

[10] Alice, INPEG, published on a16-international-planning@egroups.com

[11] Kristin, Norway, personal interview, 12/12/2000.

several Danish and Norwegian banners, from the large German unions and a contingent of Basques."[12]

The demonstrators did not succeed in stopping the ministerial deliberations. Clearly 100,000 demonstrators could have blocked the Conference Centre making a coherent meeting impossible. That is what a section of the demonstration wished to do. Despite repeated humiliations at the hands of government, and, in the French case, a recent record of impressive fight back, it was a step too far for trade union bureaucracies and the rank and file was not yet ready to break ranks. The direct action contingents were unable to do it alone. Indeed questions were raised about a strategy which separated 7-8000 of the most militant off from the massed ranks of the unions the following day to conduct a battle with the CRS in isolation. This is not a criticism of those who stumbled through the tear gas and batons to carry on the fight but of pre-event strategic discussion. Kevin from Bristol remarked "we have to find a way of fusing the two bits of the anti-capitalist movement the direct action people and the workers in the unions. Anything else just plays in to the hands of the union bosses and the police."[13]

Nevertheless the whole event was a striking success. Participants were of one voice in describing the inspiring nature of it,. The sight of massed ranks of demonstrators from many countries in the same march with the same target was quite unprecedented certainly in modern times. The anti-capitalist posters, banners and chants taken up by tens of thousands of people in unison would not be forgotten. Peter from Norwich, wrote, a week afterwards, "the feeling of solidarity, fraternity and internationalism still makes my stomach turn with excitement. I really feel part of a growing, if yet still small movement. But I feel the potential to grow especially if everyone from across Europe took that spirit back home to their workmates, their campus, their community."[14]

A close relation of the anti-capitalist set piece demonstrations was the enormous anti-fascist mobilisation in Vienna in January 2000. Around 250,000 people descended on Vienna in the bitter cold of winter. One small incident illustrates Seattle's potency. A young animal rights activist said that on the day the fascists entered the government he charged round to the Freedom Party's HQ with a bunch of friends. They occupied the office. He climbed onto the roof waving a banner. TV cameras gave instant publicity. That evening 20,000 people teemed into the Bauhausplatz calling for and to fascist participation in government. Within 24 hours organisations were coming together to plan further action. He claimed that Seattle had been an inspiration and a model for direct action. There would have been a massive anti-fascist protest without Seattle having taken place. But the event in Seattle encouraged the activists from all over Europe who teemed into Austria. Many would travel on to Millau, Prague and Nice.

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[12] Peter, Norwich and Jake, Manchester, personal interviews, 13/12/2000.

[13]   Kevin, Bristol, personal interview, 10/12/2000.

[14]   Peter, Norwich, personal interview, 13/12/2000.

Finally there is a strong argument for including the revolution in Serbia as part of the European popular upsurge. Though its obvious target was the dictatorship of Milosevic, it was a mass uprising involving tens of thousands of working people. Its impulses went much deeper than the removal of one man. Workers, alienated by years of increasingly authoritarian management and declining living standards broadened their attack to include their factory bosses as well as their political ones. Another telling feature of the uprising was the absence of crude nationalist sentiment so much part of the Balkans landscape in the 1990s. Interestingly a core of them found their way to Nice in December to join that protest.

Resistance on the sharp end

The development of resistance to the assaults of capitalism in North America and Western Europe and Australia is very impressive indeed. Even so with some still rare exceptions only a tiny minority have become activated.   There are several parts of the "global south" where whole societies are in convulsion. General or mass strikes have occurred in Argentina, Columbia, Ecuador, Bolivia and Honduras in Latin America, in Nigeria and Benin in Africa and across the Indian sub-continent and China. There have been countless large strikes and popular protests in many other countries against the impositions of the international agencies. A conservative estimate suggests that there cannot have been less than 100 million people venting their fury with the results of neo-liberal agendas. They have acted with desperate bravery in the face of the unimaginable brutality of death squads, regular army and police. The scale of revolt in some places has literally embraced all but those state forces and their lackeys dependent upon them for their own survival.

Latin America has born the brunt of the neo-liberal attempt to shape the world in its own image. The agenda of privatisation and de-regulation run right back to the eighties increasing poverty, child mortality and illiteracy in its bloody wake. Resistance goes back a long way too sharpening in the nineties with the Zapatista rebellion in Mexico, the Landless Rural Workers' Movement in Brazil, guerrilla armies in Columbia and provincial rebellions in Argentina. They were largely rural struggles in a continent where three quarters of the population live in cities. But in the second half of the nineties the struggle became urban too. Massive strikes and blockades took place between 1996 and 1999 in Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay, Columbia, Ecuador and Mexico.[15]

An excellent example has been the situation in Bolivia[16], by no means resolved at the time of writing. In January 2000 the country was hit by the Structural Adjustment Programme's demand for water privatisation. Workers with incomes of less than $100 per month faced an immediate price hike of $20. In

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[15] Selfa 2000 examines the background critically.

[16] Material on Bolivia garnered from 1world media site, www.1worldcommunication.org

the Cochabamba region incomes had already been forced down by the Bolivian government's complicity in the zero coca policy of the Clinton administration an extension of Plan Columbia.

The population simply came out of their homes, blockaded roads, marched on administration buildings, surrounded and occupied multi-national company facilities and university campuses and struck demanding the termination of the privatisation scheme. The forces of the state reacted with bloody assaults on the demonstrators killing and wounding large numbers of protestors. In April the government appeared to cave in claiming to have removed the Bechtel Corporation of America's subsidiary, the Anglo-Italian company International Water Ltd / Edison SpA, from its claim on the country's water supply. Oscar Oliviera the protest leader said, "For the first time in the history of Bolivia we have told the government 'no' and made them back off their destructive schemes for privatisation of our resources."

The success of the mass campaign fed into a new summer/autumn protest on several fronts. The first was against the Government's plan to build three military bases in the Cochabamba Province with the assistance of a $1.6 billion loan from the US Government allegedly to police the drug traffic but instantly spotted by the inhabitants as a response to their successful mass campaign. They returned to the streets employing the same tactics as previously. This campaign dovetailed with strike actions by teachers and doctors for pay increases and proper sourcing of education and health care against cuts in public services imposed by the SAP of the IMF. Again the government was forced to make concessions in both areas by the sheer determination in the face of intimidation and violence.

In Argentina resistance has also been on a mass scale involving similar tactics to those in Bolivia. Here the impetus to the struggle has been a mixture of opposition to the Government's new labour laws, cuts in social security and wage cuts all a condition of an IMF $7.2 billion stand by credit. Strikes started in December 1999 followed by mass demonstrations in April and May which included roadblocks in rural areas and a 24-hour General Strike in June involving more than 7 million workers. In August teachers went on national strike against a 12% pay cut. The unrest festered on through the autumn culminating in a further General Strike at the end of November when factory workers blockaded motorways round Buenos Aires forcing concessions from the government.

There was also militant action involving millions in Honduras, Paraguay, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil and Columbia, the latter in the front line of US policy to tame the rising anger of the peoples of Latin America. Under the mask of dealing with the traffic in drugs the US administration is throwing money into re-tooling the military to shore up the corrupt regimes which are becoming increasingly isolated as they conduct warfare on all fronts against their own populations. What is truly remarkable is the level of resistance breaking out over the continent despite suffering the double assault of sharpening poverty and state violence.

So far the resistance movements show massive courage but few signs of developing a co-ordinated political leadership which can challenge the state coherently to maximise the gains made by protest. The Zapatistas showed enormous bravery and verve in leading the Continent's new resistance in 1994. They became a shining example to the oppressed across the continent. They have remained so but the strategy they have employed has created for them a stalemate where they face integration through compromise or perhaps annihiliation at the hands of the Mexican military.

Mike Gonzalez (2000) accurately expresses the impasse in their evasion of the question of power. It is a curious 'quality' in a revolutionary organisation that it does not seek power. Their demands for land and the integrity of indigenous cultures are correct, as is their suspicion of the Mexican state. Yet "there is no space outside the system - globalisation does not tolerate free territories". In failing to appeal to the Mexican workers they confirm their isolation and their example offers nothing beyond courage and defiance to their brothers and sisters elsewhere.

The electoral road in most countries is plagued by authoritarian constitutions and violence. In Venezuela Hugo Chavez, a social democrat who claims affinity with Fidel Castro, got an overwhelming endorsement in the July 2000 Presidential election. In terms of a firm stand against the policies of the global institutions to say nothing of the US the result should be taken with extreme caution[17] but as a confirmation of a leftward shift in the Latin American population it was very positive. In the same vein can be seen the success of the Workers' Party in Brazil in October which won office in 17 of the 56 biggest municipalities including the financial capital, Sao Paulo. In September a national referendum organised by Jubilee 2000 and its affiliates saw nearly six million people vote against Brazil continuing its current (austerity) arrangements with the IMF.

Africa in 2000 saw a one-day General Strike in South Africa in May against "poverty, joblessness and the greed of capitalism" and a courageous electoral campaign against Mugabe in Zimbabwe, but the most significant event was the one-week General Strike in Nigeria in June. A steep oil price rise was announced as part of an IMF structural adjustment package (removing all state subsidies). The main TU federation called a strike. A massive response brought most urban centres to a total halt enforcing a retreat on the reformist government of Obasanju. [18] The Nigerian action spread northwards to Benin where a one-day general strike took place on 12 June.

Finally in this survey India was wracked by strikes throughout the year, the largest by power workers, starting in January in Uttar Pradesh.   The year ended

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[17] In December Chavez planned to hold a referendum the effects of which would be to draft a new labour law which would destroy freedom of association and collective bargaining replacing the independent trade unions with a government sponsored institution.

[18] Material on Nigeria, India, Benin and many other countries at http://x21.org/s26/struggles/nigeria.htm and also at www.labourstart.org

with a one day national strike on December 12th. All were in opposition to the government's plan to privatise electricity supply as "required" by the IMF.[19]

The electoral route

Last year was marked by strong left electoral activity in Britain and the United States.   In the former there were campaigns for the London Assembly, the launching of the Socialist Alliance and two Parliamentary By-Election and several local election contests in England and Scotland. The Socialist Alliance tapped a well of enthusiasm for left unity bringing together previously hostile groups and re-invigorating many independent left-wingers. In most contests socialist candidates to the left of Labour reached the 5% required to save a deposit, a unique situation in the past fifty years.

In the USA Ralph Nader prosecuted the most formidable Presidential campaign from the left in modern time taking over 2,750,000 votes across America with high concentrations in California. Over 77,000 people attended the super-rallies including 10,000 plus in Boston, New York, Chicago, Washington DC, Milwaukee and SF.[20]. Parts of the same coalitions, which had organised for Seattle, Washington DC, Philadelphia and Los Angeles, came together to campaign for Nader whose central focus in his propagandas was the crimes of corporate America.

None of this could have occurred without the Seattle effect and, at the Campaign's end, radical Americans were left with their best opportunity for decades to create a left wing force. A prominent Green activist Ted Glick, at the end of the year (2000) wrote, "The fact is that the work we have been doing over the past year has opened up concrete possibilities to dramatically increase our ranks and strengthen our various organisations. This is true whether it be the Greens, other third party groups, student groups, non-violent direct action groups, other community organisations or grass roots trade unions". This is the optimistic tone of many North American Internet interventions following the events of the year.

These activities provide ample evidence of the presence of an established and growing mood of hostility to both neo-liberalism and its policy effects and the established political process. In America to the votes won by the Nader campaign must be added the ongoing abstention of nearly 50% of eligible votes in Presidential and congressional elections whilst in Britain abstention appeared to be a growing feature with less than 50% voting in the London elections and only 30% in the three by-elections fought in the Autumn. When we look at the manifestations of anti-capitalism understanding the nature of this "mood" is important because such a mood is clearly the pre-requisite for anti-capitalist action.

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[19]   The excellent Labour Start site www.labourstart.org is a source of strike reports from everywhere in the world.

[20]   372,598 votes in Cal. M Eisenscher, "The Greening of America", LLNews@igc.topica.com

The anti-capitalist mood

The phrase, the anti-capitalist mood was coined in Britain late in 1999 to attempt to sum up the political temperature of a country where activists were aware of a shift to the left in attitudes measured by an accumulation of little actions against management authoritarianism in the work place, small local community protests against cuts in services and a few larger assaults upon bigger targets like the Stock Exchange in June 1999, opinion polls on social issues, and increases in abstention rates in by-elections. The presumption was that such activity represented a growth in antagonism to the continued push to neo-liberalism by the government, employers and local councils. The hope was that from such a mood would come further sporadic actions and ultimately perhaps some large ones!

Although the idea encapsulated the situation in Britain there was evidence of a similar mood change taking place internationally. Naomi Klein in *No Logo* cites countless examples from the guerrilla art (citizen art) assault on advertising performed by Adbusters, (her brilliant phrase is "semiotic Robin Hoods"), brand boycotts, the anti-sweat shop campaigns in North America and Reclaim the Streets whilst starting in Britain went international to Sydney, Helsinki and Tel Aviv. In Poland there are strong signs of an anti-capitalist mood which has turned into militant action. In December nurses occupied the Ministry of Health and other workers came in busloads to bring supplies and show solidarity. Groups went out to the border crossings blocking them and the railway line between Warsaw and Berlin. They have argued for a Tobin Tax (stock exchange transactions), "they don't tax the rich". Young Poles had flocked to Prague in September and a Solidarity coach went to Nice. The anti-capitalist mood and growing militancy in Poland is especially important as it demonstrates the collapse of illusions in the benefits of market capitalism only a decade after the fall of Stalinist regimes. Especially dramatic are the references to "thieving privatisation" and the call for renationalising the threatened Daewoo car plant.[21]

In Spain after years of considerable passivity there has been a revival in activity. In the Spring, Jubilee 2000 organised a popular referendum on the Debt. Committees were formed all over the country. 10,000 people manned tables in city and town squares and more than a million people cast their votes. 800 from Barcelona travelled to Prague. Three to four thousand went to Nice largely on coaches organised by the unions with contingents from Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, Galicia and the Basque country.[22]

In Britain there has been a subtle mood change. An Edinburgh worker spoke of "a challenge to the way capitalism penetrates every day life. It happens in little ways at work and shows up in the collapse of the Labour vote in elections. So

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[21]   Information on Poland supplied by Andy Z, of Pracownicza Democrakracja.

[22]   Information suppled by Andy, D, Izquierda Revolucionara.

far each little fight is cheered from the sidelines."[23] Roger from London says, "the recovery of confidence after the Thatcher years is only just beginning. There's a lot of cynicism expressed with petty discipline and management scams. The Principal gives himself a £5000 bonus and we're held at below inflation increases. 'They're all bloody mad,' is a popular phrase. Union membership is rising. Everyone wants to be in. There are tiny victories and a lot of sympathy for those who do fight."[24]

That sense of alienation deepened in the autumn as evidenced by the enormous public support for the truck drivers' blockades of the oil refineries. It seems likely that working class support was relatively indifferent to the issue of fuel tax but was enthusiastic about kicking the government for its repeated failure to meet social need. Closely following on the fuel crisis came the Hatfield railway disaster and the instant defensive reaction of the Government and privatised rail companies. Smelling a hostile public reaction Rail Track virtually closed the entire network to engage in extensive track renewal, an action that in it exposed privatisation a policy which demonstrably placed dividends before the safety of passengers. The railway crisis was itself intensified by the severe autumn floods which for the first time brought the subject of global warming onto to everyone's lips. People queued up to sign petitions calling for nationalisation without compensation. Opinion polls showed enormous majorities for re-nationalisation. In the 1980's privatisation had been introduced with hardly a whimper of opposition.

Yet Britain has had no Seattle or Nice. The battering received by workers during the long Tory years has retarded a recovery in confidence which has been further handicapped by a trade union leadership demonstrating almost blind loyalty to the Blair government. In many case that leadership had gone to the extreme of disciplining rank and file members for fighting the attacks of their bosses. UNISON with one of the most "left" leaderships had been the worst offender.

Nevertheless across Britain victims of neo-liberalism have fought back. *Socialist Worker*[25] has documented that record weekly. The biggest single event was certainly the Rover demonstration of 100,000 in Birmingham in March. There were also demonstrations of 25,000 students in November, 6000 on the Cambridge Two march in January, 20,000 on the London Gay Pride March in June and 10,000 in Brighton in July, 7000 in London for the Defend the Asylum Seekers demo in June and 1200 on the same issue in Glasgow. However, important as these large events were, a very strong feature of the year were the number of small community and industrial actions including positive strike votes, victories for the left at union conferences and the stunning victory of the left candidate Mark Serwotka in the civil service General Secretary

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[23] Willie B, Edinburgh, personal interview 10/12/2000.

[24] Roger C, West London, personal interview. 10/12/2000.

[25] *Socialist Worker* has carried an unbeatable record of strikes and demonstrations in Britain weekly since 1968.

election. Table 2 shows over 450 such episodes in 130 different places. Given the limits of the papers' coverage this is probably only the tip of a large iceberg, or put slightly differently, of hundreds of little icebergs. In all probability tens of thousands of people have taken part in actions over the year. Overwhelmingly the community actions were attacks on councils for cuts and privatisation of facilities.

The industrial conflicts were similarly concerned with privatisation of council services and changes in working arrangements which would lead to increased hours for less money. What it all seems to indicate is a growing number of people prepared to fight against the serial attacks of government, employer and council neo-liberal agendas. Finally, a further important feature of these struggles is that small scale they So far as it is possible to follow the results of action, it seems that militant community actions have usually had a positive outcome. Councils are particularly vulnerable to sustained community pressure. This is also true of councils as employers but the best outcomes come from the combination of workplace and community pressures.

Typical was the battle in Newcastle. The City Council, already a by word for cuts in services, introduced a glossy report called *Growing for Growth* in May. Its central policy was to demolish 7000 houses in the West End of the city and to include in a redevelopment programme the construction of luxury flats. A related policy proposed the building of a motor-way link northwards to link up with the highways to the Airport. The policies were released without any consultation with residents. There was an immediate and extensive revolt with a series of mass meetings and demonstrations culminating in a meeting of 500 people at the Town Hall. At the time of writing the Council was trimming the policy pushed onto the defensive by the popular revolt. A similar struggle appeared to be underway in Hackney in London where public sector workers had carried on a persistent guerrilla action against the council in defence of their jobs and working conditions. Community and workers were united.

On the industrial front the best example was the Dudley Hospital Workers who struck from September against privatisation of part of the service. By the end of the year they had completed 56 days of strike action including a three week stoppage over Xmas. The year ended in Britain with a revolt by Vauxhall Workers against the closure of the Luton factory. Enraged the workers charged into the corporate HQ demanding explanations. They had an immediate response from GM workers in Europe who organised a sympathy strike. The depth of the anger in Luton is indicated by the fact that when a small number of Socialist Worker sellers proposed an instantaneous march through town over 500 workers and their families joined in. It is too early to say whether the seedbed produced by these hundreds of micro actions can grow into a new mass movement but the level of disillusionment is now such that it would be no surprise if it did.

Porto Alegre: World Social Forum

The event in Brazil represented something quite different from the actions which preceded it. Though the WSF was established to counterpose social values to those represented by the Davos gang it did not rely on that event to pull together its participants. It chose its location and set its own agenda. The list of organisations attending and affiliating to its core statement is massive, running to several hundred. It includes bodies from all continents with a preponderance of Latin Americans.

What's new: movement or movements?

Old left, students and workers

Given Seattle a proliferation of activities in North America would not have been surprising. It is there where we can see the best confirmation of a new movement in being. Since Seattle there have been four large events and innumerable smaller ones culminating in the enormous Ralph Nader election campaign. On the basis of reported numbers there must now be well over 50,000 anti-capitalist activists in the USA and Canada. The turn to street demonstrations may just have made existing protestors more visible but there is plenty of evidence of a new activist spirit especially, though not exclusively on campuses throughout America.

An excellent report compiled by Bhumika Muchhala (2000) contains depth interviews with fifty student activists. There are some very interesting features. 64% of the respondents are under 22 and overwhelmingly new to action though like the 24% under 27, a number cited parent activists as major influences.[26] There is an enormous geographical spread from New York to Florida, Baltimore to San Francisco, Wisconsin to New Mexico, Louisiana to Chicago, Vermont to Seattle and every one of the 50 cited membership of big campaigns: United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC), 180/Movement for Democracy and Education (180/MDE) and Student Alliance to Reform Corporations (STARC).

Many come from Ivy League Colleges and 52% from families with incomes of over $60,000 (£45,000) per year. Another survey reported that 46% of freshmen had participated in political activity this year (Meatto 2000). The involvement of substantial numbers of students from the middle class is to be celebrated. Firstly it speaks of the growth of a new mass radical movement when the offspring of society's better off strata militantly express their alienation in considerable numbers. They were the backbone of the Anti-War Movement a generation ago. Secondly the arrival in radical politics of a new generation of students brings time and energy to the tasks in hand. Indeed students are essential to building organisation in all fields. Successful mass movements need students in trainloads!

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[26] This confirms evidence offered in "Talking Seattle", p 14-15.

There were those who saw the celebrated unity of labour and environmentalists as a temporary episode. It would dissolve as union bureaucrats reasserted their traditional hold on rank and file workers, especially in a Presidential year. To an extent such fears were born out. Union leaders took 10,000 members to DC three days *before* April 16th expressly to protest China's entry to the WTO. Leaders were also reluctant to have their members involved in the Philadelphia and Los Angeles protests and there were no national endorsements for the Nader campaign.   But this was by no means the end of the story.

For A16 the AFL-CIO produced a last minute endorsement too late to affect the attendance of union members but enough to indicate the pressure they are under to be part of the campaigns against the institutions of capitalism. This was a far distance from the arrogant postures of union leaders of previous generations. The reason is clear. Union members want to be involved and throughout the year union locals have endorsed and participated in most of the militant actions. The relationship is definitely two-way. Kaiser Aluminum workers at Tacoma expressly invited Seattle activists to join their picket line in the summer. Similar relationships were developed in many local strike actions such as in the successful action for union recognition by Minneapolis hotel workers in August. In Tucson, Arizona in September union members from Teamsters, Machinists and communications workers joined Arizona Alliance for Economic Justice, Earth First and the Students Against Sweatshops in picketing the National Law Centre, a principal advocate of the extension of the NAFTA Agreement.

The United Students Against Sweatshops is in the forefront of promoting movement-labour union unity. Over 200 chapters were formed during 2000. In many cases campus struggles moved from pressurising College government over investments in companies outrageously exploiting labour in the third world to the exploitation of workers on campus. Close relationships have been forged with a number of unions including the Teamsters and the needlework and garment trades (Featherstone 2000).

A further encouraging feature of the new movement is the manner in which it has given new life to older radicals. The Internet interviews starting with "Talking Seattle" have continued throughout the year with many new ones being added. Several people talk of soldiering on through the decades after Vietnam not getting very far.

Kay from Baltimore is fairly typical of this constituency. As a teen-ager she marched on Washington with Martin Luther King in 1963, initially supported the War in Vietnam but then became a fierce opponent. Always a union member she became increasingly interested in environmental issues though a low-key activist. Energised by Seattle she pitched herself into organising for DC last April following that up with Philadelphia in July. She says, "the US has too much power, has nuclear weapons and makes decisions about the whole world. (It) is a capitalist country that does not provide for the poor,   its children or its sick and elderly...(It is) a shallow materialistic society..has capital punishment and has made prison an industry...Changing society is not easy...progress is

incremental and slow.. The struggle continues." [27] These are sentiments echoed by many including the young people in Muchhala's survey.

The Internet

The media's focus on Seattle as the "first mass action organised on the Internet" WAS wrong on two counts. The first to employ the new device were the Zapatistas. Gonzalez (2000: 72) wrote "the Zapatistas...have used the internet as a free communications highway... The US military who generated this many-branched information super-highway to facilitate internal communication can hardly have intended it to be used to generate solidarity for an armed struggle in an isolated redoubt in southern Mexico".

In the pre-and post-Seattle movement the Internet clearly played a part in developing rapid communications between actions. On the other hand the movement has not been built on the Internet. Coalition minutes published there indicate the primacy of traditional methods of building: regular meetings, sub division of organising functions, street and project (estates) leafleting, letter writing to the press and individual contact work. Where the Internet was valuable was twofold. It generated a sense of excitement and was an important means for remotely situated people to get in touch with the campaigns.

Beyond North America the situation is much less clear. Very many fewer people have Internet access. This is especially true beyond Western Europe. However it is indisputable that some people in movements everywhere will have access. Perhaps a good analogy is the role of the *Northern Star* in the 19th century Chartist movement. The arrival of the paper was eagerly awaited in towns and villages. On arrival a copy would be taken off to a pub where a literate worker would read the copy aloud to his mates. Certainly today news of anti-capitalist events travels quickly across the world.

The enemy

There was a fashion in the nineties to argue that with the advance of globalisation the national state was bound for the dustbin of history. The sudden growth and impact of the anti-capitalist movement has sharply demonstrated the fallacy in that argument. What is true is that the autonomy of the national state has been restricted by the march of multi national corporations and the growing profile of the global agencies of capitalism the IMF, WB and WTO.[28] Nevertheless these agencies cannot operate without the national state and the likelihood is that they may become more, not less dependent upon its facilities.

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[27] Kay D, Baltimore, personal interview.

[28] It is also worth noting that as early as 1967 parts of the British press were shocked by the news that an IMF loan to the Harold Wilson government was conditional on making cuts in public expenditure.

Take the Structural Adjustment Programmes in the "global south". The grass roots rebellion in Bolivia has raised fundamental questions involving the legitimacy of both agencies and states. The United States as the regional super power requires stability for the business interests of its corporations. The IMF-WB disposes of loans to debtor governments with conditions aimed at prosecuting the neo-liberal agenda. Neither the US nor the agencies can themselves push the agenda through on the ground. That is the responsibility of the national state. That state may try political means or force. The Bolivian government tried to achieve legitimacy by pushing the water privatisation bill through the Assembly then met the massive opposition in the streets by violence thus sacrificing any legitimacy it might have had. Short of an invasion with the risk of a Vietnam situation the US government must give the Bolivian government the space to attempt a compromise which must mean trimming the IMF's neo-liberal programme. The growth of a global resistance movement means that that the dilemmas are constantly repeated. Walden Bello (2001) puts it like this: "a classic crisis of legitimacy has overtaken the key institutions of global governance."

Seattle brought some of their leading personnel, like Michael Moore and James Wolfensohn, Horst Kohler and Stanley Fischer out of the shadows. Under pressure they have shifted their rhetoric. They have evinced concern for the growth of poverty. They have renamed the SAPs the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), though the substance has remained exactly the same: "growth via deregulation and liberalisation of trade" (Bello 2001). Despite big claims of reducing the debt there has been virtually no movement in the year 2000 from the agencies or the governments which stand behind them. The debacle of the Climate Change Conference at The Hague in November, which achieved nothing at a moment when the apparent results of global warming dramatically entered the experience of masses of people across the world, simply deepened popular cynicism with the antics of their rulers.

The corporations themselves have become active in defending their neo-liberal agendas. The American writer Bill Berkowitz (2000) reports that Sony Corporation have promoted a programme to monitor the activities of environmental organisations in order to pressure those funding activities into turning off the tap. They suggest using "one of dozens of internet intelligence agencies...for specific data requested by a company or industry group."

A complete failure to make policy acceptable was predictably accompanied by an increasingly co-ordinated use of force. After the uncontrolled and public madness of the Seattle robocops at the end of 1999 a co-ordinated policing policy took shape. Seattle consulted Los Angeles police who produced a report with recommendations. Then the Seattle police were consulted by every other force facing demonstrations. The European forces and the Australians followed

suit. The FBI established an office in Prague and allegedly produced a list of "undesirables".[29]

Known outcomes were the employment of saturation policing, first tried at DC in the belief that massive shows of force would in itself intimidate protesters as well as muffling the spread of actions by dealing with brush fires. At Philadelphia this tactic extended to hunting known leaders, arresting them and slapping on ludicrous bail conditions.[30] Seattle police practiced mass indiscriminate arrests, unnecessarily long processing and deliberate maltreatment of prisoners. This became a pattern repeated at all set piece events except Nice where demonstrators' discipline short-circuited much police action. Finally international co-ordination was evident in the arrest of known individuals at the Czech borders and airports and the Italian border (Nice). The criminalisation[31] of popular protest must be seen as a definite and deliberate strategy of the national community of states.[32]

Conclusion

The most exciting thing about the year 2000 is that instead of a series of discrete struggles across the world we now have a movement. Across the world millions of people have protested against a common enemy, global capitalism. It has not often been put quite so starkly but that is what demonstrations against the global agents (WTO, IMF, WB etc) are about. Likewise are the strikes, blockades, demonstrations and rallies against Structural Adjustment Programmes. It is impossible to test whether all participants share an awareness of a common enemy or that they know they belong to a global movement. But it is safe to assume that the immense majority do. All demonstrations have had international contingents and speakers from many countries who have taken their experience back into their own societies. TV and the Internet have played their part including the movement's own Indymedia whose videos have been shown worldwide. And so have the deservedly famous writer/activists like Naomi Klein, Susan George, Walden Bello, Kevin Danaher and George Monbiot.

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[29]   See the excellent article on international policing by S Ferguson, "Keeping an eye on protestors", September 29, 2000 at http://www.indymedia.org

[30] The most celebrated case was the arrest of John Sellars of Ruckus for possession of a mobile phone and the imposition of $1 million bail.

[31]   Danila O, Los Angeles wrote, (of the Democratic Convention Demo) "It was clear they thought of every protestor as a criminal waiting for an opportunity to create mayhem. They set up and arrested dozens of people for doing nothing. The police wanted to test their weapons and deployment and they used us." Personal interview, 24/8/2000.

[32] An interesting statement of the British police's attitude to criminalizing protest is given by DCI Kieron Sharp, City of London Police in **City Security,** Issue 6/2000 posted 23/12, as "J18-A Copper's View" on UK_Left_Network@egroups.com

The movement has been put together by people and organisations of many kinds: NGOs, Trade Unions, church groups, direct action networks, political parties and people from the streets, factories and fields. They have brought an immense variety of sometimes disparate ideas and experience. This has all been a great strength but there is also great unevenness. When we talk of a movement it is still very tenuous, perhaps little more than a shared alienation from the system.

In North America it is very large numerically and growing. There is much healthy discussion of democracy intensified by the Presidential debacle but virtually none about democracy in the workplace where capitalist tyranny and authority is at its worst. Until that question is confronted it is hard to see a realistic discussion taking place about strategies for change. In Latin America there is mass involvement in many places. There is courageous struggle and some inspiring victories but no apparent discussion of how to wrest power from the hands of the oppressors.

In Europe there is a growing cohort of activists, many of them young and vigorous. In France particularly there is a trade union movement willing to bring its members on to the streets but still limited in vision and tactics. So far there are only small numbers across the continent who see the urgency of fusing the energy and daring of young activists with the real power of the organised workers.

The big questions need discussion. Can the capitalist agencies be reformed, indeed can the capitalist system be reformed? What is the agent of change? What organisational forms are appropriate to push the movement forward? Is a coherent international organisation possible or even desirable? What sort of society do people want to live in?

These are all old questions which have long been part of socialist discussion. In recent times at least they have been mostly abstract because a truly mass audience did not exist. Now they have become real questions in a living movement. A small but important step forward in 2001 will be the staging of international anti-capitalist conferences where such questions can be aired.

A tremendous start has been made. The growing threat to human existence on the planet has brought an urgency to the activity of ever widening circles of people. In twelve months we have had Seattle, Cochabamba, Buenos Aires, Washington, Capetown, Lagos, Bangkok, Delhi, Prague and Nice. Hundreds of thousands have spoken. Rulers stumble. 2000 was truly an amazing year!

Table 1

Anti-capitalist & related actions since December 1999[33]

Location	Date	Type of action	Estimate of numbers
Seattle,USA	Dec '99	Demonstration (WTO)	50- 70,000
Nigeria	Dec	Strike (against de-reg of oil price)	5,000
Argentina	Dec	Strike wave SAP	`Tens of thousands'
Vienna, Austria	Jan 2000	Demo (Anti-Nazi)	250,000
Davos, Switzerland	January	Demo [against Bankers Conference]	'several thousands'
Cochamba, Bolivia	Jan	Demo (against water privatisation)	'Thousands'
Quito, Ecuador	Jan 15	March of Indians (IMF 'reforms')	40,000
Quito, Ecuador	Jan 22	Demo (IMF `reforms')	10,000
La Paz, Bolivia	Feb	Demo (IMF `reforms)	1,000
Bangkok, Thailand	Feb 12	Demo [anti-IMF]	1,000
Ochomogo, Costa Rica	March	Demo (electricity privatisation)	Not known
Boston,USA	March 26	Demo [against bio-tech conference]	3,000
Hamilton, NJ, USA	March	Demo (IMF-WB meeting)	600
La Paz, Bolivia	April	Demo (IMF `reforms')	3,000
Washington DC, USA	April	Demo (IMF-WB)	30,000
Buenos Aires, Argentina	April	Demo (SAP)	`thousands'
San Jose	April	Demo (SAP)	10,000
Lusaka, Zambia	April	Demo (SAP)	`not known'
Nairobi,Kenya	April	March (SAP)	Small
South Africa	May 11	Strike against 'greed of capitlaism'	1,000,000
Salsa Region, Argentina	May	Demos & road blocks (SAP)	`thousands'
Quito, Ecuador	May (5 weeks)	Strike of Teachers (pay cuts/SAP)	Not known
Honduras	May	Hospital workers strike (SAP)	8,000
Windsor,Ont., Canada	May	Demo (IMF)	5,000
Chiang Mai, Thailand	May 7	Demo against Asian Development Bank	2,000
Argentina	May	Strike (IMF)	80,000
Malawi	May	March (IMF)	Not known
Argentina	June	General Strike (SAP)	7,200,000
Calgary, Canada	June 8	Demo against petroleum industry	'several thousands'
Ecuador	June	General Strike (SAP)	`tens of thousands'
Millau, France	June	Demo (free Jean Bove)	50,000
Nigeria	June	General Strike (SAP)	7,000,000 est.

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[33] Table One complied from many Internet sources including Labour Start and the World Development Movement Report.

Ascunsion,Paraguay	June	General Strike)	Not known
Philadelphia,USA	June	Demo (Republican Convention)	20,000
Okinawa, Japan	July	Demo (WB-IMF)	5,000
Los Angeles,USA	July	Demo (Democratic Convention)	20,000
Bogota, Columbia	August	General Strike (SAP)	Not known
Honduras	August	General Strike (SAP)	Not known
Sao Paulo, Brazil	September	Demo (SAP)	100,000
Melbourne, Aus.	September	Demo (IMF-WB)	5,000
Prague, Czech Republic	September	Demo (IMF-WB)	20,000
Dakha, Bangladesh	September	Demo (Prague support)	'Hundreds'
Capetown, Durban, Jo'burg, SA	September	Demos (Prague support)	Not known
Delhi, Bombay, India	September	Demos (Prague support)	Not known
40 cities, USA	September	Demos in support of Prague event	Thousands.
Cohababamba,Bolivia	September	Strikes, blockades, demos against wage cuts etc	'hundreds of thousands'
Boston, USA	October	Demo at Presidential debate (anti-cap)	12,000
Mexico City	October	Demo (Murder at the '76 Olympics) anti-cap themes	10,000
Argentina	November	Mass Strike (2 days) against austerity measures	'Millions'
Berlin	November 25	Anti fascist demo	3000
South Africa	November	Strikes against privatisation	60,000
Seoul, Korea	November	Strike/Demo against SAP	20,000
Seoul,Korea	December	Strike against privatisation of telecom	18,000
Nice, France	December	Demo for a social Europe	100,000

Table 2
Community and industrial actions in Britain in the year 2000[34]

Month	Community/Student Action	Industrial Action
January	6000 on Cambridge 2 Demo, Camden protest against closure of old peoples' home, Cambridge asylum seekers protest, Leeds, 300 at meeting to oppose building a roundabout, 150 at Byker incinerator campaign, 150 Crawley pensioners meeting	Postal Workers (PW)Watford,Fulham work to rule, Connex, wtr, Sky Chefs, Wandsworth Council79-40 strike vote,City & Islington College lecturers st., Ekta Print, Harrow, otb, strike votes at Kirklees Unison cuts in old peoples' homes, Chesterfield against pay cut, North West Water 1 day strike, Heathrow electricians
February	Burnley campaign against nursery closure, Plymouth, 150 demonstrate against Blair, Bristol demo against police harassment, Oxford, 400 on student fees demo, London Univ College, occup. Goldsmith College occup.,Darlington, 200 lobby council against cuts, Rochdale, 300 lobby council cuts, , London 200 on pensioners demo, Salford 300 lobby council against cuts, York, 200 on protest against swimming pool closure, Kirkintilloch, 1000 protest council education cuts	800 firefighters march East London, strike vote Burnley College, Greenwich Hospital student nurses protest closure of accommodation, new Connex strike vote, London, Pricecheck unionised, Leicester, 600 care workers protest. Dagenham Ford Engine Plant walk out, Scottish & Grampian TV strike votes, Scotland, Lecturers vote 73% for strike, Basildon College, strike ballot
March	Burnley 50 protest building a transmitter, Scotland local protests against Brian Souter, Thanet lobby of council against cuts, London, 200 demo at Japanese Embassy on Third World Debt, London, 1000 Save Mumia Demo, Cambridge, Asylum Seekers Demo, Vale of Leven, 150 protest health service cuts, Warwick Univ., 500 students occupy on fees, Cambridge 2, 1000 demonstrate, Cardiff, 300 students march on fees, Hackney protest meeting against school cuts	Southwark firefighters lobby fire authority, Scotland, 1500 college lecturers strike, London Transport workers lobby of Parliament, Sandwich, welders strike, Ayr, bus workers 1 day strike, Waterloo RMT win strike ballot re:Sarah Friday, Leamington Spa PW walk out, Whitechapel, 600 PW walk out, 100 AEUW electricians lobby Parl. On job losses, Ayr, 660 bus workers strike, Newcastle, 400 shipyard workers march on job losses, Grampian TV 300 NUJ/BECTU strike, Northumbria Univ. lecturers' ban on marking, Edinburgh 800 PW strike, High Wycombe, De la Rue print workers otb
April	Hackney, protest against nursery closure, Hull, 300 protest second anniversary of death of Chris alder in custody, Margate, 200 on anti-nazi march, Chorlton, Manchester lobby of councillors to save swimming pool, 70 At Manchester Campaign to defend council housing founding meeting, Grimethorpe protest against	**Birmingham 100, 000 defend Leyland workers,** student nurse protest in East London, Norwich, hospital electricians strike, Grangemouth, 2000 manual construction workers half day strike, Hull, 200 vigil for deaths in construction industry, Gillingham, 100 PW walk out, Sandwich, 250 Pfizer strike, 500 on Tyneside ship yard workers lobby of

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[34] Table Two compiled from *Socialist Worker,* January -December 2000.

	privatising council housing, Perth, 1000 protest march against hospital closure	Parl., Ayr bus workers strike again, Scottish power workers strike ballot, South West Trains one day strike to defend Sarah Friday, Derby, mass meeting of 2000 Rolls Royce workers, Arriva bus workers vote for strike, RMT Waterloo strike for third time over Sarah Friday, 500 PW strike in North & East London, Wigan, support staff push for strike ballot on week-end leave, Bus workers strike in East Kent, North West, 450 electricity workers mass meeting in Chester call for strike ballot
May	Bristol Univ. 250 students occupy 2 hours against top up fees, Univ of Kent students occupy 24 hours on top up fees, Romford, 300 march against council cuts, Greenwich 300 march against education cuts, 200 demonstrate against Nazis in Hastings, Camden 1000 rally to defend asylum seekers, Hove, 100 demonstrate against closure of respite home, London, 700 march on Section 28	London, teachers strike Central, Foundation School against pay cuts, Pfizer strike continues, Clydebank, 250work in at Kvaerner Engineering, Sellafield, contract workers strike on bonuses, Scottish power workers vote 488-55 for strike action, Ayr, Blackburn and East Kent bus workers actions on pay, PW actions in Oxford, London, Chelmsford, Huddersfield, Leeds, Dartford, Cambridge and Slough against 'The Way Forward Agreement', CPS conference swung left, Manchester, 300 careworkers one day strike, Stockport College lecturers' strike ballot called, PW Wolverhampton and West London walk out, P & 0 seafarers strike ballot on pay, PW Colindale & Aberdeen walk out, Stockwell bus workers reject pay cut 160-0
June	Hackney, School students walk out at Kingsland School to defend teacher, Asylum seekers meetings: 30 Middlesborough, 150 Swansea, 40 Newport, 51 Chorlton, 50 Leicester, 16 Blaydon, 40 Holmfirth, 35 Fishponds, Bristol, 25 Paisley, 100 on vigil in Newcastle, Margate, Anti-Nazi picket, Edinburgh 600 on 'creative, uncontrolled carnival', London 2000 Kurds on free Ocalan march, Newcastle 500 picket Town Hall, protesting Going for Growth, Newcastle, 500 protest Going for Growth, Edinburgh 1500 march against Section 28, **London 7000 on Asylum Seekers support march**	CWU conference voted overwhelmingly to resist PO privatisation & threatened to break with Labour, Arriva North East bus workers vote 566-92 against pay deal, Sheffield 100 at lobby to defend victimised Unison stewards, Lancashire fire fighters enforce reinstatement of colleague, Huntingdon, 6 week strike at Foframe, Birmingham, direct works vote for strike action over cuts in sick pay, East Kilbryde, hospital worker protest against pay cut, Hackney cleansing dept., occupation on pay deal, Dagenham 700 Ford workers on lobby of management, Ealing Council workers lobby council on increased hours, Wigan care workers victory, Islington council workers lobby council over privatisation, Amersham, Wells Hinton workers win recognition, Middlesborough 40 lecturers walk out Teesside Tertiary College on health & safety
July	**London 20000 Gay Pride March,** Manchester 200 at	Accrington protest march of hundreds against Rists Wires closure, Huntingdon,

	meeting to fight council house privatisation, Leeds 100 meet to oppose privatising education, 250 at Dagenham protest meeting against Ford closure, Did bury 200 meet to protest closure of swimming pool, Manchester 1200 march against section 28, Kirk lees 60 lobby council over closure of old people's homes, 35 pickets nationwide of supermarkets on Asylum Seekers, London 120 lobby Prescott on tube privatisation, Leeds 150 at meeting on State Education, Plymouth 400 demonstrate against council cuts, Islington hundreds lobby council on cuts, Liverpool 150 lobby council on cuts, Tiverton 50 demonstrate to save maternity services, Coventry 3000 Peugeot workers one day strike, Edinburgh 2000 legalise cannabis demo, Did bury 450 to Keep the Baths Campaign meeting , Birmingham 60 picketed council over conditions at day centres, Brighton 10,000 Gay Pride March	Foframe strike continues, Preston bus workers 7th one day strike, Birmingham lobby by 500 council workers against privatising direct labour, Coventry Peugeot strike vote, Manchester PW one day strike, London 1200 PW North West walk out, Hackney 300 refuse collectors vote for strike action, London Brtish Film Institute 60 join protest against pay cut, Ealing Library workers one day strike over hours and pay, Bromley bin workers 4 day strike, Plymouth 200 BT Call Centre workers one day strike, Manchester 2000 busworkers one day strike, Bromley bin workers one day strike, , Sunderland, 800 Arriva drivers one day strike, Ealing 500 council workers one day strike on working hours, Torfaen Council lobbied by 100 workers against privatisation, Westhoughton 300 workers at Bellhouse Hartwell struck for four days on pay deal, Huddersfield 500 Brook Crompton workers one day strike
August	South Beds and Wycombe Council Tenants defeat sell off, Coventry 90 taxi drivers struck	Grangemouth 1000 petro-chem workers walk off, Oldham, Wigan, Bolton, Bury 1750 busdrivers strike, Railway maintenance workers (Balfour Beattie) vote for strike, Bridgend, Aberdare PW strike, Bromley refuse collectors strike again, Dudley Hospitals, 600 on 4 day strike against privatisation, Bicester 800 PW strike victory, 300 Hackney refuse collectors vote strike action, Coventry 150 PW walk out, Arriva bus-drivers in N.E. one day strike, NW (Lancs) bus workers one day strike, Dagenham, Ford two walk outs, Manchester British Aerospace workers vote for strike action, London 120 British Gas workers one day strike
September	Haywards Heath meeting (300) on hospital cuts, Glasgow 500 pensioners march, Salford 60 protest school closure, Birmingham large defend council housing protest, 100 South Action Tenants protest council house privatisation, Sheffield College victory over compulsory redundancy, Sheffield, 500 tenants on Shirecliffe Estate picket council, 1200 attend counter conference in Brighton, Glasgow 500	Mount Pleasant PW 3,500 one day strike, Bristol PW half day walk out, Manchester bus workers 2 one day strikes, Woodford, 600 British Aerospace workers one day strike, Scotland wide council workers one day strike, Ealing 100 day centre workers one day strike, Sheffield College massive strike vote, Mansfield 2000 march to oppose job cuts at Viyella, Dudley Hospitals strike continues, Bridgend, Pontypridd, Aberdare PW one day strike, Edinburgh, Lothian buses

	demonstrate to support T Sheridan's call for replacing council tax with service tax, Lambeth, tenants success in defeating privatising their homes	massive strike vote, Ealing council workers strike over cuts, Plymouth 270 care workers strike, Plymouth 300 child care workers one day strike, Woodford, BAE second one day strike, Clay Cross hundreds of Biwaters' factory workers march against job cuts, Lancs bus workers one day strike again, Camden protest against privatising caretaking services
October	Birmingham 350 tenants protest against housing privatisation, Isle of Dogs march against clinic closure, Rochdale 300 demonstrate against old people's home closure, Corby, 50 parents protest school cuts, Mansfield 100 protest industrial development in beauty spot, Manchester 200 meet to resist privatisation of council housing, Oxford 80 lobby council on privatisation proposal, Telford 50 parents occupy street demanding safe play areas, Glasgow 400 march against Trident	UNISON members at Newcastle College one day strike, Gateshead 170 bus drivers one day strike, Wandsworth care workers strike against privatisation, Bradford bus drivers one day strike, Barnsley, 800 workers at Rexam Glass one day strike, Dudley hospital start 10 day strike, Gateshead second one day strike of 170 bus workers, Scotland council workers vote 68% against pay deal, Luton airport workers one day strike, London PW widespread one day strike, Edinburgh PW several walk outs
November	Birmingham 70 demonstrate closure of a community post office, Hackney 1000 demonstrate at the Town Hall against cuts, Oxford students picket World Bank boss, Manchester 100 Fallowfield tenants demonstration, Sheffield 100 tenants march on council to protest demolition of council houses, Livingston 50 picket Robin Cook's surgery on Palestine, Dagenham 200 meet to save Ford jobs, Glasgow 1200 march against racism & fascism, Essex Univ. 100 demonstrate against oppression in Burma, Plymouth 100 on anti-nazi demonstration, Coventry Technical College lecturer's strike, Birmingham 800 in lobby of council against privatisation, Bradford 1000 at rally to protest councils privatisation plans	Paisley, PW 200 walk out, Prestonpans PW five day strike, Liverpool 150 Merseyrail guards one day strike on safety, Scotland 600 UNISON council workers strike, Manchester bin workers four day strike against victimisation, Scotland 80000 UNISON council workers one day strike, East Leake & Newark one day strike at British Gypsum, BBC World Service journalists strike, East Yorks school meals workers strike vote, Brighton bin workers occupy depot
December	Glasgow 400 rally against council house privatisation, Miss World contest 250 protest, Edmonton 100 protest demanding closure of incinerator, Bradford 120 in local meeting against nazis	Lecturers stage national day of action, 200 Alexandria bus factory strike, Torfaen 200 strike against privatisaton, Mark Serwotka elected CPS Secretary

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Crises and turning points in revolutionary development: emotion, organization and strategy in Solidarnosc, 1980-81

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Abstract

This paper examines two critical moments in the history of Polish Solidarity 1980-81. It looks at [a] some working assumptions on revolutions, turning points and emotions, [b] the 'structure of feeling' from which Solidarity emerged; [c] how the initial mobilization and its contradictions produced both an internal crisis and the creation of a new more expansive organizational form; [d] Solidarity's burgeoning and further contradictions; [e] the crisis of March 31st 1981 and its aftermath; [f] some implications of movement failure. This whole paper rests on a controversial assumption, namely that Solidarity in Poland was (at least potentially) a social-revolutionary movement. I have elaborated this argument elsewhere (Barker 1982, 1984, 1986, 1987b, 1990a, b; Barker and Weber 1982). In the most recent of these, I explored the way in which Solidarity's social-revolutionary potential was increasingly buried, after 1981, in favour of a purely political 'democratic transition' in which the movement's original working-class concerns were forgotten in favour of a (remarkably peaceful and uninvolving) makeover to parliamentary democracy along with a shift from 'bureaucratic state capitalism' to 'liberal-market capitalism'. The peaceable character of the 'democratic transition' was enhanced by the fact that both government and opposition had converged by the late 1980s in a shared admiration for 'markets'.

[a] Some working assumptions

1. In understanding revolutions, not just 'structural causes' but processes internal to their development are crucially important. Outcomes of potentially revolutionary process can't be read off from their starting-points. Matters shaping movement paths from outset to conclusion include movements' own inner transformations. Thus, the 'data-set' for studying revolutions should include cases of 'failed', 'deflected' and other outcomes than actual revolution.

Initially, we can analytically distinguish social from purely political revolutions. The latter include most military coups, the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe, and other 'negotiated transitions' including Spain, Latin America in the 1980s, or South Africa. All these, however, pose interesting questions about how

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potential 'social' content came to be contained or failed to manifest. No Chinese wall separates 'social' from 'political' revolutionary movements. The Portuguese revolution of 1974-5, for instance, began as a military coup, but rapidly developed all manner of social-revolutionary potentials (Harman 1988; Robinson 1987).

2. We can grasp processes of 'revolutionary development' by considering them as sequences of 'crises' or 'turning points', relatively compressed 'moments' when movements face challenges about how to develop next. Contrary to 'natural history' or some 'protest cycle' theories, movements follow no inevitable sequence of stages. The 'crises' and 'turning points' in their development challenge existing practices, relations, understandings and feelings, demanding re-evaluation and creativity of response. Indeed, innovation and creativity, achieved through dialogical practice by movement activists, are at a premium at such moments.[2] Because revolutionary developmental trajectories are contingent and 'event-ful', they require narrative forms of understanding, that catch both 'flows' and 'crystallizations', and their internal contradictions.

David Harvey offers a general conceptualization, in which 'moments' (which may be long or short) consist of both internal relations and contradictions. The end of one 'moment' and another's beginning is a 'transition' when these processes become somehow discontinuous. New forms of individual and collective action develop, involving both new explorations and contestations over possibilities, directions and associated understandings. New moments 'crystallize' out of these fluidities, with their own internal relations and contradictions (Harvey 1996). There is a degree of kinship between these ideas and Andrew Abbott's thoughts on 'turning points' (Abott 1997, 2001). Harvey cites Coles on Adorno: 'For Adorno the world is thoroughly relational. Each thing is a "crystallization" of its relation with others. Yet the language of "crystallization" is as important here as that of "relation". The relational world is not one of pure fluidity and harmony, but one where things crystallize into highly dense, infinitely specific, and often very recalcitrant entities that resist the surrounding world in which they are born. One could say that for Adorno, the first movement toward a dialogical understanding of freedom lies in a recognition of both this dialectical quality and this recalcitrance.' (Coles 1993, cit. Harvey 1996). Thinking in these terms, my immediate concern in this paper is with the process by which one 'crystallization' is again subjected to 'flow' and 'relation', in such a way that a necessary new 'crystallization' is required. That is,

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[2] Here the work of 'cultural-historical activity theory' (CHAT), and notably Yrjo Engestrom's idea of 'expansive learning', is potentially highly relevant (Engeström 1987). There are potentially fruitful marriages to be made between CHAT and social movement theory, but as yet the two appear not to have made any meetings or engagements. CHAT's insights, emerging out of Vygotsky, have been chiefly limited to studies of education and work, and have - like social movement theory until recently - rather ignored the emotional; CHAT, despite nods to Marx, also suffers from an 'over-consensual' account of 'activity systems' (Barker 2007a, b).

one set of relations, procedures, cultural assumptions, hopes and fears, aspirations and emotional accents is partly broken up, demanding to be replaced by another. At each such transition, moreover, problems of the adequacy of the relevant 'crystallization' are more or less sharply posed.

Two aspects of movements condition this pattern. First, movements develop in interaction with others, most notably with their opponents. In these interactions, all sides strategize: they attempt to assess concrete situations, including themselves and their antagonists, and act in relation to the other. Their developing interactions conform to no finite set of 'game rules': 'players' are prone to innovate and launch 'surprises' of various kinds, including interventions in the others' ideas, activities and organizations.[3]

Second, movements themselves are complex assemblages, 'networks' of groups and individuals with different histories, powers, social ties (including ties to existing power setups), pre-existing patterns of organization, cultural assumptions and traditions. Participants' initial mobilization into movements is uneven, both as regards time and mode of entry. Once mobilized, their patterns of development are uneven and combined: latecomers may move to the fore, bringing new impulses to a movement, just as 'early risers' may be displaced from their initially central role. Far from being fixed entities with allotted roles and statuses, movements more closely resemble tumultuous ongoing practical activities and conversations, focused on broadly shared concerns, between changing numbers and groupings of participants who are always threatening to fissure and re-shape. Charles Tilly offers a series of analogies: a loosely choreographed dance, a fund-raising pancake breakfast, a quilting bee, a street-corner debate, a jam session with changing players, a pickup basketball game, a citywide festival. All are 'structured' yet none is a straightforward 'group' (Tilly 1993 / 4). Any 'unity' they develop is both impermanent, and a practical accomplishment.[4]

3. Recently, social movement students have paid increased attention to emotions. Growing interest in 'framing' and 'identity' - and more recently in 'dialogics' and 'activity' - has re-opened the way to considerations of emotion, no longer as an element of irrationality, but as a normal feature of all action and social relations. Three recent collections exemplify the trend. (Aminzade and

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[3] 3 Daniel Bensaïd considers the 'infinite game' whose players 'continue their play in the expectation of being surprised'. With each surprise, the past discloses a new beginning. 'Inasmuch as the future is always surprising, the past is always changing.' Here, each moment is 'the beginning of an event', 'moving toward a future which itself has a future. Whereas the player of a finite game is content to recap the knowledge that the same causes will produce the same effects, players of the infinite give themselves over to the narrative that invites them to reconsider what they thought they knew' (Bensaïd 2002). In Alasdair MacIntyre's neat critique of game theory, 'moving one's knight to QB3 may always be replied to with a lob over the net' (MacIntyre 1981).

[4] Similar principles apply to movement *opponents*, though they are less our concern here.

McAdam 2002b; Flam and King 2005; Goodwin 2001). I offer a few summary remarks about where I situate myself within this complex field.

First, the emotional is an ever-present feature of the active, practical relationships among humans and between them and the material and symbolic world. There are no 'unemotional' actions and relations.

Second, emotionality is not something opposed to 'rationality'[5], nor to cognition or perception.[6] Each presupposes and is an aspect of the others.

Third, 'emotions' are not 'entities in themselves', open to consideration in isolation from other aspects of active, practical and symbolic relations.[7] In grammatical terms, they make sense not as 'nouns' but as adjectival or adverbial qualities of such relational activity. We should avoid a 'faculty psychology' (Harré 1986; Sarbin 1986). Emotion, like cognition, is always about something, and toward something, an aspect of our active relations with persons, places, meanings and events, and with material things and processes (Armon-Jones 1986; Emirbayer and Mische 1998): 'Emotions are referential; they are always directed toward some real (or perceived-as-real) object' (Cadena-Roa 2002). More fruitful than treating emotion separately is exploring what Lev Vygotsky termed the 'dynamic unity of functions', viewing different aspects of human action and mind as practically inter-related with each other (Vygotsky 1986). Thanks to this dynamic unity of functions, we can learn both to change our emotional stance towards a situation and to manage our feelings, combining emotional with other cognitive, evaluational and motivational aspects of our responses. (Otherwise almost all forms of talk-based 'therapy' would be utterly incredible.)

Fourth, the emotional is 'embodied', manifest in bodily states, gestures and expressions.

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[5] '... even rational activity has a necessary basis in particular emotions' (Barbalet 2002); 'cognitions typically come bundled with emotions, and are meaningful or powerful to people for precisely this reason.... Rather than viewing emotions and cognitions in zero-sum terms ... we need to grapple with their interactions and combinations.' (Goodwin 2001; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001) Likewise Craig Calhoun: 'While we may have good reason analytically to distinguish emotions from cognitions and perception, we also have good reason to see each influencing the other' (Calhoun 2001). On rational emotions more generally, see Crossley (2006).

[6] We can only understand human activity when we grasp its 'affective-motivational basis' (Vygotsky 1986). Real thinking, Vygotsky insists, partakes of the 'full vitality of life.' Remember, too, Gramsci: '...strong passions are necessary to sharpen the intellect and help make intuition more penetrating.... Only the man [*sic*] who wills something strongly can identify the elements which are necessary to the realization of his will' (Gramsci 1971).

[7] Deborah Gould writes of ACT UP's 'emotion work' that it was 'inseparable from its interpretive work, and the two working in tandem were vital factors in ACT UP's ability to sustain itself.... the emotional and interpretive work of social movements are indissociable.' (Gould 2001)

Fifth, the emotional qualities of action and relationship vary in intensity. Prosaic, routine, action is as 'emotional' as highly dramatic moments, even if we often don't notice this. As Craig Calhoun (2001) notes, '... we have huge emotional investments in the everyday status quo. It may look like we are relatively unemotional as we go about our tasks, but disrupt the social structure in which we work, and our emotional investments in it will become evident'. (Garfinkel's' experiments in disrupting the everyday reveal something of this.) But we should also note that 'calm' is an emotional state. 'If we see emotions only in connection with disruptions in social life, we shall exaggerate the importance of certain emotional dynamics and miss others.' (Calhoun 2001)

Sixth, being relational, the emotional is thoroughly 'social', indeed is an inherent aspect of human interaction. The emotional is not reducible to internal individual psychology, mind or body, or to social structure, or to discourse: rather, it implicates them all at once (Burkitt 1997). Thus the emotional is [a] socially communicable and shareable and [b] itself subject to forms of cultural and power-related forms of social control concerning its 'proper' and 'improper' expression. Here Hochschild's 'feeling rules'(Hochschild 1979 – 80, 1983) and Flam's political-emotional economy of domination and resistance (2005) are highly relevant.[8]

Seventh, like other aspects of human inter-relation and inter-action, the emotional is complex and dialogical in form: like the 'ideological' (Barker 2006), or the 'attitudes' Billig dissects, feelings are dilemmic, rather than simple and obvious. This is sometimes recognized in references to emotions being 'ambivalent' (Aminzade and McAdam 2002a), or to emotions having 'different preference effects' (Kim 2002); see also Calhoun: '...people not only have emotions but have many emotions with dynamic relations among them' (Calhoun 2001). Emotions are not stable and permanent states of being, but conflict and change. Being an aspect of what we think, say and do in changing contexts, what we 'feel' is open to rapid alteration as different aspects of a total situation move to front of stage or retire to the wings, shifting their prominence in the hierarchies of relative attention and relevance. As the arguments and contexts in which we find ourselves alter, so emotional feelings and displays are open to being explored, debated, transformed. Likewise, our 'affective ties' (and indeed 'affective antagonisms') to others, whether individuals or groups, exist in the context of ongoing cognitive judgments, always subject to being weighed and reevaluated according to situational context. Whole cognitive-affective

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[8] Mustafa Emirbayer and Chad Goldberg see fit to attribute to myself a view that emotions are purely individual (Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005). They appear to read very inattentively, since the whole thrust of the article they cite (Barker 2001) suggests quite otherwise. Their not-reading extends also to Lenin, whose arguments they appear to make up as they go. Still, why bother about evidence?

configurations, 'interfunctional complexes', can change quite rapidly, enabling or constraining different possibilities for action.[9]

Eighth, emotional aspects are especially significant in huan inter-communication, in the ongoing 'dialogue' through which humans continually seek to make sense of the world and each other and thus of their own individual and collective selves. The concrete meaning of human 'utterances' (spoken, gestural, written) is conveyed, not simply by the selection of words from a shared dictionary, but by the 'evaluative accent' imparted to them in the moment of their expression, an accent which conveys a speaker's practical stance (Vološinov 1976, 1986). Equally, since dialogics places as much stress on the active, preparatory response of the 'listener' (Bakhtin 1986), the act of 'listening' itself conveys meaning, again in good measure by the evaluative accent of the listener (focus and intensity of attention, physical stance, facial expression, etc.). To focus only on the purely verbal content of inter-communication is to miss the significance of such matters as laughter, applause, silence, ironic smiles and frowns, inattention, rituals and so forth, but also seemingly mundane material practices, as means by which meanings are formed, adjusted, transformed by emotional inter-communication.

Ninth, we can distinguish between emotions involved in relatively short-term and longer-term actions, stances and relations (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001; Jasper 1998). The distinction invites discussion of the dialectical interplay between these two temporal registers, offering a further window on processes of ongoing change. A similar dialectic is required to explore the relation between longer-term 'ideologies' or 'attitudes' or 'values' and immediate processes of everyday speech, between the general and the particular. These matters exercised the Russian dialogicians Vološinov and Bahhtin; see also Billig (1995, 1996).

In the above light, it is potentially fruitful to attune ourselves to issues and moments of 'transformation', grasped in narrative terms. Theodore Sarbin

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[9] Anne Kane offers an additional perspective on these matters, discussing the metaphorical character of human symbolization. Metaphors and symbols are, even if often strong and enduring, also *ambiguous* and *opaque*. There is a kind of slippage between symbolic representations and experience, or more than one way of 'thinking' and 'feeling a situation or event by symbolizing it in terms of something else. In *unfamiliar* situations, as in crises, there is a potential for creativity and contestation about both how to symbolize the new condition and - thus - how to respond practically to it. As Kane suggests, a structure of emotion is *changeable*: 'Encountering a new or different paradigm scenario of an emotion - for example, a narrative of humiliation in which the response is resistance and the outcome regeneration, instead of cowering and helplessness - may transform how an individual or collective conceptualizes that emotion, and, possibly more importantly, the appropriate response of action. Again, it is the metaphor and polysemy of the symbols in these narratives of emotion that allow transformation; the possibility for change is opened up through social interaction in which different narratives are shared.' (Kane 2001)

suggests we only understand emotions as part of narratives (Sarbin 1986).[10] Equally, we can only comprehend narratives of human interaction if we can sense the emotional changes through which identities, organizations and purposes are seen in their 'becoming', as processes in transformation.

[b] Polish society before Solidarity

During the autumn of 1980, Solidarity grew at an extraordinary speed. It recruited the great majority of the Polish working class in just four months. It offered, it seems, a powerful articulation of already partly-formed ideas and aspirations among Polish workers, and indeed the mass of Polish citizens, who developed parallel civic organizations.

Helena Flam, seeing emotions as more than purely micro-level phenomena, proposes that we examine the 'emotional-institutional context' in which movements arise, and ask, what combination of 'cementing emotions' ties people to an existing regime? (Flam 2005). Among such 'cementing emotions' she mentions both gratitude and loyalty, but also fear, anger and shame. While Flam's emphasis on the emotional aspect of social structure - what we might term 'political-emotional economy' - is welcome, we need to grasp its inherently contradictory character. What Gramsci saw as the contradictory character of everyday thinking also has its 'affective' side. Firstly, 'cementing emotions' (positive or negative) are combined in real-world contexts with their opposites, that is with critical feeling-patterns which may be 'submerged' or 'hidden' (Scott 1990) for whole periods, or variably open to public expression by different individuals or groups. Secondly, emotions are not an autonomous realm of experience, being only one of a number of motile aspects of how people think and act, indissolubly tied to ongoing cognitive judgments of their own and others' powers and capabilities, and thus to their practical confidence in the possibilities of oppositional speech and action.

Useful here is Raymond Williams' concept of a 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1977, 1979). This refers to a shared but inchoate sense of 'unease' or 'displacement' which has not yet found a satisfactory 'figure' for its practical-cultural expression. V.N. Vološinov (1976, 1986) provides a similar idea with his notion of the 'ideologeme', a half-formed thought which requires 'choral support' from others to achieve satisfactory articulation; likewise Deborah

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[10] See also Kane (2001: 253-4). Randall Collins, who discusses 'tipping points', suggests their dynamic is 'primarily emotional; individuals "decide" which coalition they will give a show of support to, insurgent or status quo, not so much by calculation of costs and benefits (which is impossible at this stage of extreme uncertainty), but by collective emotional flow' (Collins 2001). This narrows our choice to cost-benefit and emotion as alternative causes. What of perceptions, what of ideological convictions, what of strategic judgments of possibility, what of loyalties and other affective-cognitive matters, and what of new discoveries about self and society? Collins' work bears witness to the continued vitality of a theoretical opposition between 'rationality' and 'emotion' which I find unconvincing, not least in its improverished understanding of both sides of the assumed distinction.

Gould (2001) applies the related notion of 'ambivalence' to AIDS activism in the USA during the 1980s. Polish opinion studies in the later 1970s revealed popular majorities placing 'trust' and locating moral authenticity in family and friendship, but little in official institutions, other than the regime-tolerated Catholic Church (Mason 1985; Nowak 1980, 1981; Vale 1981). A widespread 'unofficial consciousness' developed, transmitted in conversation and a plethora of popular jokes about official corruption, privilege and injustice. This was a political-emotional economy mixing cautious defiance with outright fearfulness, combining memories of both previous repression and previous oppositional achievements, not least the occupation-strikes and inter-factory strike committees of 1970-71 (Laba 1991). This mixture of contradictory impulses and perceptions was partly expressed in a differential readiness to act among different groups within the Polish working class and beyond. As yet, however, this structure of feeling had found no expressive 'figure' that might crystallize into a movement.

Rod Eyerman refers to 'structure of feeling' as 'those deeply rooted dispositions and sensibilities which organize and define a way of life' (Eyerman 2005). This seems not quite to catch Williams's sense of a structure of feeling as an inchoate sense of unease, involving contradictory impulses arising from experiences which have not achieved a clear articulation in ideas and shared practice.[11] On the other hand, if a structure of feeling is lacking in clear definition and articulation, and thus open to a variety of modes of concrete expression, it is not infinitely open. In the Polish case, the structure of feeling that was widespread among people in the 1970s ruled out strong popular identification with or enthusiasm for the regime. It was thus, if only in statu nascendi, an 'oppositional' structure of feeling.

David Harvey offers what I think is a mis-reading of Raymond Williams, treating his conception of a 'community' characterized by a 'structure of feeling' as verging on organicism, as a 'total way of life' that is necessarily 'exclusionary' and oppressive to outsiders (Harvey 1996). The Williams I read treats a 'structure of feeling' as essentially inchoate, containing various potentials for development and crystallization in different directions. Williams, who acknowledges the influence of Vološinov, seems to me to treat a 'community' as a centre of dialogue, and not a closed world.[12]

The question that Harvey raises, of 'exclusion', is however worth pursuing further. There is a case to be made that when such a structure of feeling does find a more or less adequate 'crystallization' - as in a powerful social movement with which a community identifies - then, indeed, it does become in a sense more 'exclusionary'. Mining communities, once trade unionism took firm hold,

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[11] Eyerman's treatment verges on assimilating 'structure of feeling' to Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus', a notion with less of Williams's sense of *contradictoriness* and thus of *multiple potentialities.*

[12] Harvey's criticisms might better fit the concept of 'habitus' in Bourdieu.

were indeed 'exclusionary' and 'hostile' - towards strike-breakers. When thoser who possess loose and contradictory structures of feelings do find more focused 'crystallizations' of their ideas and activity-patterns, they also tend to define stricter boundaries, and to impose a kind of 'discipline' on themselves and those around them. However, for many, this process is also liberatory - insofar as they replace an externally imposed discipline which is often associated with exploitation, oppression and humiliation, with one that is more self-chosen, more open to their own determination, and more expressive of their felt needs. (I say 'more' because these are relative matters.) Helena Flam (2005) suggests that social movements 'detach' people from established institutions, organizations, and cognitive and normative patterns; in so doing, we can add, they also 'attach' them to other such institutions and patterns. Unless we hold to the most extreme liberal-individualism, where freedom consists in an a-social rejection of all forms of obligation and 'social constraint', there are positive qualities to 'exclusion' and 'hostility', arising out of popular struggle, which Harvey perhaps misses.

We can thus see movements as providing a kind of emergent shape or definition to a structure of feeling. Movements themselves, as specific articulations of conflicting impulses, are themselves also inwardly contradictory, both liberating and constraining, and subject to inner contestation (Zirakzadeh 1997) as well as development through conflict with opponents. Evaluating them necessarily involves political judgment.

In the later 1970s the Polish economy manifested deepening economic difficulties (Barker and Weber 1982; Harman 1976 – 7), and the government was cautious about overt repression of dissent: A secret police colonel remarked ruefully about the opposition, 'We know all the addresses, we could destroy everything in one night, but the high-ups won't allow us to' (Garton Ash 1983)[13]. Against this background, overtly oppositional groups began to agitate for political change, and particularly for 'free trade unions'. In the coastal cities, especially, they could draw on a strong recent tradition of militant workplace organization, allied to bitter memories of murderous coercion in December 1970.

The Gdansk activists publicly announced a Founding Committee of Free Trade Unions, publicizing their demands through underground newspapers and leaflets, and rehearsing their own leadership in small local strikes. Their key practical problem resembled that of the nascent Civil Rights Movement in Montgomery in late 1955: they needed a suitable issue around which to risk a wider mobilization. Sharp rises in food prices from 1st July 1980 set off an immediate wave of strikes across much of Poland's industrial centres, with government weakness revealed by its rush to negotiate. As yet, Gdansk and Szczecin workers were relatively untouched by this militancy, but in August the Gdansk activists were given their moment. One of their number, Anna

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[13] See also the evidence of secret policeman Sucharski in Bloom (forthcoming).

Walentynowicz, a 50-year old crane driver at the huge Lenin Shipyard, was sacked for her oppositional activity. The activists - uncertain whether they could carry it off - decided to risk a strike-call.

[c] The birth of Solidarity

The story of how the Gdansk activists succeeded in winning the shipyard workers to an occupation strike on Thursday 14th August has been often told (Barker 2001; Persky 1981; Potel 1982). It's a narrative full of dramatic incident: young activists smuggling strike posters into the shipyard and putting them up in their departments; sharp arguments with foremen and party loyalists and then walk-outs; a swelling march round the site, pulling out other departments; a halt at the shipyard gates, scene of several workers' deaths in 1970, for a minute's silence followed by singing of the Polish national song; direct confrontation with management; Anna Walentynowicz returning to the shipyard in the manager's car as a condition for negotiations; the immediate election of a strike committee in which management succeeded in including some allies; two days of occupation and talks, ending on Saturday afternoon with an apparent major victory in the shipyard.

A gamut of individual and collective emotions was on display, as the strike moved through crises and moments of celebration: tension, argument and then the activists' relief as workers marched out of their departments; solemn silence and mass singing; a stormy mass meeting, with heckling, applause, and the sudden dramatic appearance of Lech Walesa, a sacked electrician who climbed into the shipyard to lead the strike; Walentynowicz wiping her tears as the workers cheered her return; tense negotiations for two days as the occupying workers barricaded the shipyard for fear of an attack by the militia; anxious crowds gathering at the gates; urgent messages passing back and forth between the shipyard and other striking workplaces in the region.

On the Saturday afternoon, the shipyard management (and through them the regional government) conceded all the workers' immediate demands: a large pay rise, the reinstatement of Walentynowicz and Walesa, plus an unprecedented permit for workers to erect a large monument to the dead of 1970 outside the shipyard gates. The shipyard manager, backed by his supporters on the strike committee, demanded that the occupation strike end immediately. Walesa, as chairman, felt he had no choice but to agree, and announced on the loudspeaker system that the strike was over. Workers began to stream home. The apparent victory in the shipyard launched a crisis in the movement.

Walesa was immediately attacked by representatives of other, smaller workplaces, who had also struck in solidarity with the shipyard workers. If the shipyard returned to work, they would be isolated. Krystyna Krzywonos, the tram workers' strike leader, told Walesa: 'You can't fight with tanks with trams - we'll be crushed like flies.' Some activists were non-plussed. Some, from other

workplaces, marched off angrily. There was confusion, angry shouting, uncertainty. Facing a still fair-sized crowd, Walesa took an instant gamble. 'Who wants to continue the strike?' he asked, and won back a roar of assent. 'The strike continues', he announced.

Walentynowicz and Alina Pienkowska (a nurse from the shipyard hospital) ran to the conference hall to use the microphones. They had been shut off. Outside, they could hear the shipyard director's voice booming from loudspeakers: 'The strike is over; everyone must leave the shipyard by six o'clock, or the agreement will be canceled.' The two women rushed to the walls shared with neighbouring yards, trying to explain that the strike had not been canceled, that a solidarity strike had been declared. The other strike committees angrily said they weren't budging. At Gate 3, the women met a crowd going home. Walentynowicz tried to speak to them, to be faced with an angry worker challenging her right to continue the strike. 'I've got a family, I've got children', he yelled, 'I'm going home.' She burst into tears. Pienkowska, who had never spoken publicly before, took charge, ordering the workers' militia to lock the gates for a few minutes' meeting. 'The strike is still on,' she urged: 'Walesa was out-voted, but the majority of workers want to continue, because there are no guarantees, and no free trade unions. If you leave, the activists will be sacked again. The most important thing is the solidarity of all the factories.' When the gates re-opened, many of her audience stayed.

Estimates vary of the numbers who remained out of the 16,000 workforce. Quite likely there were less than a thousand. The big majority had departed. However, two days of strike activity had now considerably expanded the numbers of the activist minority, for only the most committed stayed. Nonetheless, the strike was now in crisis. Bogdan Lis and Andrzej Gwiazda, feeling betrayed by the ending of the Lenin shipyard strike, had gone back to the Elmor factory, where they delivered bitter speeches, and won agreement to continue the strike. They toured other factories by car, bringing their delegates back to Elmor, to form a new battle-centre. The official media announced the end of the strike. But gradually the situation clarified. Some workers learned at home that the shipyard strike was on again, and returned - a few on their wives' and girlfriends' orders. The Elmor delegates decamped back to the shipyard, and sent out messengers to try to dispel the confusion.

That evening, in the shipyard conference hall, the somewhat battered activists assessed the situation. No compromisers now muddied their debates: all had loyally quit. For good or ill, the activists had full charge, but also a major problem. 21 enterprises were represented, and the strike was holding at all of them. However, the crucial Lenin shipyard workforce was divided between a militant minority and a majority whose feelings and opinions could, since they had dispersed, only be guessed. To continue the strike in these conditions was to face the fearful possibility of overt repression. The security forces might attack at any moment. The tension was considerable. Yet to give up now would be a defeat. If a handful of activists had won over the shipyard workforce once,

could they do it again, especially now that workforce had enjoyed a taste of practical solidarity and the victories it could bring?

Whatever their fears, the activists had committed themselves. That night, they formed a new organization: the Inter-Factory Strike Committee (known by its Polish initials as the MKS). They elected a Praesidium, composed of people prominent in the activist movement. Renewing the workers' militia with warnings to be extra-vigilant, they drew up a new list of demands. The MKS had a precedent, for such bodies had been formed in both Szczecin and Gdansk in the insurgency of 1970-71 (Baluka and Barker 1977; Laba 1991), but the new organization went beyond anything previously declared. Their demands, 21 in number, were now general, addressing the conditions facing the Polish working class at large. At their head was the call for new, free trade unions, smartly followed by the guaranteed right to strike, release of political prisoners, controls over censorship (including the broadcasting of Sunday Mass on state radio), and a list of specific economic demands about wages, pensions health services and social equality. Speaking now for many different enterprises, they had to generalize their demands, but their list clearly had immense political implications, launching the movement onto a new path that challenged the regime's very basis.

Their mobilization problem had also shifted. To win, they must spread the strike far beyond the core enterprises around the shipyards. Simultaneously, they must win back the shipyard workforce, or the heart of the scheme would collapse. Having decided on further action, they proceeded energetically and imaginatively. Over the whole weekend, messengers carried news of the MKS and its new demands to workplaces across the region. And, during Saturday evening's crucial meeting, someone suggested they hold an open-air Mass at the shipyard gates.

Late on Saturday night, they negotiated with the Bishop of Gdansk, who reportedly sought permission from the party authorities. A local priest was found to perform the ceremony. He was so nervous that, before he set out, he made his will (Bloom forthcoming). On Sunday morning, before gates bedecked with flowers, ribbons, flags and a portrait of the Polish pope, the priest began a Field Mass, beside a wooden cross erected at the spot where workers had been killed ten years before. If the Mass had religious significance for many, it also performed a huge mobilizing function. Thousands attended, both from the shipyard and the larger city.

Everything still hung on Monday morning. With the gates flung wide, the main body of the shipyard workforce gathered outside. Over the loudspeakers, the shipyard director could be heard summoning workers back to work. On top of the gate stood Lech Walesa with a bull-horn. 'Come in', he urged cheerfully, 'come in and join us. It will be safe.' The large crowd hesitated, uncertain. Then a group of young workers, cheering, marched out of the crowd to rejoin the strike. Others followed, pulling the rest behind them. The strike was secured again.

Now the MKS regained control of the loudspeakers. The hall became a permanent meeting place, all its sessions and discussions broadcast across the shipyard, and outside to the square beyond. Again, with redoubled energy, the whole shipyard was placed under the control of the strike committee. The bond between activists and workforce was rebuilt. Now attention and energy turned outward, towards the rest of the Polish working class and towards the regime.

During the first Monday, delegations from more striking workplaces began arriving at the shipyard gates, to join the MKS. The workers' militia checked their credentials and led them to the hall. Each arrival was announced with great formality like arrivals at some aristocratic ball and offered the microphone. Each explained where they were from, what was happening in their workplace, and why they were joining (Potel 1982). Every arrival enhanced the sense of collective power. By nightfall, 156 workplaces from the Gdansk region had formally affiliated to the Inter-Factory Strike Committee, adding its delegates to the roll of those entitled to vote. The activists had pulled off one of the great feats of working-class organization in history.

If we looked at the activists' behaviour on the crucial Saturday afternoon and evening from afar, unable to decipher the content of their furiously emotional arguments, we might be tempted, using Blumer's account of 'collective behaviour', to describe them as 'milling', a feature of 'crowd behaviour' un-regulated by common norms (Blumer 1969). In effect, we would deny any real 'sense' to their activity, for a focus only on the emotional aspect of their activity misses its intellectual and purposive content. The heightened emotionality of the activists' dealings with each other - cries of betrayal, tears, furious argument, anger, breaking contact - betoken not a lack of shared norms, but uncertainty and argument about how to apply them in a suddenly transformed situation. Heightened emotionality marked the activists' collective, reciprocal struggle for and - in this case, at least - discovery of a new way forward, better fitting their larger objectives, in a process that Yrjö Engeström terms 'expansive learning' (Engeström 1987).

In effect, the shipyard manager and his allies in the first strike committee had unexpectedly disorganized the activists, pushing them into a difficult tactical situation and compelling them to search for a new creative response. However, if their opponents provided the immediate impulse to change, the existing form of organization, the shipyard strike committee, was anyway inadequate to the activists' general goal of 'free trade unions'. A struggle within a single workplace could indeed unite opposition activists with regime-supporters among the workforce in seeking concessions within the existing political frame. A general struggle for 'free trade unions' demanded something different. By Saturday, the limits of the old form were reached. At this juncture, the movement must either halt and disperse, or convulsively re-gather its forces and step onto a different level of activity and organization. Previous experience had not prepared the activists for this emergent contradiction, and they were thrust into uncertainty

and mistrust of each other before they could, collectively, work out a means to resume their struggle on a higher level.

That, despite bitter words to and about each other, the activists managed to find a way through the dilemmas of the Saturday afternoon depended partly on the sufficient bonds of pre-existing trust amongst themselves (based on two years of previous joint work in conditions of illegality).[14] They had, nonetheless, to re-make their relations with each other, and to broaden the leadership.[15] In the process, some enjoyed 'empowering' individual experiences. Alina Pienkowska, thrust into taking charge at Gate 3, was able to find new resources to master a tense situation, just as her friend Anna broke down in tears. Two previous years of rehearsing leadership and discussing strategy and tactics paid off: Pienkowska, mostly silent in oppositional meetings, had absorbed the key arguments and proved able to articulate them strongly.

[d] Solidarity's burgeoning and its contradictions

Over the next two weeks, the MKS expanded its reach. The number of affiliated workplaces grew to over 600. At Szczecin, a parallel MKS organized 740 workplaces. There was a further MKS at Elblag, then at Wroclaw in Upper Silesia, and finally in the coalmines of Lower Silesia. All adopted the Gdansk 21 demands, centred on free trade unions. Some three million workers joined the occupation strikes.

As numbers expanded, and the MKS activities and demands began to define an emergent crystallization of the 'structure of feeling', unevenness of consciousness, emotional response and organization still defined the field. The regime and the strike committees battled over communications, with telephones cut off and emissaries arrested and beaten up. The regime attempted divide and rule tactics, but failed. Tension was high, heightened by rumours and counter-rumours, and feeding a contradictory and shifting emotional field.

The strain damaged some people. There were nervous breakdowns, panicky withdrawals of strike committee members, epileptic attacks (Bloom forthcoming; Gajda 1982; Kemp-Welch 1983; Pawelec 1982). Individuals failed the test in other ways too. At the Ustka shipyard occupation, for example:

> 'Sunday, August 31.... We waited. That last day meant more strain than the whole two weeks. There were some who could not stand that. One member of the strike

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[14] It was more than 'trust' in the abstract, but rested on a shared orientation to Polish political life. They had concluded together that major institutional change was needed. (They would express those ideas very sharply in the eventual negotiations with the regime.) While their immediate unifying demand was for 'free trade unions', their shared critique of the regime's economics, policies and practices always transcended this.

[15] Broadening the leadership to include significant figures from other factories also meant the *demotion* of many of the initial activists who had started the shipyard strike. They could not all be on the new Praesidium.

committee could not be found since Saturday evening. Finally we learned he was dead drunk in a beer booth, of course with his "Strike Committee" badge on his sleeve. This confirmed the fact that not all the members of the committee had been chosen properly. Of course, the unpleasant measure we had to take was to expel him from the strike committee immediately' (Kaszuba 1982).

Others felt exalted by the struggle. In an extraordinary and passionate memoir of the 1980 strikes, Jan Gajda, a Gdynia port worker, described the meaning of the workplace masses:

'To understand the renaissance of the cross in Poland one had to experience the inner rebirth and the days of purification. For the onlookers the cross was merely a relic two thousand years old and nothing more, For us, strikers, it was something much more because of our (unconscious) identification with Christ. We were ready to take the cross on our own shoulders, the cross in the form of the caterpillar tracks of the tanks. To understand that one has to be a mystic or to have experienced that oneself.'

Anything but an obedient son of the church, Gajda sharply criticized the Cardinal for not supporting the strikes:

'I called out in my own mind... how much did they offer you for that? And how much more did they promise you? Good Lord! '

Nor was the 'Polish Pope' immune from his spiritual criticism: basically, this Prince of the Church failed to see that Christ himself returned to Poland in August 1980:

'...when the Word became Flesh, the Vicar or Christ failed to recognize the Messiah under the overalls of the people of the coastal region.... (Christ) deigned to put on a coarse overall, sweaty, dirty, and stinking of alcohol' (Gajda 1982).[16]

Other workers' memoirs recall time spent fishing in a workplace canal, playing practical jokes, running card schools, reading and writing poetry and songs, organizing sports, and building up souvenir collections of strike memorabilia (Gajda 1982, Kuczma 1982, Pawelec 1982). Andrzej Wajda, the Polish film director, who visited the Gdansk MKS, reported his impression of 'immense calm', in the same period that Walesa recalled when the strike kept 'collapsing all the time'.

However, two weeks of mass occupation strikes altered relations between the workers' movement and the regime, registered in an altering balance away from fear-and-disorganization and towards hope-and-organization. The impulse to organization registered not simply in numbers affiliating to the MKS's, but in the new forms of material-social order the strikers were developing. In the factories, a workers' militia controlled entry, banning alcohol from the occupations and preparing defences in case of attack. Strike committees

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[16] A similar idea inspired a series of carvings I saw in a church garden near Warsaw in 1986: an extra 'station of the cross' was added at the end, showing Christ standing triumphant, two fingers raised in a peace sign, with a Solidanosc badge on his breast.

organized the feeding of the occupiers, in some cases in conjunction with local farmers who brought in supplies.

Where the organization of material supplies was poorly developed, there were corresponding tangible effects on morale. At the Predom Metrix factory, a strike committee member recalled, 'I must admit that part of our people were not quite in high spirits. Probably because we had not solved well the problems of sleeping accommodations and food as a sit-down strike required' (Szylak 1982). At Gdynia port, the occupation committee organized policing, trial and punishment of theft from the bonded warehouses (Gajda 1982). Across Gdansk, the MKS took control of trams, taxis and lorries, and a canning factory was re-opened on the committee's instructions to process fish landed by the Baltic fleet. There was nascent 'workers' control'.

The very assembling of a 'solidarity' or crystallizing a 'structure of feeling' into a shared collective stance takes argument, reformulation, the questioning of previous assumptions and stances and the learning of new perspectives and thus the reconfiguring of social relations. It also involves changing the balance of loyalties and antagonisms. There was a symptomatic moment during one of the many meetings in the shipyard hall, when delegates first applauded a personnel manager who urged them to plead with the Party General Secretary to meet them, and then turned on him in fury when Walentynowicz revealed that he was the one who had sacked her (Barker 2001; Garton Ash 1983). What is interesting in the episode is the sharp transition from applause to excoriation. Had the interchange - and others of which we lack a record - not happened, and with the results it did, the MKS could not have stood together for two weeks and achieved what it did. In accepting the new way of looking at both themselves and the powerful, and at the possibilities for transformed relations among themselves that this perspective offered, the workplace representatives were, at the same time, building a new loyalty, a new organization, and accepting a new directive discipline. (The fact that this emerged out of democratic debate, out of arguments and counter-arguments, does not make it any the less disciplinary.)

The organizational form adopted to struggle for 'free trade unions' transcended normal trade-union forms. The MKS was highly open and democratic. Its assemblies debated and voted on ongoing policy. When negotiations finally began, they were conducted, not in closed sessions involving a handful of leaders, but in front of microphones, the proceedings broadcast across the shipyard and into the public square beyond. All workers belonged to the same single organization, without distinction of industry, occupation, or collar-colour; the MKS demands mixed together 'political' and 'economic' issues; and these organizations were taking control of some essential material processes. In form, the MKS's were closer to the 'workers councils' or 'soviets' of Russia and Germany in 1917 and 1918-19 than to western models of trade unionism.[17] In

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[17] In August 1980 they did not mobilize peasants, police or military: those questions would arise later - successfully in the case of farmers, disastrously in the police and army cases.

their critiques of existing society, politics and economy (debated in the MKS assemblies for two weeks and voiced very clearly in the negotiations), in their demands and also in their activities and organizational forms, the MKS's embodied the outlines of a different societal form from that defended by the regime. Rousseau's famous sentence, 'Man is born free but is everywhere in chains', became a slogan of the movement, published on occupied factory gates, and quoted at the regime during the Gdansk negotiations.

After two weeks of mass strikes, the government signed agreements at the Lenin Shipyard and with the other MKS's. The strike movements' growing strength had compelled the regime to engage in long negotiations, forcing them both to listen to - and in part accept - an extraordinary dossier of grievances that touched on most aspects of Polish political life, from economic mis-management to abuse of the judicial process, and, finally, to accede publicly to every one of the strikers' 21 Points, along with the immediate release of arrested dissidents.[18] The Gdansk agreement was signed on 31st August in front of the world's TV cameras, like the conclusion of a treaty between two sovereign powers (which indeed it resembled). Walesa was carried shoulder-high through cheering crowds.

The MKS had asserted, for Poland's workers, a new collective identity and social status, a claim with considerable affective-attractive power. That the regime was compelled to recognize this, at least publicly, only strengthened its appeal. While small groups of activists had initiated the struggle, the achievements had been the product of three million workers making it their own, identifying with the movement and its demands and transforming their individual and collective identities in a process of communicative social agency. In the course of the strikes, meanings, feelings, social relations, personalities were tested, explored, re-shaped, amplified or muted. As people rooted the ongoing narratives of the strike movement in their individual autobiographies, real processes of both empowerment and disempowerment (especially for the regime and is supporters) occurred, of 'cognitive and emotional liberation.'

The process was always risky, capable of turning out differently. The initiators had to put their orienting perspectives to the practical test of others' judgment, in interaction with more numerous voices. The huge, passionate dialogue (verbal and practical) of August was the mechanism for patterning and cementing new ideas, practices, institutions. This was a process of 'interactive discovery' (Barker 2001). As word of the events spread among the wider population, that audience too was preparing to respond further.

Within days, a meeting of delegates agreed to form a national body, the Self-Governing Independent Trade Union, Solidarity with its now famous logo. They

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[18] The entire proceedings at Gdansk were tape-recoded and transcribed. An English translation of the complete transcript is available (Kemp-Welch 1983); I offer some analysis of the proceedings (Barker 2001).

adopted the structure of one big general union, federating of regional bodies, replicating the MKS form.

The new movement grew at an extraordinary pace. Membership rose in a few months to around ten million, some 80% of the total workforce, and a majority of workers in almost every industry and occupation. (Only among school-teachers did Solidarity fail to win a majority - 48% joined (Barker 1987a).) In recruiting them, Solidarity also transformed its members. The very act of participating in a founding meeting, often in defiance of local bosses, meant breaching old habits of submission, forging new bonds of loyalty. What had seemed to millions to be a relatively closed door of 'political opportunities' was rapidly kicked open after the August victory. Andrzej Gwiazda, Solidarity's vice-president, later described his experiences at a meeting of workers in the book trade: 'There I could see with my own eyes how a workers' assembly, divided into groups and grouplets, terrified by the presence of the manager and other official figures, and with absolutely no faith in the possibilities of success, transformed itself into a fighting, democratic organization after four hours of discussion.' (cited in Harman 1983). This had its own emotional valences. When the powerful stutter, we dare look them in the eye, openly expressing previously repressed feelings and ideas. The very fact of starting to make collective demands and take organized action to win them, in turn, opened participants to voices and experiences they could not previously access. 'Dissidents' now came to seem reasonable people, not the 'foreign agents' the Party media had portrayed.

Across Poland, growth came through strikes and conflicts. The August settlement unleashed a surge of demands and sharp local and regional conflicts, mostly ending in Solidarity victories. The union's growth expanded members' horizons and demands, and their willingness to mobilize for them. Their struggles reached into new areas of social and political life. Strike targets included the security police, corrupt officials, the use of public buildings, health service organization, food supplies. During November, the union in Silesia organized searches of warehouses, to check if there was cheating in the rationing system (there was). One commented, 'The Solidarity people in Huta did not stop to consider whether this was in their field of competence. They just did it'. In other spheres, and Polish regions, workers were posing other demands with political implications (Barker 1986).

Even amongst workers, Solidarity had from the start been more than a simple trade union concerned with wages and working conditions. It touched the nerve of Polish independence, it won the Church the right to weekly religious broadcasts, it raised issues about civil and political liberties, Polish justice, and international military alliances, it voiced aspirations to general democratization. Its very existence and its successes challenged the ruling order. As such, Solidarity speedily drew behind its banners all manner of other oppressed and exploited social groups.

Students moved first, with a rash of college occupations and the formation of officially recognized 'independent, self-governing' student unions. Among Poland's three million small farmers, previously spasmodic agitation bore fruit in a spate of demands for a Peasants' Solidarity. Prisoners in Poland's goals organized and formulated demands. Other movements and organizations were inwardly transformed, including tenants, allotment-holders, ecologists, journalists, artists, actors, writers, even philatelists. 'Independent, self-governing' bodies sprang up everywhere. Even the notorious queues outside shops began to organize. Polish society in the autumn and winter of 1980-81 enjoyed what one writer called 'an orgy of participation'. Through these activities, 'collective identities' were transformed, with powerful emotional consequences. Public happiness grew, along with openly voiced scorn for the regime. Reported alcohol consumption and suicide rates fell. 'For the first time', one participant wrote, 'I feel at home in my own country'.

Michael Young points out that, in a whole series of movements, 'identity transformations or conversions, understood as radical and emotional alterations of the self, are constitutive of radical collective action. Appreciating them as such requires attending to the emotional dynamic of transformative cultural schemas....' (Young 2001). Elizabeth Wood, writing about Salvadorean peasants whose reasons for rebellion included assertion of their own dignity, suggests that exercising agency, under their own control, in the realization of their perceived interests, demonstrated the emergence of a new insurgent political culture based on solidarity, citizenship, equality and entitlement. She comments that the emotional benefits of this were only available to those who actually participated in the rebellion (Wood 2001). What was distinctive in Poland in the autumn of 1981 was that most people participated, and their participation was mutual and inter-communicative.

In parallel, the Polish authorities' power was weakening in all directions. Many officials lost their positions. In 'normal' times, nine of the 49 provincial Party First Secretaries would change each year. There were 22 such changes in the last four months of 1980, and another 31 in the first six months of 1981 (Lewis 1985). Every regime attempt to regain lost ground seemed to set off an avalanche of protest, expanding popular movements and their demands and disorganizing the rulers.

There was a new 'political-emotional balance' in society. Sometimes, Raymond Williams argues, literary works can produce a 'shock of recognition' that helps to focus and crystallize an inchoate and germinal 'structure of feeling'. In Poland, for a period, the 'figure' which produced that shock of recognition was no literary work, but the collective organization of Solidarity itself, giving more definite articulation to popular confidence, hopes and identities. Its capacity to harness and express people's feelings, hopes and wants, to attract their enthusiastic energies, and to provide a new and vibrant sense of shared identity, in turn depended on its successes in surmounting a whole series of difficulties and winning.

We might still talk of a 'structure of feeling', but it was one with very different inner tendencies. By comparison with previously, people were less fearful (or, less people were fearful, or people were fearful for less time...), more detached from the regime and the Party, more attached to Solidarity. More people participated in, and enjoyed, collective action. People became easier with new terms, and new social relations. They felt more collectively empowered, more confident about their own lives and futures. In any emotional dimension, it is a matter of 'more and less', majorities and minorities, never of simple homogeneity.

All such developments find their parallel in the heady early phases of other popular proto-revolutionary movements. 'The beautiful revolution', 'the revolution of flowers', 'the springtime of the peoples', 'moment of madness', 'Bliss was it in that very dawn to be alive' - such phrases catch the early and enthusiastic moments of popular mobilization, when a profound sense of general optimism and, above all, unity arises, a unity of a whole broad movement that rejects an oppressive past and welcomes a bright future. The question is always: What comes next? Marx, writing in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (29 June 1848) about the June uprising in Paris, suggests that the initial unity and beauty is but temporary:

> 'The February revolution was the beautiful revolution, the revolution of universal sympathy, because the conflicts which erupted in the revolution against the monarchy slumbered harmoniously side by side, as yet undeveloped, because the social struggle which formed its background had only assumed an airy existence - it existed only as a phrase, only in words. The June revolution is the ugly revolution, the repulsive revolution, because realities have taken the place of words, because the republic has uncovered the head of the monster itself by striking aside the protective, concealing crown.' (Marx 1973)

What was Solidarity, and what might it become? The 'free trade union' demand - unprecedented in its successful assertion across the whole of the 'communist' world - remained deeply ambiguous. What exactly was to be the relationship between Solidarity, with its vastly enhanced attractive power and authority across almost the entire Polish population, and the regime? What exactly was Solidarity, anyway, and what might it become? And what kind of internal regime would Solidarity develop among its own members? Those were matters still to be settled in practice. Touraine and his colleagues explored the ambiguities, seeing Solidarity as at once a trade union, a movement for democracy and a national liberation movement (Touraine 1983). It was all those, and more besides.

If the movement's identity was ambiguous, so was the situation its emergence had created. The closest analogy to political relations in Poland in the winter of 1980-81 was that familiar to students of revolution: 'dual power'. A weakened regime, with a much reduced capacity to form and impose its autonomous will, faced a huge and growing popular insurgency, each side embodying distinct principles and aspirations. It was a situation that could not last: its 'logic' was that one side must crush or deflect the other. And the matter did not lack

urgency, with economic crisis deepening, and the Kremlin pressing the regime to 'restore order'.

Neither side was, however, yet in any position to resolve the situation definitively. The regime would have liked to weaken and break the popular movement, but lacked conviction and means. As for Solidarity, its own leaders and advisers held it back.

Solidarity's existing leadership gave the impression of people who had unleashed tidal forces they could not control. Leading activists expressed worry that Solidarity supporters wanted too much from their movement. For them it was a problem that the movement was drawing around itself all the aroused hoped and expectations of society. Jacek Kuron told an activists' meeting in December 1980:

> 'The main difficulty is that people's attitude towards the government ... is characterized by frustration and increased antipathy in all areas. The result is that when any conflict arises between Solidarity and the government, no matter on what question, we always get tremendous support. On the other hand, any understanding, no matter how favourable to the union it may be, arouses dissatisfaction, or - to use perhaps a better word - disappointment among the people.'

And Bogdan Borusewicz, an activist from Gdansk, declared:

> 'At this moment, people expect more of us than we can possibly do. Normally, society focuses on the Party. In Poland nowadays, however, society gathers around the free trade unions. That's a bad thing. Thus there is an increasing necessity to formulate a political programme. It would be good if the party took the lead and removed people's social expectations from our shoulders. But will it do so now? In the eyes of the people the new trade union should do everything: they should fill the role of trade unions, participate in the administration of the country, be a political party and act as a militia, that is confine drunkards and thieves, they should teach morals - and that's a great problem for us.' (Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, 4:4-6 1981 p 15),

There is a remarkable parallel between the Polish situation and that in Russia after the February Revolution, as Leon Trotsky described it:

> 'The workers, soldiers and peasants took events seriously. They thought that the soviets which they had created ought to undertake immediately to remove those evils which had caused the revolution. They all ran to the Soviet. Everybody brought his pains there. And who was without pains? They demanded decisions, hoped for help, awaited justice, insisted upon indemnification. Solicitors, complainers, petitioners, exposers, all came assuming that at last they had replaced a hostile power with their own. The people believe in the Soviet, the people are armed, therefore the Soviet is the sovereign power. That was the way they understood it. And were they not indeed right? An uninterrupted flood of soldiers, workers, soldiers' wives, small traders, clerks, mothers, fathers, kept opening and shutting the doors, sought, questioned, wept, demanded, compelled action - sometimes even indicating what action — and converted the Soviet in very truth into a revolutionary government. Sukhanov complained that that was not at

all in the interest of the Soviet, and did not enter at all into its plans.... ' (Trotsky 1965)

Why did this enthusiasm for Solidarity alarm rather than exhilarate the leaders and advisers? At root, because they were committed to a perspective with a simple central proposition: 'Don't go too far!'[19] In reality, the 'trade union' formula was proving too constricting for the real character of the movement, but no viable alternative was emerging. Sizeable numbers of Solidarity members criticized the leaders for being 'too soft' in relation to specific events, but no one focused these criticisms into an organized opposition within the movement.

The leaders' predominant response was to try to stem the onward rush of their own side. Their initial efforts in this direction, however, were unconvincing. The Solidarity tide continued to sweep all before it through the winter and into the spring, with strikes and other battles erupting all across the country, further undermining the regime's credibility and political resources and enhancing the popular sense of collective empowerment. It thus took a while for Solidarity's inner contradictions to come to a head. The first three months of 1981 witnessed a series of major national and regional strikes, with material conditions slowly worsening and continuing agitation for recognition of a Solidarity-backed peasants' union.

[e] The 31st March crisis and its aftermath

It was out of this last issue that a general crisis emerged. Solidarity members, meeting at Bydgoszcz, on 19th March, to support peasant demands, were seriously beaten by large numbers of police, clearly acting under orders. The Bydgoszcz region erupted into general strike, issuing posters of the victims' battered faces. This was the first time Solidarity had faced serious state violence. The national union, after some argument, called a four-hour national strike on 28th March, to be followed, if that failed, by an unlimited general strike from 31st March.

The four-hour strike was completely solid. Poland simply stopped. Even official TV programmes shut down. If 28th March was a dress rehearsal for the 31st, it seemed the full-scale production would be a considerable success. The atmosphere in Poland was electric. There were active preparations for a major confrontation, including designating strike headquarters in each region, assembly of foodstuffs, sleeping and barricade materials.

When members of the Politburo favoured declaring an immediate emergency, and using force to break the strike, the Prime Minister (and Defence Minister) General Jaruzelski threatened to resign: probably he could not be sure of his troops' loyalty in such a crisis. Jaruzelski, though, had a sharper card to play: he turned to the Catholic Church for aid. Both the Pope and Cardinal Wyszynski

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[19] Historians of revolution will remember Saint-Just's warning: Those who make a revolution halfway dig their own graves.

called for restraint; Walesa attended a private meeting with Wyszynski, and the Church's advisers to the union leadership also applied pressure. At the last moment, without informing or involving the rest of the union leadership, Walesa and a few advisers negotiated secretly with the regime. He then appeared on TV on 30th March, announcing the cancellation of the general strike.

Responses to this sudden turn-around were, not surprisingly, mixed and confused. Some were doubtless relieved. A considerable minority were very angry, calling the deal 'Walesa's Munich'. The sense of betrayal made some people physically ill. One young woman from Warsaw spoke for many:

> 'It was the beginning of the end, a breaking of the spirit. I felt physically ill, so depressed I wanted to die. It was such a terrible mistake. I don't think it would actually have come to a strike, the authorities would have backed down. The Russians? They wouldn't have come. It would have meant too bloody a struggle. They knew we'd fight to the end.' (Craig 1986)

The Bydgoszcz activists denounced the deal from their hospital beds. Solidarity's press spokesman resigned, calling Walesa a feudal monarch with flattering courtiers. Walentynowicz's fierce criticisms led to her removal from the Gdansk branch Praesidium. Andrzej Gwiazda, who felt he'd been duped, published an open letter to Walesa. accusing the chairman of undemocratic practices.

March 31st was a 'turning point' in Solidarity's development (Abbott 1997; Bloom 1999). Suddenly there was an almost complete halt in popular mobilizations and strikes, lasting for three months. While Solidarity membership did not drop, attendance at union meetings fell off rapidly. Among workers, especially, there was disorientation: when elections for Solidarity's forthcoming Congress were held up and down Poland, few workers put themselves forward, as speeches were required, and they did not know what to say. Many election meetings were inquorate (Myant 1981). An opinion poll in June-July found that 70 per cent of Polish workers felt they had no influence on social life (Staniszkis 1984).

The Bydgoszcz crisis illuminated the degree to which, at a key moment, the previous internal democracy of Solidarity had been replaced by bureaucratized decision-making by a few leaders and advisers. The crisis also brought to the fore the question, what exactly was Solidarity, and what should it become? The term 'trade union' became ever less adequate. Zbigniew Bujak, chair of the Warsaw regional branch, told his factory: 'If we consider ourselves merely as a trade union, as the government expects us to, then we must think of ourselves as a trade union of seamen on a sinking ship.' (Barker 1987a)

After Bydgoszcz, argument would grow within Solidarity, practically and theoretically, about what course the sinking ship should now take. What should Solidarity do? How should it struggle, and for what? Who should lead, and with what policies? The arguments would be about the movement's very life and death.

Solidarity's internal debates had some limited time and space to develop, for the regime could not take full advantage of the sudden popular demobilization. The ruling Party was deeply divided: its working-class members had mostly broken discipline and joined Solidarity's 28th March strike, and an unprecedented 'horizontal' discussion movement developed within the its own ranks demanding more openness and Party democracy. It took some months for the core regime leadership to restore some semblance of control in a shrinking Party - and, eventually, to decide privately to bypass the Party in favour of direct military rule.

Inside Solidarity itself, there was a dual movement. On one hand, the de-activation of the rank-and-file membership continued for several months. On the other hand, more radical ideas began to spread among the activists, notably about economic self-management - both to contest Party management in workplaces, and to handle the deepening economic crisis. However, these discussions happened mostly in small circles of activists and intellectuals, relatively cut off from the mass of members, little involved in these developments. Zbigniew Bujak reported that, when he raised the issue of self-management in his own factory, workers didn't understand him: not anyway, until, he said it would lead to taking of power. But that was off the agenda (Barker 1986). Zbigniew Kowalewski quotes the Polish sociologist, Jadwiga Staniszkis: 'I fear that the language of the leaders is not very convincing for the rank and file.... Even the slogans of socialization and self-management sat little to the imagination of the masses. It is no accident that it is easier to promote self-management by talking about seizing economic power, as I do, or by talking about an active strike, as Kowalewski does in Lodz.' (Kowalewski 1982)

The economic crisis deepened, shortages multiplied. Food shortages were becoming desperate, with people queuing all night to get their basic ration entitlements. In the summer meat rations were cut by 20 percent. A senior government official stated, 'One-third of the country's workforce is standing in a queue at any one time'. A Solidarity newspaper claimed that malnutrition was hugely reducing miners' productivity (Harman 1983). From July onwards, after three months of silence, two new surges of collective action began. First, there were large 'hunger marches' in numbers of cities, organized by local Solidarity branches, but with no national involvement. Second, from July until mid-November, a wave of 'wildcat strikes' contested the worsening economic situation and raised other, broader grievances (Barker 1986, 1987a). The national leadership responded, not by attempting to lead the strikes, but by rushing about the country 'firefighting' - and even backing government calls for an end to the unrest for the sake of 'the country'. Thus, though popular activism recovered for several months, Solidarity nationally refused it any active articulation, indeed sought to defuse it.

Even so, Solidarity was compelled to change its own account of itself. By the time of its autumn National Congress, the 'trade union' formula was replaced with a new self-description: Solidarity now described itself officially as a 'social

movement' aiming at the complete reform of Polish society, and seeking a 'Self-Governing Republic'.[20] There was much to admire in the new Programme, except that it consistently evaded a critical question: how to implement the changes it suggested? No practical arguments were advanced. It proposed goals that were, in the context of Polish politics, revolutionary, shattering the existing framework of political life, but no revolutionary means were suggested. When it won recognition as a 'trade union', Solidarity had accepted 'limitations' on its own activity and scope, recognizing 'the leading role of the Party in the state'.[21] Now, despite publicly aiming to remake completely Polish social and political institutions, the leadership still sought to remain within existing legal bounds. The tensions of 'self-limitation' had not been removed, only lifted to a higher plane.

A further difficulty: the Congress that decided these matters had quite low working-class representation. The silence of workers in the aftermath of March 31st, noted above, meant that few of the candidates for regional delegates to the Congress were workers. Members of the intelligentsia were less diffident about speaking at the selection meetings, and they dominated the delegations. Half the Congress delegates had degrees; only a quarter were manual workers (Barker 1986). There were less carriers of rank-and-file opinion from the mass membership.

Popular disquiet - at the growing economic crisis, at the growing gap between Solidarity's leadership and its base, at its apparent practical ineffectiveness - did find a kind of partial expression in 'radical' tendencies that emerged within the movement. But none proved able to offer any practical alternative to Solidarity's leadership. Their criticisms of the leadership were often rancorous and personalistic; their general arguments for more radical programmes were not translated into new forms of organization or proposals for alternative forms of activity, hence remained abstract. None, for example, worked to unify or organize active support for the 'wildcat' strikes of summer and autumn, where they might have built a base; none warned of the threat of military takeover, or challenged Solidarity's failure to organize in the restive and mostly conscript military; none organized solidarity demonstrations when large numbers of civil police wanted to form their own 'Solidarity' union.

Andrezj Gwiazda, a key figure in Gdansk, was emblematic of the radicals' weakness. At the Autumn Congress, he was one of three oppositionists who offered themselves as alternative candidates to Walesa for national Chairman of Solidarity. Each candidate was allowed 20 minutes to answer questions from

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[20] The complete text of Solidarity's new Programme was translated in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, 5.1, spring 1982.

[21] For accounts of how that formula was smuggled into the final agreement, and the controversy involved, see Barker (1986, 1987), and the invaluable testimony of two of the intellectual delegation from Warsaw that helped with the smuggling (Kowalik 1983; Staniszkis 1981).

delegates. Asked why he was standing, Gwiazda replied only: 'Because the rules allow me to do so.' He and his supporters had developed no alternative project or vision, hence the only matter up for debate and decision was the man and not a distinct way forward. There were good ideas: for example, 'winter aid committees' to ensure that the old did not suffer from food and coal shortages in the approaching winter, but putting that into practice would require a measure of political power, and taking and organizing that power was on no one's agenda. Good ideas without muscle to back them remain empty words.

It had become clear to the regime that purely political means could not defeat Solidarity, and they turned to the military for salvation. Its plans were revealed as early as September, but Solidarity ignored the warning (Barker 1987a). From October, General Jaruzelski combined in his hands three offices: party secretary, prime minister, defence minister. Walesa almost welcomed the news: 'At least it means power is concentrated in one man's hands. What we need is a strong reasonable government we can negotiate with' (The Guardian (London), 20 October 1981). The military began drawing up lists of people to arrest. The regime moved carefully, still camouflaging its plans, but testing the resistance with small local attacks against Solidarity members. In the spring, physical attacks were signals for mass strikes, now they aroused nothing more than scattered local protests.

The strike wave ran on into early November, with the union leadership still calling for an end to 'elemental and unorganized protests'. In the middle of the month, the strike wave petered out, largely through sheer exhaustion and disappointment. Jadwiga Staniszkis wrote in November, 'Many [ordinary workers] feel alienated, as if they were a mass levy to be raised and later disbanded. Tired of the hardships of everyday life, they are less and less inclined to involve themselves in union activity' (Staniszkis 1982). Many workers fell back into angry apathy. Modzelewski described the mood on 3rd December: 'The trade union has not become stronger, it has become weaker, and all activists are aware of this. There are several reasons for this: weariness as a result of the crisis, weariness at the end of a line. Some people blame us for the prolongation of this state of affairs' (*Washington Post*, 20 December 1981).

Some activists began to turn to talk of 'political parties', but never to the idea of party-formation inside Solidarity. The most promising potential development was a hardening militant group, centred on Lublin and Lodz, emphasizing the need for workers' control and 'economic planning from below', and arguing for 'active strikes' in which workers would take actual control over production as part of a 'strategy of struggle for workers' power.' Had their proposals gained support, they might have re-connected the union with its membership in new forms of collective action (Kowalewski 1982, 1985).

In the last days, as the regime further raised the temperature, there were late signs of radical hardening of attitudes among the leadership. On Saturday 12th December, the National Commission met, in its most radical mood, voting to oppose emergency powers legislation with a general strike. But it was too late.

That night they were all arrested and interned. Martial law was declared at 6 a.m. on Sunday.

Cardinal Glemp broadcast an appeal to people not to fight back. There were strikes, but not that many. They were broken by direct military means. Two pits in Lower Silesia held three-week underground occupations. When the miners finally emerged, they were shocked to discover that they were alone in their action, unable to believe the whole of Poland was not on strike with them. In truth, even before the military clampdown, a sense of defeat had already spread among large sections of Solidarity's members. The success of Jaruzelski's coup depended on the de-mobilized condition of Solidarity's rank and file.

[f] Concluding Remarks

The very scale of Solidarity's victories and its subsequent expansion took the movement into uncharted territory, where old conceptual maps no longer sufficed. The simple, expanding unity of the first seven months of Solidarity indicated the movement's immense potentials, but also concealed important contradictions: the insufficient 'free trade union' formula, leadership ambivalence about its own movement's radicalism, the conservatizing influence of 'mediating' forces such as the Catholic Church and the Polish intelligentsia. The 'moral shock' of the March 31st debacle indicated the need for re-thinking.

David Harvey provides a business analogy, where altered economic networks can weaken or destroy capitalist concerns who fail to adapt: 'The identity of the players and the culture of the corporation, acquired under a certain regime of spatio-temporality, prevents doing what obviously ought to be done in order to survive under another' (Harvey 1996). Solidarity, to survive the growing threats to its very existence, needed new identities and culture, and ways to overcome resistances to change. Its goals and its stance towards the regime required revision, along with its own internal rules, procedures and social relations. Existing loyalties and social ties must necessarily come under scrutiny, if it was to develop some new 'crystallization' of its own character more or less adequate to the new situation.

Perhaps the most critical question was whether Solidarity could draw a new map of the situation it both found itself in and constituted. That required clearly formulating and finding sufficient answers to some important questions. What kind of opponent was the regime after Solidarity's 'recognition', and how might it develop? Was 'partnership' with the regime desirable, even possible? Could the regime solve the economic crisis, which was sapping Solidarity's own support as much as the regime's? Or must Solidarity alter its stance, and seek to substitute itself and its own power-potential for the regime? What should it offer its disappointed and fragmenting membership? Were Solidarity's current forms of organization and ideas a barrier to change?

The crisis in the movement after 31st March could, and did, have a variety of effects on how people felt. A 'turning point' can provide excitement, provoking

curiosity and potential creativity, energizing people towards new ways of looking at the world and themselves, and fostering new projects. It can equally depress and de-energize, promoting negativity, withdrawal, cynicism, disappointed hopes. It can gain hearings for people and ideas, previously more marginal and ignored. It can also provoke a conservative response, blaming previous radicalism for current difficulties and seeking to contain new impulses.

As Marshall Ganz suggests, the pattern of formation of leadership circles can play a significant role. Leaderships that draw on diverse constituencies and experiences have access to a wider range of options, enhancing potential creativity in conditions of uncertainty (Ganz 2000). Where voices are excluded, the potential for creative transcendence of inherited patterns of thought and feeling is reduced. Exclusions - they were part of Solidarity's culture after March 31st - pose a potential question to the excluded: should they organize some independent space to develop and express their views and feelings? In Solidarity, that would have meant bypassing leadership calls for 'unity' in pursuit of democracy, and developing 'proto-party' formations, or factions inside the movement. If that did not happen, then dissidents would tend to feel suffocated and either to withdraw or become personalistic in their criticisms.

There was a kind of 'crystallization' after March 31st, but it tended to promote uncertainty rather than clarity. Many Solidarity members were disorientated. There was widespread unfocused mistrust, producing division, loss of a sense of collective identity and purpose that, in the end, turned into widespread dissociation, angry withdrawal, and sometimes hostile individualism. In the last weeks, there were reports of people fighting in queues, where previously they had organized to make things fairer. Loss of belief, paralysis of will, and a festering angry disappointment marked Solidarity's final period.

Literature on other movements offers some insights into the dilemmas of Solidarity's final months. In a rare discussion of movements facing theoretico-practical impasses, Kim Voss's account of the decline of the Knights of Labor offers the concept of 'cognitive encumbrance' (Voss 1996). The opposite of McAdam's 'cognitive liberation', this signifies that existing strategic formulations feel inadequate, offering no apparent way forward. It has, of course, important emotional aspects: loss of confidence in the movement, a sense of aimlessness, pointlessness, defeatism, diffuse anger, bewilderment. 'Encumbrance' is a cognitive-affective complex, a condition of stalled mutual learning. Debra King refers to 'emotional dissonance created through changing ideological frames' (King 2005). The Solidarity case suggests a particular kind of 'emotional dissonance' when the need to change ideological frames arises, through crises in a movement's development. What till now has seemed effective no longer appears certain, and a watchful, questioning, stance emerges which - whether uncomfortable or enjoyable - requires some kind of resolution.

Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta propose a distinction between reciprocal and shared emotions. The former refers to activists' feelings for each other, the close

affective ties of friendship, love, solidarity etc within a movement, while the latter are shared among group members, but their objects are outside the group, like outrage at the government. They comment, 'Reciprocal and shared emotions, although distinct, reinforce each other, thereby building a movement's culture' (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001). One has to say, it all depends! In crises, such bonds are tested severely. Shared emotions towards the regime started to differentiate within Solidarity, with mutual charges of 'softness' and 'extremism' echoing in discussions, matching more or less articulated differences in stances towards the regime. Reciprocal feelings were complexified by mistrust, antagonism and division.[22]

These and other schemas[23] suffer from being too static: they capture 'conditions' but not narrative. Discussing the 1917 revolution, Trotsky suggests that the popular movement proceeded by 'the method of successive approximations' towards shared acceptance of 'all power to the soviets' as a solution to their difficulties.[24] Solidarity's evolution in its last months also reveals 'successive approximations' occurring, but no group was, in a sense, 'pointing the way' and giving dialogic direction to a radicalization of the activist layers. And matters of timing of development became critical, as the regime itself was using the same 'method' to work out how it might strike Solidarity down. Prolonged disorientation without decisive resolution is liable to promote loss of confidence and mutuality, as dialogue is partially stalled and contained.

There was a 'missing link' within Solidarity, in the shape of an emerging 'left current' that pointed to the threat from the regime, and the need to undermine it and work to directly substitute Solidarity's own power for it. To explain that absence, we would need to review the history of the Left in the West as much as in the East in that period.[25]

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[22] Part of the difficulty is that Goodwin *et al* only discuss situations of movement *emergence*, when their observations apply quite well. Matters are more complex in movement crises.

[23] Gould (2001) discusses 'ambivalence', but her focus is more on feelings about one's situation in society than about the movement that challenges that situation. Jochen Kleres invokes 'shame' as the predominant explanatory emotion to account for the decline of gay activism in post-*Wende* East Germany (Kleres 2005). That mechanism seems to offer little purchase on the Solidarity experience. Colin Barker and Michael Lavalette explore the implications of a sense of constricted possibility on the Liverpool dockers' struggle in the 1990s (Barker and Lavalette 2002). Relevant comparisons might also be drawn with the later history of SNCC, whose members began to 'eat on each other' (Barker and Cox 2002).

[24] The passage reads: 'The fundamental political process of the revolution ... consists in the gradual comprehension by a class of the problems arising from the social crisis - the active orientation of the masses by a method of successive approximations. The different stages of a revolutionary process, certified by a change of parties in which the more extreme always supersedes the less, express the growing pressure to the left of the masses - so long as the swing of the movement does not run into objective obstacles. When it does, there appears a reaction: disappointment of the different layers of the revolutionary class, growth of indifferentism, and therewith a strengthening of the counter-revolutionary forces.' (Trotsky 1965)

[25] I offered some remarks on the question in Barker and Weber (1982).

Solidarity's defeat was immensely consequential. The regime's turn to sheer military power to crush Solidarity, proved fateful for 'communism'. Dispensing with politics and The Party, Jaruzelski and his collaborators widened the road to 1989. On the other hand, after its defeat, while Solidarity was never crushed, its working-class base declined further. Increasingly intelligentsia-based, it gave up on dreams of economic self-management in favour of neo-liberalism (Barker 1990b). As such, it helped shape the 'purely political' 1989 revolutions across Eastern Europe (Barker and Mooers 1997), providing ammunition to the liberal triumphalism of Fukuyama and others.

The history remains relevant today. If nothing else, the Polish movement tested to destruction the suicidal proposition that mass movements should seek to 'change the world without taking power.'[26] That route, Solidarity's fate reveals, leads to misery.

Appendix: a note on emotions in crises and rituals

There is, perhaps, an interesting contrast, in terms of the forms of collective activity and their associated emotional dimensions, between those we see during crises and those we see in collective rituals.

In an earlier essay (Barker 2001), I offered some remarks on emotions and ritual, drawing on work by Strathern and Stewart (1998). I summarise the argument. During collective rituals, people use their bodies to personify [a] who they are and [b] what they intend to become within a given social setting. Rituals, collective performances in which bodies are sensuously active together, are (like other forms of action) emotion-laden, but the emotional aspect is not separable from other aspects of its content. Engaging in ritual action is a way of communicating whole complexes of meaning. It is a 'shorthand' form of communication, capable of unifying different actors who may have a variety of specific ideas around a particular shared experience. Ritual action is a sign both to oneself and to others, taking 'choral' or 'multivocal' form. Being public, it has a binding quality, expressing a 'promise to align with others'. Enhancing solidarity around a particular issue or event, it affirms by communicating affirmation.

Such a position seems to fit quite well with a dialogical approach.[27] Rituals only 'work' if those participating are expressing a sufficiently shared perspective on a

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[26] The title of a book by John Holloway (2005).

[27] It might be thought that dialogics focuses only on disputatious talk, but both Vološinov and Bakhtin suggest not: '...any real utterance, in one way or another or to one degree or another, makes a statement of agreement with or a negation of something' (Vološinov 1986); 'The narrow understanding of dialogism as argument, polemics, or parody. These are the externally most obvious, but crude, forms of dialogism. Confidence in another's word, reverential reception (the authoritative word), apprenticeship, the search for and mandatory nature of deep meaning, *agreement*, its infinite gradations and shadings (but not its logical limitations and not purely referential reservations), the layering of meaning upon meaning, voice upon

similar object. Otherwise, they can seem empty and formalistic, have depressive effects, promoting dissociation. 'Successful' rituals are means of expressing 'agreement', indeed they are means of amplifying such agreement.[28]

The narrative of Solidarity's history — and especially of its first seven months — is full of examples of collective ritual action. There were obvious forms like the shipyard Field Mass or the national ceremony in Gdansk in December 1980 to dedicate the workers' memorial to the dead of 1970, but the history also records mass singing, clapping, cheering, booing, whistling, ceremonial speech, solemn silences, the decoration of factory gates with pictures and flowers, poetry readings and musical recitals. However, as my earlier essay suggested, these forms 'punctuate' the narrative in an almost grammatical sense, marking transitions between situations. There were occasions for ritual action, and other times when different kinds of communication occurred, with very different emotional valences.

In 'crises of development', ritual action plays little part. What marks crises is disagreement and cognitive-emotional turmoil. Crises are moments of 'pain' and 'vulnerability', when circumstances no longer permit 'seamless performances' (Summers-Effler 2005). Crises are moments of challenge, perhaps created by an unexpected alteration in the behaviour of opponents or other interactants, or by a questioning initiated within a group of movement of existing ways of acting or thinking. In a crisis, existing perspectives are thrown into doubt, along with the social relations and learned expectations that sustain them. Commonly they reveal previously covert contradictions in existing social relations, goals and understandings. Such conditions demand improvised responses, a casting about for new solutions. They may involve division emerging within a previously assumed unity, posing the possibilities of fission or re-formation on a changed basis. It is 'misalignment' of movement members that characterizes a crisis, not the 'alignment' of ritual action. They are moments of tension and danger and also of new possibilities.

Ritual action draws on known repertoires, deploying components from the stock of a shared culture. It uses familiar forms to achieve its effects. But what marks crises is that the familiar, the already known, is no longer adequate. Crises disorientate, they overturn expectations, their resolution requires

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voice, strengthening through merging (but not identification), the combination of many voices (a corridor of voices) that augments understanding, departure beyond the limits of the understood, and so forth.' 'One cannot... understand dialogic relations simplistically and unilaterally, reducing them to contradiction, conflict, polemics, or disagreement. *Agreement* is very rich in varieties and shadings. Two utterances that are identical in all respects ... if they are really *two* utterances belonging to *different* voices and not one are linked by *dialogic relations of agreement*.' (Bakhtin 1986)

[28] Randall Collins (2001) explores the effect of 'successful' social rituals, but does not consider 'unsuccessful' ones, which is a pity, for further consideration might suggest their relevance to movement *decline*.

innovation based on some form of practical criticism of previous assumptions and limits.

Where, through the rigours of crisis interactions, groups succeed in resolving a situation in a new and at least partially adequate way, capable of attracting significant agreement, new forms of understanding are born, and new kinds of bonds are formed. These are the moments when 'ritual action' and its attendant particular forms of emotional interaction are most appropriate. Solving problems leaves people feeling empowered. What ritual action can offer at such moments is a collective affirmation of the new direction, the new understanding, the new goals and the new social relations and shared discipline that these imply.

If, as suggested earlier, we need to understand emotions as both shared and dilemmic, it may be that each apparently contradictory aspect comes more to the fore in one kind of event-setting than another, providing a kind of narrative sequencing of forms of emotional communication.

Finally, there are situations – of the kind that characterized Solidarity after 31st March, 1981, where a crisis in movement development is revealed but no adequate answer is found.[29] In such a condition, cognitive-emotional turmoil finds no solution, there is less and less to celebrate ritually, and the bonds of previous solidarity weaken. There is less to 'affirm'.[30]

The implication is that, here too, we cannot consider the emotional aspects of human action, individual or collective, apart from the cognitive and materially active content, the understandings and purposes of which they are an inherent part.

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[29] I am reminded of Gramsci's characterization of a period in which the old is dying but the new cannot yet be born, and when 'morbid symptoms appear'.

[30] Collins, followed by both Eyerman and Summers-Effler, attempt to catch the nature of different moments with the concept of 'emotional energy' (Collins 2001; Eyerman 2005; Summers-Effler 2005). The difficulty with this concept is that it is treated in simply *quantitative* terms, as something that rises and falls, is gained or spent. Consideration of moments of movement failure suggests another possibility; that 'emotional energy' may, like attention, be *focused* or *dispersed*. If Solidarity members in the latter part of 1981 were disoriented, anxious, bewildered, quarrelsome, their emotions were not necessarily less *energetic*. What they lacked was a shared vision of a way forward, and that was a cognitive-practical matter as much as an emotional one.

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The state of emancipation – with, within, without?

Kirk Helliker

Abstract

This article examines the vexed question of the state, civil society and emancipation. After criticising the Liberal perspective on state and civil society, it outlines and considers the two main Radical (communist) perspectives: the mainstream and dominant Marxist state-centred approach as exemplified in specific ways by Lenin and Gramsci, and the society-centred approach including the works of Marxist Autonomists and Anarchists. In relation to the global South, both perspectives are critically reflected upon, especially in the light of the problematic relationship that often arises between Left-leaning governments and social movements. It is shown that, for state-centred intellectuals and activists more comfortable about thinking emancipation in and through the state, the society-centred conception raises challenging questions about 'the political', 'politics' and state-civil society relations. Both conceptions though offer important arguments and, in rendering the controversies between the two positions, it is important to recognise points of convergence. The article ends with some brief thoughts on the state and emancipation in post-Apartheid South Africa.

This article is about social emancipation in the contemporary capitalist world with a particular focus on the vexed question of the state[1]. It considers current debates surrounding the state and civil society by criticising the hegemonic Liberal notion of civil society and by setting out two Radical conceptions (one state-centric, the other society-centric) that explicitly seek to articulate a project of genuine (post-capitalist) emancipation. In shifting forms, these two approaches have deep historical roots, including the First – Socialist – International before the turn of the previous century and the controversy between early Marxists and Anarchists. Debates between these two conceptions of emancipation have acquired renewed resonance with the rise of 'alternative globalisation' (and 'localisation') movements over the past twenty years.

The Liberal notion of civil society, which pervades the international development industry, is based on a state-civil society dualism that speaks about a universalising civil society waging war against a particularistic and centralising state. At the same time, though, civil society is framed as existing '*with*' and alongside the state and, most importantly, ultimately inside a state-civil society consensus about social order that reproduces class domination and undercuts processes of emancipation. Of the two Radical notions, the state-

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[1] This article has benefited greatly from the comments of two anonymous reviewers.

centric one has been dominant historically within communism. This state-centric position (which is consistent with a large body of classical Marxist and Social Democratic thinking) argues for political strategies against the state and it proclaims the possibility of emancipation in, through and by means of (and therefore '*within*') the state. The alternative perspective involves society-centred emancipation and is in line with versions of Anarchist, Communist Libertarian and Marxist Autonomist (and other forms of anti-statist communist) thought that speaks not of acquiring state power (either through the electoral system or on an insurrectionary basis) but of developing counter-power (or even anti-power) inside the bowels of civil society despite (or '*without*') the state. These three conceptions I refer to respectively as the *With* (Liberal), *Within* (Radical state-centric) and *Without* (Radical society-centric) perspectives.[2]

The primarily focus of this article is on the two Radical conceptions, and the ways in which these conceptions assist in emancipatory praxis (or the thinking and 'doing' of emancipation). In this regard, it is important from the outset to be sensitive to issues of representation. The two conceptions are often presented by their proponents in dualistic terms and as involving – invariably – competing and antagonistic strategies vis-à-vis each other (as if a particular movement by necessity must be animated by either society-centric or state-centric change). This claim seems problematic, in ways similar to the rigid distinction sometimes made between the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition (Fraser and Honneth 2003). Hence, specific social and political movements regularly entail a fluid combination of state- and society-centric activities – the case of the *Chavista* movement in Venezuela might be said to illustrate this. At the same time, though, one particular conception (and practice) may be hegemonic within a civil society movement. As a result, it is important to unpack the self-representations of/by movements – for example, movements that claim to be society-centric have at times pronounced state-centric leanings, at least in terms of tactics.

One of the central problems encountered in seeking to understand the controversies around the state and emancipation is that they take place at different and shifting levels of analyses (involving a range of philosophical, theoretical and political commitments about strategies and tactics) that on occasion are conflated and not properly articulated and delineated. For instance, similar political tactics may be found across the state-centric/society-centric divide but – simultaneously – specific theoretical arguments about the form of the state might be at loggerheads. This article tries to be sufficiently sensitive to these differing levels of analysis. In the end, I seek to explore (at least tentatively) whether 'or', 'and' or 'and/or' should conjoin *With*, *Within*, *Without* when it comes to emancipatory practice. However, no rigid position on this matter appears possible, necessary or desirable.

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[2] The with/within/without distinction is thought from de Souza's (2006) phrase "together with the state, despite the state, against the state", although the two sets of distinctions do not overlap.

In terms of presentation, I first set out the Liberal perspective in order to more readily identify the broad parameters of both Radical approaches. Secondly, I examine these two approaches in some detail and with reference to particular struggles around the globe. Before concluding, I talk briefly to the politics of emancipation in post-Apartheid South Africa.

'With' the state in perpetuating class domination – the prevailing Liberal version[3]

In classical European political philosophy and theory, civil society is sometimes contrasted to a state of nature (for example, Thomas Hobbes), more often to communitarian relations (for example, Ferdinand Tonnies) and, most often, to the nation-state (for example, John Locke, Georg Hegel and Karl Marx).

Hegel argued, generally, that the egotisms and inequalities of an unbridled civil society under modern (individualistic) competitive capitalist conditions were productively managed by the universal nation-state ruling over and pacifying 'uncivil' society, thereby making it more 'civil' (i.e. the state was the solution to civil society egotisms). In Marx's view, any such notion of universality was a mere pretence (or a "false universal") – Ehrenberg (1998: 2) – and the nation-state served the specific interests of the bourgeoisie with its economic dominance firmly rooted within civil society. In Marx's words, "this slavery of civil society is the natural foundation on which the modern state rests" (quoted in Femia 2001: 136). Therefore, the institutional separation between state and civil society under capitalism mystified class domination, with the state being a particular organisational expression of relations of domination existing first and foremost within civil society. 'Bourgeois' civil society, with its particularistic class-based bickering, could only be overcome by the universalizing and emancipating role of the proletariat.

The dominant understanding of civil society in the contemporary world (including within the worldwide development system) is a sanitized Liberal one – including in relation to Africa – which turns both Hegel and Marx on their heads (Baker 2002). 'Civil society', in current Liberal thought, regularly forms part of a conceptual couplet: either the civil society-state couplet or the civil society-communitarian couplet (which are two of the three versions in the classic arguments about civil society noted above). For Liberals, these couplets imply that civil society (seen almost in its entirety as a progressive social force) struggles against the modern state (with its democratic deficits and often authoritarian rule) and against pre-modern communitarian sociality (often lodged in rural areas where civil society is said to be incipient and undeveloped); state and communitarian relations both entail totalising

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[3] This discussion of the Liberal version admittedly does not do full justice to the complexities and variations within the Liberal tradition, but I do believe it captures a significant if not dominant trajectory within contemporary Liberal thinking on civil society (particularly as found in the development literature).

compulsions and commitments contrary to the supposed voluntary and contractual civility of 'civil society'.

The first couplet depicts civil society as the universalising logic inherent in capitalist societies that opposes the particularistic interests of the state, and it becomes the driving force behind processes of democratic modernity. Civil society is defined in relation to the nation-state and, generally, this relationship is portrayed as antagonistic throughout much of Africa, with civil society as progressive and the state as regressive. In terms of the second couplet, the concept of civil society is compared, in typical modernist and modernisation language, to communitarian forms of social organisation that apparently continue to structure (in particular) rural social realities. Communitarian relations (for example, chiefdoms and customary tenure) are said to be regressive particulars that result in democratic and development deficiencies. They undermine the unequivocally progressive and universalising content of civil society and its modernist endeavours vis-à-vis the (un-democratic) nation-state.

This dominant Liberal understanding of civil society – and more broadly the current fixation with civil society – arose in the face of an anti-statist moment globally and is undoubtedly linked to new forms of imperialism. Anti-statism entailed successful struggles against centralised 'Communist' rule in central-eastern Europe, Neo-Liberal downsizing and restructuring of the Keynesian welfare state in advanced capitalist nations, and sustained opposition to authoritarian and military states throughout 'peripheral' capitalism. Civil society was designed to recover for society a range of powers and activities that national states had usurped in previous decades. Ironically, despite the revival of civil society under anti-statist conditions, the dominant Liberal interpretation of the concept is statist or at least state-centric.

The Liberal position entails an instrumentalist view of civil society as a formidable weapon for democratizing the nation-state, rather than viewing civil society, for instance, as in-itself a site of struggle for hegemony or as an end-in-itself i.e. a pre-figurative form of politics for a new society. Democracy is conceived as effectively external to civil society and is lodged rather (in statist fashion) in liberal democratic state bodies. Civil society organizations have no legitimate existence independent of their role in interacting with the state, and the strengths and weaknesses of these organizations are identified in terms of their regulatory state-centric functions in building and defending liberal state democracy (for example, many civil society groups promote the realisation of human rights, and the state is implicitly – but problematically – recognised as the legitimate guarantor of these rights – Baker 2003, Neocosmos 2006).

On one level, then, civil society is defined in opposition to (or against) the state (in a way similar to the Radical state-centric view). On another level, though, the boundaries of civil society overlap with the boundaries of liberal politics as defined by the state; in other words, civil society although "defined in opposition to the state, also ends at the boundaries of liberal politics" (Sader 2002, 93). Any antagonism between state and civil society occurs within a broad state-civil

society consensual paradigm (the "consensual state domain of politics" – Neocosmos 2004: 11) in terms of which the state delimits and structures what is acceptable oppositional (i.e. civil society) politics. Ultimately, civil society (as conceptualised in this perspective) is supportive specifically of the liberal state form, leading to state-civil society collaborative and partnership arrangements that facilitate overall social domination. Politics beyond this consensual domain are viewed by both state and civil society at best as illegitimate politics and at worst as criminal behaviour (what the Radical society-centred view would label as the popular sphere of, or authentic, politics). In this sense, the Liberal perspective depicts civil society '*With*' the state in perpetuating class domination.

In the end, the Liberal perspective undercuts both Hegel and Marx. Whereas Hegel saw the state as moderating and reconciling the particulars of civil society, the domesticated Liberal approach (domesticated by both state and capital) perceives civil society as the incarnation of reason, the universalizing mode of social organization and defender of democracy (much like Neo-Liberal 'free' marketers posit the capitalist market). This approach demonizes the modern state (at least its authoritarian traits) but obscures its bourgeois form. Hence, the capitalist form of the Liberal state – and indeed the capitalist market – is treated as a necessary historical given, and is considered as the very foundation of a strong and vibrant civil society. Capitalist society is compartmentalized, fragmented and partitioned out according to the tripartite realms of economy, state and civil society, and thus its totalizing logic is undetected and left un-analyzed. This entails a de-economised version of civil society devoid of class relations. Civil society, as Marx understood it, is thereby sanitized and cleansed – civil society comes to represent an unadulterated realm of un-coerced freedom where the oppressed defend themselves against the ravages of the state. Civil society is not a problem; rather, it is the solution to the woes of state-regulated capitalism.

In summary, the dominant Liberal view depicts civil society as the universalizing logic inherent in capitalist societies that opposes the particularistic interests of the state (and of communitarian relations), such that it becomes the driving force behind the twin goals of democracy and development. This view fails to recognise (unlike classical Radical civil society thinking[4]) that civil society itself is in various ways a site of domination, inequality and conflict: the moment of social domination inscribed within civil society is ignored and, further, contradictions internal to civil society become displaced and take the form of tensions between civil society and the state.

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[4] The fact that the international development system, including multilateral institutions (such as the World Bank) and international NGOs, readily deploys the notion of civil society in a domesticated and sanitized fashion is part of the "perverse confluence" in the use of terms (Dagnino 2008) existing between current Liberal and Radical thought.

Radical civil society ('within' and 'without')

Radical understandings (based loosely on Marx's rendition of civil society) conceptualise 'civil society' as a site of both social domination and social conflict (with domination and conflict regularly reproduced within the state). In some way, social movements animated by emancipatory politics invariably enter into conflictual relations with social classes and groups that seek to defend prevailing systems of domination. This would involve movements addressing and confronting – conceptually and literally – governments/states in specific (historical and spatial) forms.[5] I consider these movements, even if existing outside the consensual realm of liberal politics, to be inside civil society; this is true even of strongly anti-statist movements that are labelled by Liberal politics as beyond the civility of civil society because of their supposed un-civility[6].

In this section, I outline the two Radical understandings of civil society and emancipation that have post-capitalist (communist) connotations but not necessarily post-capitalist implications. At a general level, I refer to these as 'state-centred' and 'society-centred' conceptions. I use this dualist-from of presentation heuristically as a first step to making sense of existing Radical emancipatory thought and practice. A much more nuanced understanding, which would entail unpacking (and possibly) transcending this dualism, is not fully pursued in this article but would be critical to emancipatory practice[7].

In this respect, different writers use various terms and phrases which, although not necessarily appearing and operating at the same level of abstraction and analysis, in some way conceptually capture the spirit of the broad (dualistic)

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[5] Quite often, progressive social movements are linked to (non-grassroots based) intermediary Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that lend support (both discursive and material) to the struggles of movements (other NGOs are more regressive). NGOs supporting progressive movements regularly exist at the more 'civil' end of progressive trends within civil society, because they often abide by the prevailing ideologies and tactics animating the worldwide development industry. But not all progressive NGOs fit the same mould.

[6] The state-centric Radical conception and practice at times adopts the same approach as the Liberal view to emancipatory anti-statist movements.

[7] Although the discussion of radical civil society that follows is drawn primarily from academic writings, I recognise that these writings often dress up in theoretical clothing the experiences, thoughts and expressions of movement activists. Further, my thinking around emancipation is also more directly experientially-based. My political activism dates back to the politics of the United Democratic Front in South Africa during the 1980s, and subsequently included a long stretch of time in rural Zimbabwe – notably during the Fast Track land redistribution process from the year 2000 onwards (and interlinking with war veterans and others involved in the land re-occupations). Currently, I am a 'resource person' for rural movements and progressive NGOs in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, involving small-scale farmers and agricultural labourers; as well as a 'resource person' for a Latin-American-African People's Dialogue initiative driven by groups in Brazil and South Africa. My experiences during the Zimbabwean land reform process and my encounters with indigenous South American activists have influenced significantly my thoughts and feelings around emancipatory politics; and I have used these influences as a basis for introducing from 2009 a South Atlantic Studies Honours course (entailing comparative studies of South American and Africa movement politics) at the university where I teach.

distinction. These include (respectively, state-centred change and society-centred change) the following notions: politics of hegemony (and the politics of demand) vs. politics of affinity (and the politics of the act) (Day 2005); counter-hegemony vs. anti-politics (Baker 2002); politics of representation vs. politics of presentation (Badiou 2005, 2006); tactics vs. encounters (*Colectivo Situaciones* 2005); instrumentalist politics (and acquiring power-over) vs. expressive politics (and pursuing power-to) (Holloway 2003); and becoming the constituted power vs. building constitutive power (Hardt and Negri 2000).[8]

During the rising dominance of the Liberal concept of civil society in the 1970s and 1980s, more radical civil society discourses and politics (both state- and society-centred) also existed, including in South America and Eastern Europe (Baker 2002). Years of military rule in a range of South American countries highlighted the need for the defence of civil and political liberties. Civil society was seen (in the sense formulated by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci) as a theatre of social struggle involving counter-hegemonic opposition by popular classes to state authoritarianism. Often, though, the authoritarian state was simply portrayed as dominating society by constituting and structuring it, and there was only limited recognition that civil society also dominated the state through a specific form of class rule. Like the Liberal notion, the struggle was therefore perceived as between democracy (civil society) and authoritarianism (the state). But a number of social movements, such as the trade union movement aligned to the Workers' Party in Brazil, pursued an explicitly socialist agenda in a state-centric version of the Radical perspective.

Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the years immediately preceding the end of Communist rule also witnessed radical initiatives, with many scholars and movements viewing civil society (at least initially) as a counter-power (but not as strictly counter-hegemonic in the Gramscian sense). More specifically, in the face of totalitarian rule, civil society was identified as an end-in-itself (rather than as a means for seizing state power), or as a kind of autonomous social democracy with pluralist forms of self-organization and self-management involved in building communities. This social organizing, as a form of building independent sites of popular power, was encapsulated in the notions of the 'self-limiting' revolution and 'anti-politics'. Any democratizing of the state through civil society was understood not instrumentally but simply as a (mainly inadvertent) by-product in what was essentially a society-centric notion of emancipation. This view therefore rejected state politics and emphasized independence from the state, corporatist institutions and political parties; and it

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[8] The classical distinction was between the notions of 'political revolution' associated with Karl Marx and early Marxism and 'social revolution' propagated by Anarchists (or 'anti-state socialists') such as Mikhail Bakunin. For literature from the 1870s pertaining to this, see www.marxists.org. The dualist-type distinctions in the paragraph do not necessarily originate with the writers cited (who in the main support society-centred change), but are found often in their works.

advocated internal democracy involving the re-socialization of power as counter-power.

From the 1990s, the differences between the state-centred and society-centred perspectives became increasingly delineated and subject to intense debates among both intellectuals and activists, with the work by John Holloway — based on his analysis of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas in Mexico — being of some significance. His notion of "changing the world without taking power" (or '*Without*' the state) involves a sustained critique of the Radical state-centred perspective that portrays civil society as counter-hegemonic and state-focused (i.e. taking power, by means of and '*Within*' the state, to change the world). This perspective is often linked to Leninism but, despite the significant differences that Carroll and Ratner (1994) rightly stress between Vladimir Lenin and Gramsci, it is also in many ways Gramscian. A fruitful way of exploring these two conceptions is with reference to the Zapatista movement, known initially for its uprising in January 1994 against the North American Free Trade Agreement. The Zapatistas are normally painted as representative of society-centred change. Irrespective of Burbach's (1994) — dubious — claim that the Zapatistas are the first "postmodern rebellion" as well as the marked congruence that undoubtedly exist between specific post-modernist commitments and certain Radical society-centred arguments, the controversies between the two Radical perspectives occur broadly within modernism. In fact, the situational singularity of the Zapatista experiences has universal import. The five interrelated points highlighted in relation to the Zapatistas should be seen in this light.

First of all, the Zapatistas question the conception of emancipation as occurring in a pre-determined way along a fixed trajectory to a pre-defined end. This is encapsulated in the phrase '*preguntando caminamos*' (translated awkwardly in English as 'asking we walk'). This goes contrary to the politics of demand that (in response to the classic Leninist question of 'what is to be done?') regularly posits a well-defined and delimited process of emancipation as embodied in a set revolutionary process (for instance, the National Democratic Revolution). Secondly, the Zapatistas criticise vanguard-ism and hierarchical structures which are often associated with the politics of representation ingrained in state-centred change (as exemplified by traditional socialist trade unions and political parties); a rhizome-like organizational form is often linked to the politics of the act. Thirdly, the Zapatistas are strongly anti-statist in arguing that emancipation cannot be reduced to transformation in and through state structures — rather, they emphasise autonomy vis-à-vis the state, as witnessed in their building of autonomous regional spaces and councils (Dinerstein 2009) which are designed as experimental pre-figurative forms of local politics. Fourthly, searching questions about the authentic subject of historical change arise within anti-politics movements — in particular, no ontologically-pure transcendental subject (notably the working class) exists at the forefront of 'the' struggle; rather, diverse subjectivities emerging contingently engage in diverse struggles (these include indigenous peoples and peasant farmers or *campesinos*, as in the case of the Zapatistas; but also marginalised dwellers living in urban slums or *barrios*, whose agency is unfortunately under-stressed in Davis's — 2006 — influential

work, *Planet of Slums*). Finally dignity, identity, culture, territory and spirituality are central to the Zapatistas, along with the 'construction' of expressive communities more generally — a 'colder' focus on strategies and tactics, as seen in the politics of hegemony, leads to instrumentalising the human (and humane) project of emancipation.

To emphasise, though, these five (and other possible) differentiations do not necessarily overlap in a clearly demarcated fashion, with state-centred qualities by necessity lining up on one side of the fence and society-centred qualities on the other side. In practice, any social movement may exhibit a fluid combination of both general strategies (if indeed they are separate strategies) for social change. As a result, in reality, a range of hybrid movements and emancipatory processes occur. For example, the *Movimento dos Trabalbadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST) in Brazil seems to display a mixed variety of features — it is peasant-led and peasant-based, engages in autonomous action (including illegally taking over large-scale farms or *latifundios* based on a call to 'occupy, resist and produce') but it is sometimes labelled as vanguardist and hierarchical (or Leninist) in structure (De Souza 2009). Even the Zapatistas have not been adverse to negotiations with the state and to the politics of the demand; and specific groupings within the diverse unemployed workers movement and *piqueteros* (picketers) of urban Argentina, who are sometimes declared as the clearest expression of expressive politics, have at times pressurized and sought concessions from the state (Petras 2002).

This broad (state-centred/society-centred) distinction though is sensitive to two key interlinked issues, namely, 'the political' and 'politics'. For my purposes, 'the political' refers to the realm of the modern state, and pertinent questions concern the embeddedness of social (including class) domination within the very form of the state as well as the state's functioning in flooding and capturing civil society as a means of thwarting opposition and closing down autonomous spaces for resistance. A number of communist scholars (loosely-labelled) raise these issues, including Marxist Autonomists (such as John Holloway), Communist Libertarians (see Berry 2008), Anarchists (for example, Richard Day — see Day 205, Graeber 2002 and Franks 2007), plus others who are more difficult to label (for example, Cornelius Castoriadis, Alain Badiou and Jacques Ranciere). Other critical (but non-communist) intellectuals, such as James Scott (1998), do likewise. Scott's fascinating study of the state, under conditions of 'high modernism' in both capitalist societies and Soviet Union-style socialist societies, shows how the state invariably seeks to transform non-state spaces into spaces that are defined and categorised by — and made legible to — the state. The work of activist scholar Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba (in relation to the Democratic Republic of Congo) and his notion of "communalist palaver" is of particular significance (Presbey 1998, Wamba-dia-Wamba 1985).

Despite their differences (and there are many), all of these writers claim that the state's domination of capitalist society is tied up inextricably with the very fabric and form of the modern state. In Holloway's (Marxist) case, this involves deriving (historically and logically) the (fetishised) state form from the essential

social (class) relations under capitalism. For others (for instance, Badiou and Ranciere), it involves conceptualising 'the political' in a non-reductionist way largely independent of class and the economy, and considering how the state compartmentalises, constitutes and stabilises society in a domineering manner. For Holloway and others, then, just as Marx spoke about the logic of capital, it is necessary to identify and highlight the logic of the state as an alienating force of societal oppressions. As a result, there is need for an emancipatory politics unbound from the state or at least a sufficient distance from it. State-centred theorists, such as Hilary Wainwright (IIRE 2005: 52), while not denying that state institutions controlled by Left parties regularly – as a pronounced trajectory – "lord it over the people", nevertheless claim that "the pull of the state away from the people is not inscribed in the state's character [in a law-like fashion] but is historically produced and subject to historical transformations". This implies that emancipation in and through the state cannot be ruled out *a priori* and is contingent on the balance of social forces (Bensaid 2005, McNaughton 2008).

Pursuing further this question of 'the political', it is clear that – for emancipatory social movements around the globe – the state is a particularly contentious realm of struggle when controlled by Left-leaning parties (Vanden 2007), as can be noted in reference to three countries (Zimbabwe, Brazil and Venezuela)[9]. In Zimbabwe, the ruling Zimbabwe National African Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has had a problematic relationship with social movements. Initially, in the early years of independence, the party sought to inhibit the growth of autonomous trade unions and social movements, and effectively took them under its organisational wing. The emergence of an autonomous trade union movement and urban civic groups in the 1990s was met with repression by the party through the organs of the state. The exact relationship between ZANU-PF and the 'fast track' land movement (starting in the year 2000) is controversial. Critics claim (see Hammar et al. 2003) that the land movement was simply an electoral ploy of ZANU-PF and that it was initiated and stage-managed by the ruling party. Others (see Moyo and Yeros 2005) argue that the land movement cannot be reduced neatly to the party, and that the movement had (at least initially) a degree of autonomy from the party. However, during the course of 2000 and 2001, the party increasingly sought to direct and channel the land movement and in so doing subdued it.

With regard to Brazil, the trade union movement played a significant role in the struggles against authoritarian rule and formed a solid support base for the Workers' Party that eventually obtained power under President Lula in 2002. During the earlier years of opposition (notably during the 1980s), the leaders of the unions and Workers' Party had apparently "broken with ... vanguardist traditions, [had] become critical of bureaucratic state-led development, and ...

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[9] In this regard, two other nations where general questions about Left governments and emancipation have been of paramount importance in recent years are Haiti and the *Lavalas* movement (see Hallward 2008, Nesbitt 2009) and Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (see Giri 2008, Singh 2005, Vanaik 2008).

committed themselves to building democracy from the bottom up" (Heller 2001: 155). The MST, probably the most militant land movement internationally, has consistently sought to maintain its autonomy vis-à-vis Lula's party. Although at times the MST has expressed and demonstrated its support for the Workers' Party in the latter's repeated attempts at electoral victory nationally, this has neither involved principled support nor the formation of an alliance. As a result, in the light of the right-ward turn of the Workers' Party (particularly once in power) – including a pronounced neo-Liberal project – the MST has kept its organisational distance from the party and has thereby maintained its organisational independence. To quote Joao Pedro Stedile of the MST: "Whenever a mass movement was subordinated to a party, it was weakened by the effects of inner-party splits and factional battles. The movement had to be free from external political direction" (Stedile 2002: 80).

Venezuela, like Zimbabwe, has seen the emergence of strident urban opposition (largely middle-class and of European descent) against the government of Hugo Chavez. Chavez's urban support base is in the *barrios*, where the masses of urban poor live (including large numbers of indigenous people and *mestizos*). Chavez's ruling party (the United Socialist Party of Venezuela) has a fluctuating and ambiguous relationship with progressive social movements, in part because the party is marked by 'hard-line' and 'soft-line' political currents (Ellner 2008). In general, though, it encourages the existence of progressive groups within the broad *Chavista* movement. At the same time, there are groups with rich historical radical traditions that seek to remain autonomous of the *Chavista* movement although offering critical support for the party. This is captured by the comments of a community activist in Caracas in response to the insistence by the *Chavista* vanguard youth organisation that the community name its soup kitchens after the *Chavista* mayor: "Why can't we name the kitchen after Benita Mendoza, a working woman here in the *barrio*; she has raised three kids and been left by three husbands" (quoted in Fernandes 2007: 120).

The necessity for some form of autonomy for social movements in relation to Left-leaning governments seems clear. At times, progressive ruling parties in power turn against movements (for example, in the case of the Workers' Party and the MST); or they swallow up the space for civil society by ensuring that all social movements become mere wings of the party (as in the early years of Zimbabwean independence, and with the contemporary 'fast track' land movement); or they tend to de-mobilise social movements altogether (as seemingly the case of the African National Congress – ANC – in South Africa since the end of Apartheid, as touched on later). Insofar as 'the masses' are mobilised by dominant Left parties, this is done instrumentally to defend 'the revolution' (or to ensure that the party retains state hegemony). Irrespective of the form that the undercutting of social movements takes, 'the party' (as Frantz Fanon – 1967 – noted decades ago in Africa) becomes 'The Party' and a process of substitutionism occurs – 'The Party' (the one and only party according to party ideologues) substitutes itself for social movements and for the people. After occupying national power structures, normally with significant social

movement support, Left-leaning governments (in the form of a distant and alienating state) subsequently pursue (often with great intent) an oppressive 'power-over' its 'emancipated' citizens; in the light of this problematic trend, society-centred groupings – as an alternative to seeking hegemony – seek to animate 'power-to' or liberatory power within an emancipating civil society.

In Venezuela, the Chavez government continues to push forward radical measures despite reactionary initiatives by the opposition (Harnecker 2009). Ciccariello-Maher (2007: 42) highlights the dialectic between state power and social power by indicating how, through the formation of local communal councils by the state on a nation-wide basis, "sectors of the state are working actively to dismantle and dissolve the old state apparatus by devolving power to local organs capable of constituting a dual power". While such a claim may romanticise the *Chavista* movement, there is some evidence that the Venezuelan state is working to dismantle the old state apparatus by devolving power to local civil society organs. These parallel structures are not simply designed to make the state socially accountable (which is the 'soft-line' – or even state-focused – stance in the *Chavista* movement), but they also exist as legitimate sources of power in their own right with distinctive responsibilities for bringing about emancipation in Venezuela (which is the 'hard-line', or society-centred, approach). Venezuela's *Chavista* movement involves a strong 'statist' moment but also significant mobilisation of social power.

The state-centred notion recognises and accepts that the state in capitalist society reflects and refracts the contradictory social relations that animate capitalism (similar to Nicos Poulantzas's notion of the state as the material condensation or crystallisation of contradictory relations). Besides class domination, built into the state form are contradictions, conflicts, tensions and ambiguities that can be tactically exploited by emancipatory forces that have at least one foot in (or one eye on) the state. This suggests, then, that the state does not exercise 'power-over' without simultaneously generating significant (un-captured) internal sites and spaces available for emancipatory praxis. In this regard, the case of Venezuela under the presidency of Chavez (and of Bolivia under Evo Morales) is sometimes said to offer a useful counter-weight to Holloway's position – the state in Venezuela would therefore provide some basis for social transformation. The Venezuelan example is perhaps suggestive of a complementary relationship between state-centred and society-centred visions and strategies of change, without denying though the prevalence of tensions and trade-offs existing between them.

This leads to the second issue, that of 'politics' beyond, unbound or at a distance from 'the political' (seen as the alienating and distant state form that dominates and oppresses society). French (anti-)philosopher Alain Badiou calls for a politics "outside the spectre of the party-state", for "thinking politics outside of its subjection to the state", with this invariably involving "a rupture with the representative form of politics" (Badiou 2006: 270,289,292). His notion of an 'event' (meaning the emergence of authentic egalitarian subjectivity) seeks to capture the sense of this rupture – a political event entails a radical break with

the 'state' of the 'situation' by social elements that exist at the edge of the situation, that are seemingly incapable of being represented by the state, and that remain un-captured by the state's logic. Badiou's friend and compatriot, Jacques Ranciere (1994, 2006) argues along similar lines in advocating a form of politics that breaks from the state (or 'police order') and that goes against the grain of all societal classifications and identities imparted and enforced by state and capital.

Castoriadis (1997: 3, 4, 5; Castoriadis 2001) speaks of 'the political' as "explicit power, instituted as such" (akin to constituted power) and he also highlights the need for a 'rupture' (or the arising of liberatory politics) that "puts into question the established institutions" and leads to "the project of an autonomous society". This involves a clear recognition that, contrary to what at times appears to underpin the state-centred notion, power is not simply centralised spatially and institutionally (in the state) but is – at least in addition – dispersed throughout the breadth and depth of society (along the lines of Michel Foucault's argument about capillary power) (Ojeili 2001). For this reason, Holloway (n.d.) speaks of an "interstitial revolution" taking place within civil society that does not obtain its meaning and relevance with and in reference to the state. Authentic emancipation involves exploring and activating latent potentialities in civil society as a means to social empowerment, without necessarily being directly and openly anti-hegemonic vis-à-vis the ruling bloc as understood in the Gramscian sense.

The critical point that arises is embodied in the notion of 'anti-politics', that is, the claim that the interstitial revolution involves imagining and practicing a fundamentally different form of politics, unrecognisable from the politics of state-centred emancipation. Holloway (n.d.: 5) puts it this way:

> The state seeks to impose upon us a separation of our struggles from society, to convert our struggle into a struggle *on behalf of, in the name of.* ... The drive towards self-determination moves in one direction, the attempt to win state power moves in the opposite direction. The former starts to knit a self-determining community, the latter unravels the knitting.

Implicit is the notion, for Holloway, of building expressive communities that present themselves for themselves, in opposition to winning state power instrumentally through forms of representation.

In this respect, the thoughts (in large part unavailable in English) of the Argentine militant research group, *Colectivo Situaciones* (*CS*), are very instructive, in part because of their close links with militant groups (including unemployed workers' movements) in urban Argentina since the late 1990s.[10] To quote them at length, *Colectivo Situaciones* (2002) argue that political activism generally

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[10] The specific writings of *Colectivo Situaciones* on knowledge production deserve attention in their own right from university-based intellectuals who desire to undertake emancipatory research. See Dinerstein (2003) and Khorasanee (2007) for a better understanding of *CS* in the context of contemporary struggles in Argentina.

has remained tied to a mode of instrumentality: one that connects itself to other experiences from a subjectivity always already constituted, with prior knowledge — the knowledges of strategy — charged with universally valid, purely ideological statements. Its way of being in relation to others is utilitarianism: there is never affinity, always agreement; never encounter, always tactics. Political activism — above all the party variety — can hardly constitute itself into an experience of authenticity. ... What interests it of an experience is always "another thing" than the experience in itself.

Colectivo Situaciones speak[11] about an "authentic experience of anti-utilitarianism", a process of inexplicable "composition" (viewed as different from articulation, agreement let alone alliance). It is tantamount to falling in authentic love (an event for Badiou like any genuine political event) that "transforms the 'self' into the 'common'". This is not about politics (or the logic of confrontation and "the battle for power") based on pre-constituted transcendental subjectivities (for instance, the working class); rather, it entails immanence (i.e. "inhabiting the situation"), a never-ending "constituent becoming" involving the contingent (re)-creation "of values, of experiences, of worlds", and the formation of "new modalities of instituting collective life and attending [to] immediate necessities". *CS* argues that the politics of state-centred change does not address the question of building a new humanity. Further, the politics of state- and society-centred change are not mere duplicates of each other or opposite sides of the same coin (i.e. counter-power replacing — and becoming — power). The politics of affinity is rather an entirely different way of imagining, thinking and doing politics. As they say:

> If the [political party] elections attempt to represent all that exists and, for that reason, decree the nonexistence of that which it does not manage to capture and measure, the experiences of counterpower [more aptly, anti-power][12], to the contrary, exist only in a situation, in a territory, in spatiality, a bodily disposition and a self-determined time.

In summary then: "There does not exist a single set of given rules".

Arguments like this clearly undercut the instrumentality of civil society. State-centric theorists and activists who wish to acknowledge the significance of autonomous movements — and thereby seek a dual strategy for emancipation from their perspective — need to seriously reflect upon and heed these arguments if they are not to remain trapped within an instrumentalist logic of

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[11] The quotations are from the two pieces from *CS* listed in the references at the end of the paper. Neither piece is properly paginated.

[12] The notion of counter-power is suggestive of struggles against existing forms of (state) power but not against power as such (hence, the notion seems consistent with a Gramscian counter-hegemonic project); in this sense, it implies struggles contained *within* the logic of power as inscribed within the state form. The more appropriate term for the '*without*' stance, and one more in line with the arguments of *CS*, is 'anti-power' — insofar as this implies struggles against the logic of power and outside the pace and rhythm of state-directed politics (formulated by Alain Badiou as politics 'at a distance' from the state). Anti-power though does not negate movements engaging with the state, but such engagement would not be on the state's terms or turf.

social movements that might bring about structural transformation (and improve social conditions) but leaves human(e) emancipation largely unaddressed and the human condition unchanged.

However, the general claims of society-centred theorists are not devoid of serious problems. These theorists at times seem to overplay the logic of domination inscribed in the state, thereby abandoning the state to the machinations of capital; and they appear to underplay the moment of domination within civil society and thereby over-romanticise the possibilities of autonomous civil society action (thus in some way reproducing the Liberal image of civil society) (Ross 2008). In fact, given their own emphasis on the particular logic of the state (which cannot be reduced to class logic) in constituting, structuring, infiltrating and encompassing society, the very notion of autonomous sites of struggle (outside of the state's reach) – let alone of a 'project' of autonomy – might seem dubious.

However, their claims allow for possible alternative renderings of civil society on two levels that are worthy of further reflection and action. First of all, the forging of a project of autonomous society – entailing the building of popular sites of struggle – seemingly leads to a blurring of the distinction between 'the political' and 'politics' (or between state and civil society more broadly). This is evidenced in the formation by the Zapatistas of 'autonomous' self-governing regions with local councils, health clinics and rebel schools. Insofar as there would continue to be a relationship of subordination between state and society, it would be the state's subordination to society (which, ultimately, is the exact opposite of the normal setup). Beyond this, though, the project of autonomy may, in the course of struggles, lead to a profound questioning of the state-civil society distinction in its entirety.

The second point is that, if the state-civil society distinction is to retain some degree of usefulness for emancipatory politics, this would require a critique of the notion of 'the civil'. Certainly, Radical society-centred notions of civility, based on popular and indigenous reasoning, question and undermine the definition and imposition of statist notions of politics and civility. As Partha Chatterjee (2002: 70) notes in relation to India, the "squalor, ugliness and violence of popular life" cannot be imprisoned "within the sanitised fortress of civil society" as this fortress has been imagined, constructed and defended by the post-colonial state. In this regard, there would be serious doubts about the prospects of "civil solutions to neo-colonialism" (or to neo-Apartheid in South Africa) such that the "civil domain, by definition, cannot be broadened by civil society". Hence, "the onus lies on progressive uncivil politics" (Yeros 2002: 61,249) to re-define and widen the state-civil society consensus and, thereby, wedge open and deepen the spaces and potentialities for genuine social emancipation and revolution.

No doubt, any genuine project of emancipation must recognise the legitimacy, viability and significance of sites outside (or *without)* the state that involve popular-radical struggles that challenge (although not directly or explicitly) existing bases and forms of 'explicit power'. At the same time, the state – as a

key locus of power and force for oppression in capitalist society — also needs to be challenged *within*.[13] Combined, this means that emancipation does not simply entail taking power (or seizing/controlling the state) or merely liberating the realm of civil society, but requires transforming (and undercutting) various forms of power on a society-wide basis. However, this is not simply a question of combining state and civil society (or party and movement) in a crude additive or trans-historical fashion.

Historically, as Badiou shows, movement and party both played critical roles. The Paris Commune triumphed because of its movement-base but ultimately failed because of its inability to articulate a centralised direction. The party was a response to this failure, but in solving one problem it created a whole host of others (as both state-centred and society-centred theorists recognise in specific ways). Addressing this would entail "a new articulation" (Badiou 2006: 310) between popular movements and the party-state, or — in experimenting with new forms of politics — the abandonment of party and movement as traditionally articulated and practised (Badiou 2009). If party and movement are to be re-articulated, this presumably would entail valorising the autonomy of popular movements within 'politics'/civil society (but without spontaneism) and recognising the need for some organisational form within the realm of 'the political' for order, coordination and direction (but without coercion) (Heller 2001, 2009).

A few thoughts on South Africa

This section, which is largely impressionistic, provides some thoughts on emancipation and the state in post-Apartheid South Africa in the light of the preceding discussions. It is not intended to illustrate the key issues in any comprehensive fashion, nor is it a definitive and up-to-date overview in the sense of neatly capturing the state of emancipatory politics in contemporary South Africa. It is designed though to stimulate discussion on emancipation in South Africa in a way that does not simply take state-centric change as a given. It thus addresses the question of statism, as a pronounced trajectory in South African 'Left' politics, and suggests the need to critically appraise this trajectory outside of the logic of the state and in a way that highlights the significance of popular and autonomous sites of struggle.

The economic and political contradictions and crises in Apartheid South Africa during the late 1970s and into the 1980s raised the prospect of South African capital adapting itself to the de-racialisation of society and even pursuing this option as an ideological project. During the years of formal transition away from Apartheid (1989–1994), this was indeed vigorously pursued in a social partnership between business and the ANC (as well as the radical trade union movement), involving essentially a class compromise to stabilise post-Apartheid

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[13] The possibilities of working *with* the state on tactical grounds, as contingencies determine and allow, should also not be ruled out.

economy and society. As these processes got underway, the mass-based organisations centred on the United Democratic Front (UDF) – which had been at the forefront of many of the urban struggles (and which had so effectively weakened Apartheid) – were all but de-mobilised, if not as a deliberate strategy then as a necessary consequence of the state-capital-union partnership of nation-building.

In fact, increasingly from the mid-1980s, the ANC-led Charterist movement (of which, broadly speaking, the UDF was part) sought to inhibit the formation of pluralistic political and organisational tendencies in order to consolidate and discipline 'the struggle' against Apartheid along the lines of *the* National Democratic Revolution (entailing a teleological statist-path of emancipation). In the end, as the liberation movement became the ruling party, 'the struggle' became absorbed into the state, leading effectively to the 'domestication' and containment of popular struggle. Ashwin Desai (2004: 386) for instance highlights that, consistent with traditional state-centred 'Left' politics, the distance between state and party was breached (presumably not unlike under Apartheid) in post-Apartheid South Africa: "Thabo Mbeki has broadened the reach of the state, blurred the state-party divide and has tied [sic] to use this process to absorb, break-up or neutralise any mobilisation outside the state-party ambit". Retrospectively, the domestication of struggle can be interpreted as implying an instrumentalist conception of movements, whereby movements are tools for becoming hegemonic – in the case of the UDF and its autonomous centres of localised power in urban Apartheid South Africa, these simply became means for destabilising and replacing the Apartheid government, rather than pre-figuring liberatory forms of social power in a genuinely transformed post-Apartheid society.

The post-Apartheid state has engaged simultaneously in both market-led restructuring and historical redress. The tension between these two trajectories is encapsulated in the distinction between 'growth through redistribution' as a (Keynesian-style) development programme embodied in the post-Apartheid government's initial Reconstruction and Development Programme, and 'redistribution through growth' as a more Neo-Liberal approach that became expressed in the government's Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy adopted in 1996. This ongoing tension is expressed in a range of governmental programmes, including with respect to land and labour relations. Generally speaking, this tension has animated South African state policies and programmes since 1994, such that to speak about a full-blown and unadulterated neo-Liberal state in South Africa – as regularly occurs – is highly problematic. For such reasons, Seekings and Nattrass (2005) talk about a post-Apartheid "distributional regime", without denying that re-distributional measures are regularly undermined by counter-measures including those of a neo-Liberal kind. The marked presence of Neo-Liberal macro-economic policies in post-Apartheid South Africa is not inconsistent though with the simultaneous existence of a pronounced statist trajectory (in fact, statist and market moments regularly complement each other in capitalist development processes).

Hence, numerous studies of post-Apartheid South Africa have noted the centralisation of state power: de Jager (2006: 104) for instance speaks of "centripetal tendencies" leading to "institutional centralisation" within the state apparatus. But the work of Heller (2001, 2009) in his comparative analyses of South Africa, Brazil and India, is particularly revealing. He identifies various trends within post-Apartheid restructuring, notably "concerted political centralisation, the expansion of technocratic and managerial authority, and a shift from democratic to market modes of accountability". State organs have notable "insulationist and oligarchical tendencies" such that planning processes serve "as vehicles for marketisation, rather than as institutional spaces for democratic participation" (Heller 2001: 133,134,144). Alongside — if not because of this — structured social unaccountability has been a 'rentier' trend involving for instance significant instances of personal corruption and self-enrichment by state functionaries.

Any developmental thrust by the ANC-controlled state tends to be highly centralised and devoid of significant civil society participation. The (former) ANC stalwart Raymond Suttner (2006: 23) suggests that this amounts to the instrumentalisation of popular struggle:

> At the level of the state and top echelons of the ANC ... there is a definite desire to trim down the mass character of the ANC and channel mass action in general along lines that are statised and institutionalised. ... [T]he masses are not intended to raise the issues independently as self-acting popular actors.

So far, it seems unlikely that the new Jacob Zuma presidency will entail a break with this trajectory. There do appear however to be some groupings within the ruling Tripartite Alliance (consisting of the ANC, South African Communist Party and Congress of South African Trade Unions) that question, if only tentatively and partially, the institutionalisation of politics and the undercutting of autonomous politics. This questioning though is a far cry from a shift away from the prevailing "instrumentalist understanding of state power" in South Africa in which the "capture of state power" becomes "uncritically equated with acquiring the means to transform society" (i.e. "planned emancipation") — in other words, a "technocratic ethos of state-led transformation in which process has been sacrificed to product" (Heller 2001: 134,151,157).

The extent to which there exists any questioning of planned emancipation within civil society in South Africa likewise is also currently unclear. The main trade union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), continues to occupy an uneasy in-between space, simultaneously defending the rights of its membership (often against state programmes) while being an acknowledged junior partner in the Tripartite Alliance. This has on many occasions significantly inhibited its autonomy and militancy (many of its key demands in fact have been excluded from state policies and programmes) (Buhlungu 2005). Besides the union movement, post-Apartheid society is marked by a broad range of social movements (and motions). These movements, at least in the early years, generally "operate[d] within the parameters of the new [post-Apartheid] status quo" (Ballard et al. 2005: 630) —

i.e. within the state/civil society consensus – and over the years they have had a fluctuating and uneven organisational and political presence. They have tackled issues such as land reform (e.g. The Landless Peoples' Movement), HIV/AIDS (e.g. Treatment Action Campaign), housing and the privatisation of electricity and water services (e.g. Anti-Privatisation Forum).

A vast array of tactics exist, from standard formal lobbying to 'un-civil' (some would say anarchist) activities such as land (and housing) occupations, blocking of highways, seizing of basic foodstuffs from stores by unemployed people, the unofficial connection of electricity (and the reconnection of power subsequently cut by municipalities). Also, at times, intense internal – and factional – debates take place. For instance, the question of forming alliances with COSATU (given the latter's alliance with the ANC) has been a contentious point (Naidoo and Veriava 2005, Xali 2006)[14]. Indeed, for various reasons, community-based struggles have often been ignored by COSATU and in certain cases union-movement tensions have arisen. Some movements have had (and still have) close links with the ANC, while others have sought to remain largely autonomous from party politics and have debated the merits of participation in the electoral process. Presently, there are initiatives from some quarters to form a national Left formation, but whether this is to be state-centric (including a Left party) or society-centric remains to be seen. A few movements (such as *Abahlali*, the Durban-based shack-dwellers movement) have autonomist tendencies, where the influence of anti-statist thinking and practice is clearly (but not necessarily consistently) discernable (Gibson 2006, Pithouse 2007).

At the same time, irrespective of a movement's relationship to 'the political' and the question of autonomy in this respect, there is often full or partial dependence of movements on NGOs. A considerable portion of civil society work in South Africa is in fact not driven by social movements; rather, there exists the "NGOisation of resistance" (Mngxitama 2006), as has happened notably in relation to rural movements, with some NGOs going so far as to almost masquerade as social movements. Not all NGOs (though located at the most 'civil' end of civil society) are mere servants of power (Ghimire 2001, Kanji et al. 2002, Borras Jr. 2008), and hence there is no necessary link between NGOs and political conservatism. Many indigenous NGOs in fact engage in radical forms of politics. For example, in the Eastern Cape Province, a few NGOs are organising farm workers into committee structures, given the failure of the trade union movement to have a significant rural reach. They also propose agricultural programmes that are fully consistent with the food sovereignty model of the global small-scale farmer organisation (*La Via Campesina*). Nevertheless, a relationship of dependence often emerges and this is difficult for rural communities to break free from.

There is a clear need within social movements in post-Apartheid South Africa to think through the question of autonomy, in relation to the party-state. Over

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[14] See also the articles by Ashwin Desai and Oupa Lehulere in *Khanya: A Journal for Activists*, No.11, December 2005.

twenty years before 1994, Rick Turner (the Durban socialist academic assassinated by Apartheid security forces) foresaw the rise and consolidation of statism and posited the significance of autonomous sites of struggle in a future South Africa:

> The political party as mediator between the individual and government tends to take on the characteristics of the system itself, the 'party machine' dominates the membership and the rank and file become increasingly divorced from policy making. .... The political arena becomes polarised between an atomised mass and a number of small groups trying to manipulate the mass in order to get political jobs. The result of this is to move the source of power in society out of the political arena and into the control of functional power groups. ... [T]here must be other additional centres of power which can be used by the people to exert their control over the central body (Turner 1971: 81).

In addition, these disparate centres of power would need to insulate themselves from the conditioning and constraining effects of NGOs.

Conclusion

This article has not sought to offer any definitive statement on emancipatory politics, but rather identifies, explores and teases out some of the critical questions facing emancipatory activists and academics. My unwillingness to be definitive (or to take sides) is not a reflection of a post-modernist positioning. Post-modernist thought (broadly understood) has influenced contemporary thinking about emancipation, with the emergence for example of various post-Marxist and post-Anarchist schools of thought. The controversies outlined in this article though fall squarely within modernist thought and practice — certainly, post-modernist claims about discursive practices and un-sutured social totalities are animating these controversies, but these claims are incorporated within modernist ('pre-post') foundational logics. Authentic emancipatory movements remain movements against the logics of capital and state and they legitimately go by the name of communism.

Debates within social movements in contemporary South Africa in certain ways mirror or replicate these broader controversies around the politics of hegemony and the politics of affinity. Barchiesi (2004, 328; Barchiesi n.d.) suggests (I would say, prematurely) that we are witnessing the "decline of established [that is, state-centred] paradigms of the 'Left' in South Africa", and that this simultaneously opens up prospects for pursuing refreshing (and expressive) forms of radical popular autonomous politics that seek to recover control over local spaces and that are devoid of the influence of old-style Left vanguardist politics. Any society-centred politics in South Africa though that falls consistently outside the state-civil society consensus has been subject to state scrutiny and if need be to repression (as in the recent case of *Abahlali*). The same fate, although for different reasons, also befalls more 'spontaneous' localized struggles such as urban 'service delivery' protests and rural land 'invasions'. These struggles are narrowly labelled (by the logic of the state) as mere expressions of particularistic grievances (within a politics of demand) but

are simultaneously defined as falling outside the realm of legitimate state-centric politics (they are included discursively in order to be excluded politically). Like *Abahlali*, these struggles seemingly question and counter the South African party-state's over-riding concern with 'power-over'.

The significance of challenging power-over through a politics of counter-hegemony (and the importance of the state to social change) cannot be dismissed – but hegemony, though critical to structural transformation, may be of less significance to human (and humane) emancipation. In this regard, movements in South Africa which try to think and practice autonomous popular struggles (notably at a distance from the state) and that are animated by expressive politics become critical. Similar to Rick Turner, Michael Neocosmos (2006a: 65) argues, in relation to contemporary South Africa, that the "[t]he basis for a democratic politics must be the recovery of politics within society, that is, the creation of a fully active and politicised citizenry" (without the state dictating "whether popular organisations are democratic or not"). Hopefully, such a politics would not simply entail the battle for power, but would involve – using the language of *Colectivo Situaciones* – the creation of new values, experiences and worlds in a post-capitalist direction.

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Sociopolitical and philosophical questions of organization in making a human society

Samuel R Friedman

Abstract

Marx's Marxism looked forward to a democratic workers' state that would wither away into a free association of working humanity. Experience since then has shown that reformist social democracy leaves capitalism and state bureaucracies intact and that revolutionary movements have created or been transformed into non-democratic state bureaucracies that have left workers still subordinate to (and arguably exploited by) employing agencies. This paper asks how a revolutionary workers' movement can end capitalist production and disperse an alienated state without generating a new autocracy or alienated state. Institutional forms like revolutionary parties and even workers' councils have a tendency to become alienated structures by the very fact of having to coordinate production, distribution and the transformation of social relations. This tendency, however, is not absolute, and can be countered by the arguments and, particularly, the struggles of organized and activist workers and communities. For this to succeed, however, political awareness of these tendencies towards bureaucratization and alienation, and a prior sociopolitical and philosophical discussion and awareness of relevant issues, should become widespread. This paper ends with 14 theses about core elements of this politics—which are offered for discussion with no expectation or desire that these issues should be decided except in the course of revolutionary and post-revolutionary struggle.

Part 1. Introduction

This paper attempts to answer a difficult problem in political sociology and philosophy that is also a crippling problem in the practical politics of the left. This is how we[1] can create a new form of society in which ordinary working people run their lives and, collectively, in an open and reasonably democratic way, also make the basic decisions about the shape of their world, regional, local and daily social, economic, and environmental contexts. Put in different terms:

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[1] By "we" here I mean the world's working classes—i.e., the great majority of people on this planet. However, as of 2009 when I write this, the great majority of workers in the world are not actively revolutionary—though some millions (perhaps) are. Thus, the "we" who read this, and the "we" available to take near-term action that this paper discusses, are a "we" that is far from representative of most workers. It is my hope that the ideas in this paper can help resolve this discrepancy in ways that help set the stage for the next mass working class radicalization to re-shape and, indeed, save, the world.

How can we eliminate the capitalist, state-ridden way of running things that is destroying the environment, creates frequent wars, deprives most human beings of any meaningful say about urban or rural development, the nature and quality of their schooling, or how and on what they spend their working day, and creates a politics in which the promises of the campaigns have little to do with *either* the problems that humanity needs to resolve or the actions the politicians take when once in office? And to put down the third part of this dilemma: How can we make rapid and thoroughgoing change without creating a bureaucratic dictatorship that will make things even worse?

Phrasing this historically, workers and peasants with similar aspirations in Russia in 1917 and China in the 1940s created revolutions—but found that the results a decade later were bureaucratic dictatorships. Similar fates befell revolutions in Vietnam and other places, although in each case the details about what happened and why were somewhat different. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Sweden, and France, social democratic parties that claim to represent workers, the poor and some farmers come repeatedly into office, but create only a more welfare-state oriented version of capitalism that solves none of the problems posed in the first paragraph.

On the left, there have been many attempts to answer this problem. Anarchists have claimed that the problem is the state, and that parties simply re-create the state and all the problems when they come to power either through election or revolution. Trotskyists argue that the problem has been the form and politics of the parties that have taken power, but continue to maintain that the party to lead the revolution is essential. Marxist humanists try to work out non-party forms of organization that can engage pre-revolutionary and revolutionary masses in dialogue so that ordinary workers remain in control of revolutionary processes.

All of us have failed so far, and indeed, various political tendencies have generated powerful political arguments to explain (or explain away) our failures and to offer hope for the future. Past failures do not mean that we will continue to fail in the future. History creates opportunities for system transformation out of its own dialectical development—often involving changes whose implications we fail to see before they are upon us. Our actions now can lay the basis for making important changes during such opportunities (often taking the form of socioeconomic, military or other crises). But to do this, we need to improve and disseminate (one or more) credible outlines of a solution to the problems posed above: How can the working billions in the world take over the madhouse that currently exists and turn it into something good?

In my opinion, there are at least three major questions that many people who deeply want such change have to find credible answers to for the movement to be able to move forward. These are

1. How could ordinary people actually overthrow the monstrous, powerful institutions of the state, the corporations, and the market (for goods, services and labor) that dominate life?

2. How could we do so without having our efforts create equally bad or worse systems of domination? Would we jump out of the pot of corporate capitalism into the fire of Stalinist dictatorship and gulags? And

3. How could we re-shape the world after we took power away from the current institutions so that our new ways of doing things would make sure people had access to the food and other goods they need, have useful and pleasant ways to do the work that needs to be done, have time for friendships and relationships, move rapidly to reduce and then eliminate structured inequalities among nations, races, men and women, and people of different occupations, and solve problems like environmental catastrophe and war?

I have already written a paper (Friedman 2008), that presents some ideas about the third question. It needs to be re-written in more popular form, but my ideas on this topic can be found there, and seem to me to be reasonably consistent with what I say in this paper.

Since my intention in this paper is to focus primarily on the second question, I will only sketch out one scenario about how we could "take power." I do that here in order to set the stage for my concerns on question 2—both in terms of presenting a context in which these concerns seem important and also in terms of presenting a process of current events during which "we" can act in some of the ways I discuss below so that the process of taking power is more likely to lead to a good political process rather than to dictatorship. That is, all three of these questions are interlinked, with each set of "answers" at time 1 conditioning what is possible at time 2 and so forth—but also in reverse, with our ideas and intentions for later stages of the process conditioning what we do at earlier stages.

How could we "take power"? One scenario—based on a lot of the history of the last two hundred years, including "classic" experiences like the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, the revolution in Catalonia in 1936, that in Hungary in 1956, and the French May Days of 1968, as well as more recent experiences like those in Argentina in 2001-2002—is as follows:

During a period of social, economic or other uncertainty when many people are unhappy about the way things are going, some group of workers, the unemployed, or other members of the broadly-defined working class engage in a demonstration, or a sit-down strike like those of the 1930s or that by the Republic Window makers in Chicago in 2009, or block a major highway. Perhaps simply because it catches the imagination, or perhaps because the authorities try to repress it, this action gains widespread support, and others emulate it—and this becomes a flood of action that overwhelms efforts by the authorities to suppress it. Often, indeed, their efforts at repression lead to situations where the soldiers simply refuse to take part in the repression, or even switch sides and join the insurrection.

In order to coordinate their struggle, workers form committees at their workplaces (which may then seize control over their workplaces), neighbors or unemployed people form committees, and the committees in a local area send

delegates to frequent, perhaps even continuous, meetings to make decisions about what needs to be done. As the prior political and economic institutions lose authority, these new committees (which are often called workers' councils) take over responsibility. Often, a moment of confrontation becomes inevitable, and in a successful social transformation these workers' councils dissolve the power of the pre-existing governing bodies—including having the people who do the work taking over economic decision making. (Government bureaucratic agencies either get dissolved or get taken over by their workers under the supervision of the councils—there are a lot of difficult issues on this that need to be worked out with little experience to guide us as yet.)

For this process to work out, we need to have clear sets of ideas (which may take the form of warring visions held by different political factions or parties) that paint a picture of how we will use our power after we have it and how we will structure our power so that it remains ours rather than becoming a dictatorship. In practice, none of these ideas will work out precisely as planned, since revolutions are schools that teach everyone new lessons, but they probably do not need to be precise blueprints for what we will do. Indeed, in many ways, the disagreements and uncertainties about what is desirable and what is needed, and the contending political forces that develop around these, may well be part of the process by which we, first, render the old powers uncertain and unable to counter the movement and, then, after we disperse their power, part of the process by which we keep power accountable, open, and in our hands.

Part 2. The question of how to create a radical transformation of human society without setting the stage for a dictatorship

Let us turn now to the "meat" of this argument.

The opposition to a "leadership-building" party sees correctly that such a party becomes its opposite after taking power--but fails to see the *need* for a revolutionary party or parties that work to coalesce the movement to do away with the State and to install workers' councils as supreme. In this sense, they fail to see revolutionary social change as a process that involves the need for different organizational forms at different times. In this sense, formulations that are simply "anti-party" attempt to find fixed forms that hold good throughout the raging storms of history. This contradicts the perspective that dialectics is change and negation.

However, the "becoming its opposite" aspects of a party is important. It is due to a social reality that also will apply, to some extent, to workers' councils: to the extent that they become responsible for coordinating production, distribution, labor, defense against counter-revolution, and the re-making of society, they become *negated* as power-from-below (to some extent, anyway--at the least, this is a *strong tendency*, and takes concrete form in spending much of their time directing and coordinating *others' labor*.)

The negation of this negation is workers and communities coordinating from below—and in Making the World Anew (as well as very briefly below in this paper) I discuss the historical struggles and processes through which this might arise. It will not, however, take place instantly since it depends on political choices about the political priorities to be given to global action to deal with environmental crises, international inequality, and the ways in which we will reorganize global divisions of labor and decision-making. These set the stage for the social creation of friendships of workers around the globe and thus the creation of a global workers' unity for itself in every sense (and the transcending of class by withering it away).

The "day after taking power" (which will last for some years) will be a moment of urgent tasks, conflicting interests among sections of workers, and also with other people, much solidarity based on the prior struggle, and many competing and conflicting political/economic perspectives about how to make the world anew. Efforts to use power-from-above to decide these issues, rather than helping discussion-from-below (where "discussion" includes demonstrations, negotiations with unions and other organizations, strikes, etc.) will lead to tendencies towards bureaucratization and perhaps even dictatorship—and yet, as noted next, authoritative coordination will be needed. (This establishes a limited contradiction with potential fruitful outcomes.)

As I envision this period, it will be a period in which people set up and/or join many organizations to solve urgent problems (or just have fun) and in which some at least of their time devoted to these organizations counts as work time. Some of these organizations may well seek, and obtain, membership in local workers' councils. One way to think about these organizations is that they become a set of mediators between individuals, friendship groups, work groups and families, on the one hand, and workers' councils on another. These mediators will include unions at work; ecology clubs; neighbors who want to get a school built or a waste dump cleaned up; local (and wider) groups against gender, racial, ethnic or other subordination; and political parties or interest groups with wider perspectives on the changes they want (or want to prevent).

As mentioned, there will be urgent tasks that need to be done to maintain economic viability, change the society, deal with global warming, and much else. Such tasks will require a degree of *central coordination* and this will probably best be lodged in a workers' council for the world and other councils with regional or national remits. To prevent bureaucratization, and perhaps the crystallization of new exploitative production relations and a new class (or the maintenance of the old exploitation under new rulers and in a new form), will require challenge to authority from below by some of these mediating forces, and, in time the *usurpation* of authority to coordinate people's "work time" and other resources.

This may be simultaneously the withering away of the state and the transformation into the society of freely associated labor; or there might be stages of combined and uneven withering. I do not know at this point how this will coordinate over time with the formation of a global working class for itself—

but my guess is that the process of forming the class-for-itself will lead this as an interactive (dialectical?) process with the withering of the state being part of the abolition of the working class by its becoming all of humanity in a cooperative society. The disagreements over priorities and other issues will be the basis for organization and activism at the base that will help prevent bureaucratization etc. - at least if the post-take-over crisis does not become too severe (?)).

Part 3. Theses

The following "theses" outline some actions, formations and ideas that are needed now if we are to change the world towards a socialism-from-below.

1. A philosophically aware (set of) revolutionary parties who understand that *they* and the higher-level workers councils will become "the problem" when they become the authoritative coordinators - but also that this is nonetheless a time-limited need for the process to move forward.

2. Political democracy and struggle within and between parties both before and after the revolution. I anticipate that these will start from and deepen most existing definitions of human rights other than those that enshrine the right of capitalist and state property over those of workers and the people.

3. Our movement should put a positive political value on, and widely discuss the need for, challenges to parties and workers' councils from below. (Some such movements may tend to re-create or increase inequality. These movements, if put forward by large sections of the population, are part of what working class democracy means. This is discussed more fully in Friedman 2008).

4. Willingness to split one's party if it becomes too powerful or in any way begins to crystallize as a power above the people.

5. Similarly, our politics should value and support challenges from below (and above to the extent that the "top" is aware) of any and all fetishization of authority or its symbols.

6. It seems likely that the longer and harder a struggle counter-revolutionaries wage to destroy the new system, the more difficult it will be to avoid setting up dangerous state-like structures of repression. Farber's (1990) discussion of the Russian revolution offers valuable lessons about steps that might help resist such pressures. It does not, however, fully take account of the ways in which the experience of civil war tends to "teach" repressive patterns of thought and action. Further discussion and debate around these issues both before and during periods of social transformation is needed and should be seen as part of what I am proposing here.

7.   The pressure to prevent hierarchy etc. derives from, and should be valued as deriving from, the *active and agentic* work and thinking that workers and others do to re-make the world and the political struggles they engage in to make this happen (often against the wishes of workers councils and parties) via coordinating their own efforts and challenging obstacles that they encounter in their efforts to make needed changes at work or in their community.

8.   In past revolutions and social movements, arguments based on efficiency and the need to maintain production, perhaps together with the fear of punishment for unauthorized work stoppages, often convince workers to use grievance procedures and similar non-disruptive ways of resolving disputes with those in authority at workplaces. Kevin Murphy (2007) in his history of a steel factory in Moscow during the early 1900s provides considerable evidence that the argument about efficiency and the need to maintain production was important in demobilizing and depoliticizing workers in post-revolutionary Russia. Friedman (1982) discusses how similar dynamics demobilized and disempowered activist and mobilized truck drivers in Los Angeles during the 1960s. Thus, a politics that values *defiant and disruptive rank and file activism at work* may be crucial for a successful post-revolutionary social transformation. I would go so far as to suggest that a norm that every workgroup or workplace should engage in at least one or two unauthorized strikes a year should perhaps be a part of post-revolutionary culture - and that political parties and other groups should see this as part of their core positions, and that a revolutionary politics should include a commitment to uphold this norm and, perhaps, to split any party-in-office that opposes this in practice. (This would also serve as one partial answer to the question posed next about how to keep people active and engaged.)

9.   One problem that we may face will be how to keep huge numbers of people involved in the discussions needed to make decision-making be truly democratic and participatory. I have put several some ideas on this in "Making the World Anew," so here I will only briefly deal with it. First, this is an issue that needs wide discussion among movements during the period before the movements take power, so that different ideas can be widely tried out as soon as becomes possible. Secondly, part of the solution probably lies in a re-definition of what "work" is and how "work time" should be used (and thus what uses of time should receive remuneration). Work time needs to include considerable time for small-group, departmental, and workplace discussions to take place about what should be produced or done, how this should happen, and the socio-political issues that will influence these issues. "Work" should include not merely production, distribution and exchange of what is currently considered workplace products or services, but also the

chores and social interactions people do at home and in their neighborhoods. "Work" also probably should include "self time" in which people think, contemplate and generally maintain their sense of who they are and what they want to do. Discussions and participation should be viewed as an integral part of all of these except (perhaps) "self time," and time should be allocated accordingly. Third, working this out should be easier to the extent that meetings have the power to take effective action. Finally, we should recognize that we do not know how to run meetings so that such discussions can be both productive and fun. Working this out should be easier to the extent that the meetings actually have the power to take effective action—but the question of how to structure and engage in meetings needs wide discussion, theorization, and perhaps research.

10. Clear philosophically and politically based awareness of the need to formulate proposals for action clearly; and to *experiment* in directing the allocation/self-allocation of people's time and other resources to different tasks in terms of use values as democratically decided. This then can and should be seen as evolving to being "coordinated from below" in response to democratic processes.

11. "Workplace and community militias should devolve to, and remain under, local control" is a high value to be understood before the revolution and to be struggled for from Day 1. Of course, to the extent that the revolution is under attack from other geographic areas, this process will be more difficult. But once the working class pretty much becomes in control everywhere, this will accelerate—and at all times, working class efforts to do this should be viewed as well within the spirit of the revolution. (NB: this challenges gun control.)

12. Education focusing on "building from below" and on how to build local opposition movements. This may build on the thoughts and experiences of past thinkers like Freire and of past movements.

13. One useful pre-revolutionary organizational form is a network of groups and/or magazines to discuss "afterwards" and its dialectical relationships to the situation now and its implications for parties and for workers councils "now" and "then". Such philosophizing is best to the extent that it involves a large number of workplace and community struggle leaders. Such groups should try to educate the various parties and organizations and militants about the contradictory histories of *all forms* and organizations as the struggle progresses. That is, they should see their task as to help people be aware that the leaders and even the councils are potential enemies as well as necessary forms for authoritative coordination.

14.   Formulations that emphasize the pre-revolutionary need for "the party" are prone to sectarian and/or thuggish behavior. No one party, though, can create a socialist revolution of the kind that will improve things. Maybe we should think of creating a socialist struggle milieu, including several revolutionary parties with different ideas about what changes are needed, how to get there, and how to do it—that is, on the "three questions" posed at the beginning of this paper as well as others. This struggle milieu should produce lots of good thought and, hopefully, comradeship among members of different parties. (This has happened in the past.) During the revolutionary process itself, there is likely to be a need for one or more of these parties to push politically for workers councils to form, to take more and more responsibility, for workers to run workplaces, and, then to disperse the capitalist state and have the councils run things. *This, however, is the high point of parties' role, I think.* After Councils take power, parties can become ossified and alienated structures that lead towards dictatorship.

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A matter of trust:
the politics of working-class self-education
Jean Bridgeman

"Only by coming to terms with my own past, my own background, and seeing that in the context of the world at large, have I begun to find my true voice and to understand that, since it is my own voice, that no pre-cut niche exists for it; that part of the work to be done is making a place, with others, where my and our voices can stand clear of the background noise and voice our concerns as part of a larger song." (Jane Ellen Wilson)

Abstract

This article is based on self-organised community education work among drug users on a working-class estate in a small town in Co. Kildare, Ireland. Starting from an ethnographic account of inequality and resistance in the lives of working-class youth, the paper discusses historical and contemporary forms of community politics in this area, arguing that self-organised activity outside the control of local elites is crucial for making gains and developing self confidence. Drawing on the experience of long term community education work around drugs, state power and social class, this article argues for the central importance of trust, based on shared experience and generational solidarity, in the development of effective resistance to class power.

Introduction

The paper gives an account of the importance in helping individuals voice their social experiences, and argues that establishing trust is an important aspect in beginning this process. The paper further argues it is crucial for individuals to begin a process of action and reflection by using situations in their everyday living experiences. Drawing on Freirean methodologies in establishing a united trust in the research-in-action process, this paper asserts that through collaboration a mutual ground in participatory learning evolves. From this, a cultural synthesis in finding common experiences in the wider context of working-class culture and generational solidarity fosters a sense of inclusion for individuals towards collective common interests in working-class life. The paper argues that self-organised community learning encourages and supports transformational possibilities for individuals and in doing so individuals gain critical awareness, and confidence in challenging class power more effectively.

The setting: a working-class estate in a small town

The town is situated some thirteen miles (twenty kilometres) from Ireland's capital city of Dublin. For the casual observer passing through, the eye would

register the affluence of the town. The modern trappings of casinos, Italian restaurants, Chinese takeaways, pubs, and banks co-exist peacefully with stately homes open to visitors on a Sunday. In stark contrast, other historical buildings in the town are the poor workhouse, a former woollen mill and the derelict workers' cottages. These are stark reminders of the law of the poor and the life of the working class.

The Catholic Church plays an important part in town politics, particularly in the area of well-being and spiritual renewal. The basement of the parish priest's house is the centre for most small community projects like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, drug awareness programmes and personal development courses. Colourful flower displays and neatly cut green spaces compete for tidy town awards and local business people paint their shop window frames in matching colours, blending in sameness. This physical context structures the invisibility of working-class youth who have come to cultivate alternative landscapes of their own - in the woods, on street corners and in alleyways.

The local council housing estate is home to most working-class youth in the area. The area is made up of three hundred houses, built in the 1980s to accommodate the growing numbers of working-class families on welfare and on the housing waiting lists. The estate has no green spaces for children to play and most children play in the alleyways and back lanes of the houses. Poverty, unemployment and the harsh realities of drug use are mirrored in the everydayness of working-class life here. The neighbourhood itself is littered with empty cheap Tesco beer cans and abandoned shopping trolleys.

Lack of employment and opportunities for people in this area has left its mark on working class traditions. Local youths are held in contempt by town elites who are quick to blame the parents solely for the problems of drug use in the community. Drug users are demonised and branded as no-hopers. This negative stigma has spread to the neighbourhood which has now become known in the surrounding town and to the broader communities as "the badlands". This situation is compounded all the more by media sensationalising of crime and gangland wars in working-class communities.

In these situations working-class families in the neighbourhood try all the harder to make things right, and to be seen to live right in the eyes of the local notables. Through local activism and liaison with helping strategies in the wider community, I came to know most of the local youths and was aware of further conflicts arising for them due to failed attempts to make something of their lives. I was aware that families were more under pressure now and that youths, having internalised these failures, were driven to silence and a mistrust in helping initiatives, further succumbing to drug and alcohol use. I recognised how such negative trends compound the problems for working-class youths all the more, and how in this crisis, the underlying power structures that contribute to problems in the first place can remain covered up, or even ignored.

This paper discusses parts of an action-research project which developed organically out of of the need to do something different in trying to help these individuals, and in hoping to highlight aspects of their lives that can remain hidden. Moreover this paper is an attempt at looking beyond the familiar and brings an argument for openness in looking to disentangle the individual from victim-blaming, demonising, and moral reckoning so as to arrive at the individual in struggle and begin the process of helping from there. Beginning with the concept of "trust" in working towards this process, the paper offers a reflexive account of my work with participants in this project and the specific methodologies used in self-organised learning.

Formations of the Irish working class

A Marxist perspective reads the Irish working class as those who do not own the means of production and are dependent on selling their labour or on welfare; this makes up the large majority of the population. This is a fairly recent phenomenon however; in the 1911 census an absolute majority of households depended on ownership of businesses, shops and in particular small farms, so that most families have a "middle class" identity which was reinforced during the recent "Celtic Tiger" boom. In this context, the manual working class, particularly its unskilled and unemployed components, has often been stigmatised by others keen to affirm their upwardly mobile and/or respectable status. This paper uses the term "working class" in this latter sense.

The manual working class in Ireland, other than rural landless labourers, has never been numerically or culturally dominant. Ireland has long held a peripheral status to the United Kingdom (exporting food and sending migrant workers), with a failed attempt at economic autonomy in early statehood. A brief dependent industrialisation in the 1970s was brought to an end by the 1980s recession. More recently the country has undergone a globalising boom geared towards service industries. The bulk of manual working-class jobs historically have been in distribution and services, in food processing and the garment trade, and in sectors such as cooking and cleaning, with industrial production never dominating.

The Dublin Lockout of 1913

The defeat of the 1913 Lockout and the subsequent subordination of working-class and labour politics under the new capitalist nation-state also mean that working-class organisations have rarely controlled any substantial "means of intellectual production" of their own. While there is a long history of working-class self-education, most of the content of this has been nationalist and most representations of the Irish working-class are literary or musical, only occasionally produced by working-class people (usually men). Despite this, there is an immediately recognisable working-class culture, however marginalised, to be found in the traditional inner-city areas of Dublin, the vast new towns such as Tallaght and Ballymun built for the working class in the

1960s and 1970s, and the one working-class council estate that is attached to the fringes of most small towns in Ireland.

These small town estates, such as the one where this research is set, are marked by a lack of self-confidence. Except where there was a substantial local factory, most men and women on these estates typically worked in individualised employment, for local tradesmen, shops and families. Such estates are now often substantially dependent on local social welfare offices, church-run charities and community organisations controlled by local notables. In these conditions, it is particularly hard for people to develop any sense of collective identity other than that of stigma and a desire to escape this status. What help is provided is typically controlled by outsiders, who encourage this perspective and seek where possible to foster a sense that individual upward mobility (whether one's own or one's children's) is the only respectable strategy.

Young working-class men, lacking employment, education or respectability, routinely turn to alcohol and drugs (typically cannabis and heroin), finding companionship with each other and at times an alternative "way out" beckoning through what seems like the lucrative route of becoming a dealer. This, of course, reinforces their stigmatisation and lays them open to the power of local police for whom they provide a regular source of arrests and convictions for petty offences.

Naming the problem:
how working-class youth are represented nationally

When we take a look at some of the ways research has represented the problems faced by working-class communities and have come to represent working-class individuals, we can see how middle-class experts coming from the outside in are presumed to speak on behalf of working-class people without knowing, or even properly documenting, working-class culture (O'Neill 1990). Lynch (1999) argues that a hit and run research takes place in communities, whereby working-class people are robbed of their knowledge by middle class experts who then use that knowledge as a way of controlling and misrepresenting working-class people rather than liberating those researched.

In this situation we have to ask ourselves how might we do things differently in the process of helping communities and individuals who may be suffering most, and be researched the most, and who may, even through all this research, not even be heard. The question is then what might bring openness to doing things differently and what is needed to begin this process.

It is important to begin my argument for trust by placing it in the context of the current crisis in our society.

Putting words to the crisis: the politics of representation and fear

What's needed to begin is to ask what is a politics of representation and how might it contribute to a current crisis. Murray (1994), in theories of a cultural underclass, represented working-class youths as being lazy and stuck in no-hope situations, by choices of their own making. He argued that crime rates in these communities were rising at an alarming level due to a too- lenient judicial system. In tandem, unemployment was soaring because of an overgenerous welfare system. Research findings such as Murray's overstated working-class agency and life choices and gave little thought to the structures of oppression that are found in the lives of working-class youths. Working-class males and the communities they live in are sought after so as to document the miseries of a drug using life in order to boost popular culture and media ratings (King 2003). There follows a politics of identity and stereotyping of the drug user,

> "He's a male, and he's from a working-class area, he can't be trusted because he looks shifty, he has failed in school, as opposed to school failing him, he is thought to be of low intelligence, amoral, with no religious attachment, irrational, easily led, and both emotionally and verbally inarticulate" (2003: 177)

In Irish society today there is also a heightened fear of the drug dealer and the drug user; it is all too easy to be swept up in a moral panic as the media delivers the repetitive accounts of gang killings and drugs crime. This is not to deny the seriousness of the lives that have been lost or damaged by this criminal class; again it's a question of how best to respond. Bourgois (1995) offers one simple response:

> "a simple, cheap and effective way to disarm this violent criminal class is to destroy their profits by decriminalising drugs".

A big part of bringing the argument for trust to this paper was finding that to do so the process of trust first began with me. Being working-class and documenting working-class culture, I seemed to be more often than not hovering around moral panic myself, when a car was set on fire in my neighbourhood, or when a neighbour would mention the latest drugs shooting broadcast on the TV.

On the other hand, I trusted myself in knowing the hidden lives behind this heightened atmosphere where young working-class youths were cultivating alternative landscapes around the perimeters of the wider community - making huts in the woods and staying out all night returning to sleep all day. These young people were second generation youths I had known growing up in the area: they had not known much school-life, most were early school leavers. "We could not wait to get out", they would say to me whenever I asked them about school. None of them knew employment as such: perhaps some training courses but most did not even have the advantage their parents had, such as a trade apprenticeship if you left school early.

Once when I was coming home from night duty in a local hospital, where I was working part-time as a care worker, I met a youth coming through the town at dawn on his way back from the woods. He was hooded and almost invisible. It

was then I decided to call my thesis "the hidden people". In this naming was the first step in establishing my trust in this research and the need to look beyond the familiar, to ask the question "Is it possible in our contemporary capitalist society in the midst of crisis, blame and fear, to disentangle the individual so as to come to the human in struggle?"

A native ethnographer in the neighbourhood

I became recognised for having a part in helping people in the community: my kitchen table was and still is, the space for many talks and plans with neighbours regarding some of the problems we were experiencing. Issues such as confronting the county council to have the alleyways blocked off so as to stop joy riders and avoid the danger of cars being burnt out at the back of the houses were regularly discussed. I was also involved in helping local drug users with everyday practical things like filling in forms, reading legal documents in order to break down the jargon, and making notes of important dates. I would lend books when some were starting courses and put in a good word with police officers, hoping it would make a difference when some youths were going to court.

A turning point for me came about when given the opportunity to bring my local activism into research in action; now I had the chance to bring it all together – my experiences, my research skills, and the relationships I had with locals. I had a distinct advantage in gaining access to drug users as I had already been working with some of them in the area. One of the fundamentals of anthropology contends that ethnographers, in order to bring a "thick description" of the area of study (Spradley 1979), need to live in the field of study for long periods of time, and get to know the natives well by establishing trusting relations (Bourgois 1995). Drug users do not trust easily and have a particular distrust for mainstream social representatives; I had been given affirmation by local youths that I was OK, I was sound![1]

I also had a theoretical and cultural understanding that working-class culture is largely a defensive one. Roberts (1971) says there is no real mystery about this as its historical roots have been shaped by the struggles to survive in the cities of the industrial revolution. I had also grown up in a world of "them and us" and had instantly understood the theorist's documentation of the cautious, pragmatic view working-class individuals can have towards those in power. I came across what Scott (1985) points to as "hidden talk" among the lower classes behind the backs of power and recognised this to be one of the strengths in the relations I had with the local youths, where our conversations and the helping means I gave them seemed to be a natural critical dialogue, or as we say "behind the back talk".

It was this means of being able to talk freely and critically about the way things were for them, the way we used humour to break down serious jargon and to

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[1] "Ah, you're sound!" simply means "you're OK".

reinterpret the conversations they held with various local power holders that formed the first building blocks towards self–organised community learning. The relationships I had struck up were also based on a type of human honesty that recognised people for just being people. This is probably best explained by the responses to the sudden death of a local youth who was excluded from local shops and who had come to be begging in the streets of the town. When most people scorned him, these youths would said,

> "He's a real nice person. Like, don't mind what you see. Behind all that he's really sound".[2]

Power and control:
how working-class youth are managed locally

King (2003) writes that most of the damaging debates around drug users have taken place within a frame of prohibition or a zero tolerance perspective to the drugs problems. This though, he says, is never far removed from securing for those debating a self righteous boost in being seen as on the side of the virtuous and not on the side of the damned (the drug users) or the shameful. I was acutely aware of how some local elites in the wider community perceived local drug users; the following are some narratives expressed in conversation when I was beginning to put this project into action. As the project is ethnographically grounded in the community I wanted to gather the views of other locals:

> "There are no manners on them nowadays; there's no discipline. I blame the schooling; [they] should never have banned being slapped by the teacher when you were doing wrong".

In fact, many drug users were early school leavers precisely because of domination in the class room and cultural domination in the curriculum. Willis (1977) writes about how working-class kids leave school because of this, coming to believe they are inferior and are failures, thus making do with a life and work that is second best.

 Others held a zero tolerance attitude and suggested a "lock them up and throw away the key" solution:

> "The prison system is too lenient. They should be locked up and not let back out. Sure they only go into prison for a rest; they're holiday camps not jails".

In contrast to this, many working-class males spoke to me about being harassed by police and the youths I teach and who are part of this action research project will openly say

> "When you are working-class you are guilty until proven innocent".

Foucault (1979: 6) puts this another way:

> "The true underlying function of the prison is not to control the criminal so much as to control the working-class by creating the criminal".

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[2] This and other quotes are drawn from my ongoing fieldwork.

The here and now of the neighbourhood

It is easy to see how national deindustrialisation comes to be mirrored in the everydayness of working-class life. This shows in visual poverty, where the houses have broken windows and crumbling paint on the doors. Litter bins are overflowing because people find it hard to afford bought bin tags so the council will empty their bin. The lack of money coming into households has put a strain on working-class traditions such as future life planning. Local deindustrialisation has also left its mark with the closing of the carpet mills in the 1980s and then the grain mills in the 1990s. With the closing of local shops and markets and the coming of global enterprises such as LIDL and ALDI supermarkets, employment is scarce and in most households just does not exist.

 Working-class people who were once independent economically are now dependent on government projects to restore their communities. Welfare dependency has taken its toll on working-class pride and dignity and those who take a dignified leap to escape poverty generally land in poor working situations with its own degrading effects from low pay and easy dismissals. They enter conditions where their labour is disposable and not very meaningful.

Drug using on the estate has created no-go areas where gangs of youths gather at weekends for sessions of dance with music booming from car stereos. Local residents, already shattered by poverty and coping with a growing drugs problem, have now also to cope with negative discrimination about the area in which their homes are. This can stop some locals from gaining means of work:

> "On occasion when money was lower than low I would advertise locally to do some child minding. I would give my phone number on the advertisement but when I would get a call and mention where I lived, it was always the same reaction – 'where did you say?' and 'well I will get back to you' ".

 The lack of opportunities and the crushing hopelessness people feel when they have long since given up the struggle for change is sometimes expressed in sayings, like "we are just getting by" or you just have to live 'day to day' while local youths refer to the mundane daily existence in the neighbourhood as 'the great nothingness'.

National helping strategies and small town community politics

The National Drugs Strategy 2002-2008 brings attention to young working-class males and their isolation from stable family and communal structures. In this, the individual is called into question as somehow flawed while the community that is poverty stricken, isolated and neglected and is the underlying cause for problem drug use is ignored. Carley and Morgan (1999: 163) write that

> "Young people in working-class communities have received more control than care, and more blame than apology".

The majority of community development policies are rooted in a liberal, humanistic framework (Geoghegan and Powell 2006); this means the focus of accessing situations is viewed through a 'survival of the fittest' thinking. Thus the focus is on what individuals can make of themselves in terms of what they have or what they can present.

The local politics in the town works towards a prevailing consensus; this is made all the more powerful by a process of blaming the victim, which in turn stands to mute working-class voices on many issues of social inequality. As individuals are not given the space or opportunity to voice their social experiences and begin a process of reflection on their social realities, they come to internalise the social structures that are beyond their grasp as personal failures. This creates a deep seated belief that there is no hope in a community that is already neglected and with individuals who are already marginalised. The process of trying to change anything is more compounded for the drug user now:

> "I do try to change, but it all just seems impossible, like there is too much to change, just to be liked, respected, or to have what everyone else has. I get fed up, it's a mountain I know I have to climb, and I'm responsible, there's no else to blame only myself - ah just spark a joint and that's it".

I knew it was a different setting for youths with me, when I was filling in the odd form or helping out by phoning a local programme or course, but I did not know as yet what this difference was. I was to discover however that what I was doing with them, in terms of providing a space for talk and sharing social experiences, was an introduction to a critical thinking that went beyond the accepted boundaries of a dominant culture. In other words, what was happening in gaining help in this way was a deconstruction of the norm they were used to. So in working through some practical problems, the focus of transformation for them did not pin all the responsibility on the individual, but allowed for critical reflection of the world around their realities.

Ways out of the "great nothingness": research in action and transformation

In the beginning, before I was really aware of the importance of self-organised learning with the youths in this project, I wanted to make it known to those who had the power to further educational initiatives. I brought my project ideas to professionals involved in promoting social inclusion in the wider Kildare area and introduced them as new methods in educational programmes for drug users. I also brought with me some youths who were now participating in the project. During a conversation about finding a place to hold the learning discussion, the youths were asked

> "De yis know yer own minds lads?[3]

This comment was to become the centre of many a role play learning session with the group. I knew collaboration also meant relationship, and I knew a big

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[3] "Do you know your own minds, lads?"

part of the relationship I had built with the youths so far was on the grounds of not being judged. This of course was a two way process: they were not judged and they did not judge me either. I had established this on previous occasions using a type of self-assessment with a critical review of "how I see the world" by always ending in a question that somehow worked in gaining a response from them, either to say I'm right or I'm wrong about something. More importantly, what I was establishing in this was a common ground of trust in mutual learning and a space for them to be included in this - whether they knew their own minds or not!

Voices in action and transformation: self-organised community learning

I recognised a need for a more social educational learning process than most of the programmes in the local area had to offer. The general curricula focused on personal development which again placed the focus of learning and a responsibility for change solely on the individual, with little recognition to social structures outside their personal grasp that play an immense part in shaping their lives. These situations contribute to what Freire (1972) calls a "culture of silence". He uses this concept to indicate the means by which the oppressed lose the ability to critically respond to the culture that is forced on them by a dominant culture.   This in itself creates an isolated "other". Some community intervention and educational programmes have come under criticism (King 2003) for their focus of change to emphasise funding, lack of staff, unreasonable demands and long waiting lists. Instead, perhaps new ways of thinking and doing, new knowledge and attitudes, and changing the culture of institutions, is the real agenda needed.

As an educator I recognise teaching is a performative act (hooks 1994) as a practice of freedom. I directed the learning sessions in such a way as to bring about what Freire (1972) calls a cultural synthesis, this is a process of sharing common experiences. I designed the group discussions in such a way so as to draw on experiences relating to the wider context of working-class culture. I did this because I knew it was important, not just in terms of encouraging dialogue in the discussion, but because it brought some recognition to a common resistance towards liberation in working-class culture. I knew this was an important part in individuals gaining a sense of belonging and encouraged this all the more with stories and events in the context of working-class history. I was to find out from some youths that in times of exclusion and extreme circumstances the hearing of an Irish ballad would give them a sort of hope in belonging to a common interest in struggle for freedom.

The argument for trust throughout this paper is supported by how individuals begin to gain confidence in challenging their realities. This methodology for self-organised community learning proved successful in pilot study discussion groups. Individuals gave feedback of being accepted just as they were; it gave

them the trust they needed to speak out, and encouraged them by the knowing that they would not be blamed for their own predicament, or (as some recalled):

> "We would be left sitting in silence while the priest went for tea. This was for us to reflect on ourselves and give a positive solution to him on how we were going to change".

We need a different way of approaching the problems faced by working-class communities today which asks if it is possible to disentangle the individual from a politics of harm and misrepresentation in order to get to the real structural underlying problems of drug use in working-class communities. From this begins a process that scratches out a space for gaining human voice in struggle. Establishing trust is the first step in giving those in struggle the confidence to explore their existing realities in a current crisis, within a new methodology for learning which is specifically for, but not wholly designed for, working-class learners.

In my view self-organised community learning outside more mainstream helping strategies is crucial to gaining the trust of working-class drug users as it introduces a critical interpretation of their social realities and does not begin from the perspective of placing the onus of change solely on the individual. In other words we must oppose the 'blaming the victim game' with the lives of working-class youths. This plays a crucial part in helping the individual begin a process of critical action and reflection of the world around them but not as Freire (1972) would say "to merely adapt to the world, but to embark on a journey of changing it."

In transformation: knowledge in action and change

This paper makes an argument for the need to establish trust with working-class drug users in order to work towards a process of transformation and change. It does not claim to have all the answers to the problems faced by working-class people today, but it does suggest that there are, or at least ought to be, many ways of responding to these problems. In this sense, the approach developed here is offered as one possible way of responding and helping. The concept of transformation can be explained in many ways.

 In the context of this action research project, transformation is considered to be a process in which individuals begin making changes in their lives. This change for individuals begins with what is called a process of "coming to know" (Freire 1972). In this development, individuals use situations from their daily lives as learning experiences. A key issue here for participants is trust in the understanding that knowledge produced through collaboration and shared experiences is owned by themselves. What is important is that participants come to trust that the realities of their lives which they share are not taken from them and solely used for the production of popular culture, or are not used as pathological statements as a warning of how not to live:

> "You just do the run around: go into rehab, if it's a holy place then you pray for your sins. If it's more medical like, then they want to know why you are this way

and not another way. They use your personal stuff, ya know, stories and stuff, as a way of warning others how not to be like you".

A crucial step in the transformation process is the move away from thinking the individual as flawed. This begins with participants coming to examine and re-examine their own experiences in the context of their world. This was worked through with participants in various ways. In some sessions participants used drawings in expressing their experiences in the community. Others used role play. This, participants found, was most helpful in enabling them to explain their experiences with local power structures and authorities. Individuals have spoken about how in using their own lived situations as starting points of learning has given them confidence to challenge things differently. This I have found to be most important to working-class drug users who have suffered being stigmatised as the 'other' and is especially crucial for those who left school early because the education system failed them and who have in the course of their lives internalised this failing as self-inadequacy:

> "When I first went to the group discussion I had my story ready. I was as usual going to shape my experiences in order to play along with what I thought everybody was thinking about me, you know like I was really no good, and that they would do their best for me, but I would always be the same anyway. You learn to do this; you learn to play the game. The difference with this group was no-one was feeling sorry for me. I had just as much say as everyone else. The big thing was my opinion mattered. I was asked what I thought and we shared things about the community. I felt stronger in myself, I had a sense of hope that things could change and more importantly I was part of making that change happen".

Creating a sense of belonging to common interests for change

Linking everyday living experiences of the situations these individuals find themselves in, and using these situations as starting points in the process of action and reflection, allows transparency for the individuals to locate issues of poverty, social injustices and domination into broader aspects of working class culture and life. This process was brought about by telling stories of past struggles, and tales from first and second family generations, and in exploring the lyrics of Irish ballads, and questioning their meanings. This, participants said, brought them a sense of belonging, and new understandings that there are real reasons for how things are and that others hold common interests in seeing things this way also.

This fosters inclusion for the individual, but not as in more mainstream community development, where inclusion for most has just come to mean conformity to an overriding consensus. Instead, participants begin a critical questioning of how things are in order to change them. This not only lends significant gains for individuals in transformation, by way of confidence building in challenging class powers more effectively, but also brings possibilities to community education and broader sociological theory in further understanding Irish class experience.

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Pensar las luchas autónomas como potencia, pensar la autonomía como categoría abierta

Alfredo Duarte Corte

Necesitamos aprender a ver, con ojos menos empañados, lo que la gente común está haciendo ante las dificultades del día, ante esa perspectiva cada vez más oscura. Necesitamos reconocer los rasgos de esta insurrección que hasta ahora ha resultado invisible.

Gustavo Esteva, "La insurrección en curso"

Los movimientos sociales de los que hablaremos a continuación son parte de una gran constelación de luchas y resistencias que se visibiliza en los últimos años en distintos puntos de América Latina, movimientos que se encuentran en la cotidianidad de la vida de personas que se oponen a la logica de terror, muerte, miseria, desprecio y destrucción que el sistema mundo capitalista oferta como forma de vida. Esta constelación permite visibilizar luchas diversas que van desde la araucanía en el sur de Chile, en donde el pueblo mapuche resiste a la devastación de sus bosques por parte de millonarias compañías madereras y empresas productoras de celulosa, hasta el sur de Estados Unidos donde los trabajadores indocumentados buscan defenderse de la vulnerabilidad de un trabajo injustamente catalogado como "ilegal", pasando por las escuelas comunitarias de los barrios del sur de Bogotá en Colombia, en donde buscan contrarrestar la lógica de militarización y paramilitarización de este país. Tres pequeñas estrellas de esta constelación reflejan su luz en un lugar del mundo conocido como México.

En los últimos años gran parte de la política mexicana se desarrolla en movimientos sociales que luchan y resisten en contra del capitalismo neoliberal situados fuera del margen de la política institucional. Estos movimientos se han caracterizado por hacer una política poco visible pero con grandes logros. La forma de hacer política que plantean tiene las características de desarrollarse fuera del paradigma de la democracia liberal, de no buscar la toma del poder estatal, además de que son movimientos creados, vividos y luchados por gente común (no por especialistas), personas que se rebelan a la lógica capitalista que los condena a la desaparición mediante el despojo, el saqueo, la explotación, el desprecio y la represión.

El artículo que presentamos a continuación tiene el objetivo de reflexionar, por medio de algunas experiencias, sobre la forma que estos movimientos políticos están desarrollando, reflexionar sobre la potencialidad de movimientos sociales que se organizan y luchan en los márgenes de la política marcada por el ritmo de la política estatal, reflexionar sobre el hecho real de una forma de hacer política anticapitalista que no mira a la toma del poder y que busca potenciar la acción política desde la reapropiación del "poder hacer". Pensar las luchas autónomas

como potencia significa abandonar la idea de que el partido político y la toma de poder estatal es el único medio para transformar nuestra sociedad, es también abrir la posibilidad del cambio social entendiéndolo no como una forma sino como miles y variadas formas, significa pensar que el capitalismo no es solo una relación económica sino que es también, como diría Michel Foucault (2002) una forma de relación social que marca nuestras vidas, que penetra hasta lo más hondo de nuestra subjetividad aplastándola y marchitándola, y que tenemos que reaccionar para poder contrarrestarla. Pensarlo así abre nuevos-viejos caminos para los movimientos sociales en la actualidad.

Antes de que comencemos a platicar algunas experiencias concretas en la organización de los movimientos sociales autónomos nos gustaría abordar brevemente el debate sobre la importancia de desarrollar formas políticas en la izquierda al margen o fuera de la política estatal. Nos gustaría ocuparnos por un momento de la contradicción de pensar, en la actualidad, al Estado como el espacio político de transformación social.

I.

¿Por qué hacer política fuera del margen del Estado? El paradigma de la toma de poder estatal para transformar el mundo, fue el paradigma que influenció con más fuerza a los movimientos políticos de la izquierda de todo el siglo XX, esto es comprensible por las formas organizativas, los triunfos y la influencia de las grandes revoluciones socialistas durante toda la primera mitad del siglo pasado. Sin embargo, la caída del muro de Berlín, la desaparición de la Unión Soviética, el fracaso de la mayoría de los movimientos de liberación nacional y el cambio de modelo en la economía mundial, con todo lo que eso implica, han llevado al cuestionamiento de este paradigma. Podemos añadir aquí que los terribles excesos de regímenes "socialistas" en Europa del Este complementan la realidad del cuestionamiento a este modelo.

Así mismo, en los últimos años, muchas de las esperanzas puestas en los proyectos democráticos de la llamada izquierda progresista se fueron oscureciendo. En México, como en gran parte de América latina y el mundo, los triunfos de los partidos de "izquierda" en sus proyectos presentados como renovación de la social democracia fueron ganando puestos de gobierno con la misma rapidez con que se alejaban de sus promesas de campaña y cedían a los condicionamientos neoliberales de los grandes organismos económicos transnacionales. La ilusión de la expansión del modelo de democracia liberal no pudo llegar al paraíso inexistente de conciliación entre el libre mercado y sociedad. Lejos de alcanzar este sueño los gobiernos progresistas han ido transformándose poco a poco en gobiernos que legitiman el capitalismo y sus múltiples formas de dominación, muchas de las izquierdas son ahora las que reprimen sutil o energicamente la revuelta social que estalla contra la lógica de depredación y desprecio neoliberal. El periodista uruguayo Raúl Zibechi explica los peligros que se corren ante esto:

> Están naciendo formas de dominación, enmascaradas bajo un discurso
> progresista y de izquierda. Siento que es necesario mostrarlas, exponerlas a la luz
> para contribuir a neutralizarlas y, sobre todo, para evitar que consigan su objetivo
> mayor: La demolición de los movimientos sociales desde dentro, de un modo
> mucho más sutil que el represivo pero, por lo mismo, más profundo y duradero.
> Los planes sociales y la cooperación al desarrollo deberían, en adelante, ser
> considerados como parte del arsenal antisubversivo de los Estados. (Zibechi
> 2008: 19)

Estos son solo algunos de los hechos que nos hacen cuestionar hoy el paradigma
estatal como camino político en la izquierda, sin duda la argumentación al
respecto podría extenderse mucho más pero no es este el objetivo de nuestro
artículo. Al mismo tiempo esto nos hacen buscar una salida desde la potencia de
las luchas que construyen un campo de acción política contra y más allá del
capital y del Estado. Los planteamientos que hemos presentado están dando pie
a idear otras formas de transformación que nos están llevando a confrontar la
realidad del panorama político institucional de la actualidad, con formas que
buscan un camino alternativo donde los sujetos sociales participan en la política
como eso, ¡como sujetos! Y no como objetos a los que los especialistas en el
gobierno tengan que ayudar.

II.

La multiplicación de las luchas autónomas en la actualidad tiene su razón de
existencia, en parte, debido a que la política estatal no ha dado solución a sus
demandas. Con esto nos referimos a que los sujetos que impulsan hoy en día
formas de organización al margen de los partidos políticos parten de la negación
de sus subjetividades y se organizan, resisten y luchan como una necesidad de
seguir siendo, resisten para existir. Podemos decir que estas formas de
organización parten, como lo explica John Holloway, de la negatividad del
sujeto en el mundo falso del capitalismo:

> Empezamos desde la negación, desde la disonancia. La disonancia puede tomar
> muchas formas: la de un murmullo inarticulado de descontento, la de lágrimas de
> frustración, la de un grito de furia, la de un rugido confiado. La de un
> desasosiego, una confusión, un anhelo o una vibración crítica.

> Nuestra disonancia surge de nuestra experiencia, pero esa experiencia varía. A
> veces, es la experiencia directa de la explotación en la fábrica, de la opresión en el
> hogar, del estrés en la oficina, del hambre y la pobreza o la experiencia de la
> violencia y la discriminación (Holloway 2005: 13)

El grito de negación parte de nuestra experiencia y experiencia es en los
movimientos sociales la incapacidad e incluso complicidad del Estado en el
aplastamiento de las subjetividades de millones de personas en el capitalismo,
"no se puede cambiar el mundo por medio del Estado. Tanto la reflexión teórica
como un siglo de malas experiencias nos lo dicen" (Holloway 2005: 39)

Los movimientos sociales autónomos surgen como parte de un grito de
inconformidad que atraviesa la incapacidad del Estado para combatir el

aplastamiento de los sujetos y las colectividades en el capitalismo, por eso los sujetos de las luchas autónomas deciden auto organizarse, deciden dejar escuchar el grito de negación y construir la salida de este mundo aplastante con sus propios medios y desde sus propias formas.

III.

Nos gustaría compartir la reflexión sobre algunas de las modernas luchas de emancipación en el México actual, experiencias que surgen de la organización de gente común, de gente rebelde, de gente que ha decidido dejar que su grito de rabia se escuche y que más allá del grito ha decidido comenzar a cambiar su mundo en el aquí y ahora.

La resistencia por parte de estos grupos se da en un momento en que el capitalismo global, en su etapa de acumulación actual busca obtener ganancias millonarias mediante la explotación de zonas ricas en recursos naturales. En México algunas de las problemáticas más visibles son los conflictos de despojo territorial por compañías mineras, compañías generadoras de energía eléctrica y eólica, y grandes consorcios turísticos, este es el ciclo de despojo capitalista al que David Harvey ha llamado acumulación por desposesión:

> La mercantilización y privatización de la tierra y la expulsión por fuerza de las poblaciones campesinas; la conversión de varios tipos de derechos de propiedad (comunal, colectiva, estatal, etc.) en derechos de propiedad privada exclusivos; la supresión de acceso de bienes comunales; la mercantilización de la fuerza de trabajo y la supresión de formas alternativas (indígenas) de producción y consumo; los procesos coloniales, neocoloniales e imperiales de apropiación de bienes (incluidos los recursos naturales); la monetarización del intercambio y los impuestos, en particular sobre la tierra; la trata de esclavos; la usura, la deuda nacional y más recientemente el sistema de crédito. (2004: 116 − 117)

Las luchas autónomas de resistencia y emancipación se han dado en zonas rurales pero también en zonas urbanas, las segundas tienen la característica de potenciar el trabajo político en colectivo. Cientos de colectivos, sobretodo de jóvenes, se comienzan a organizar para realizar un trabajo que busca dar opciones alternativas contrarias a la lógica de desprecio y negación de sus subjetividades. Los jóvenes se organizan en colectivos que potencian la elaboración de espacios comunitarios. Pequeños espacios territoriales que rompen parcialmente la lógica territorial del capitalismo. Estos espacios son utilizados , entre otras muchas cosas, para el intercambio de productos sin la intervención de intermediarios (comercio justo), son usados también como foros culturales que difunden la organización autogestionada, el uso de software libre, la distribución de música y películas copiadas a las que la gente puede acceder pagando la quinta parte de lo que pagaría en una tienda comercial, realizan talleres de horizontalidad, crean medios de comunicación independientes y muchas otras prácticas más que van generando una reflexión acerca de la organización política alternativa.

Las tres historias que contaremos a continuación nos dan cuenta de la diversidad y la infinita potencia que existe en el horizonte autónomo como horizonte de lucha. Estas historias nos muestran que una práctica política anticapitalista distinta a la que influenció la izquierda en el pasado se está desarrollando ya en nuestro mundo. Estas son solo algunas luces de la gran constelación de las luchas autónomas que hoy se visibilizan en la oscura noche que el sistema capitalista impone a la humanidad. Son prácticas organizativas que desafían la lógica del poder-capital y que es necesario voltear a ver, reflexionarlas, vivirlas y multiplicarlas desde su diversidad en otros espacios.

IV.

Primera historia:

El *impasse* de la revuelta de Oaxaca: La historia de Lucas y la International Performance Company.

2006 fue un año emblemático para los movimientos sociales en México. Los movimientos de resistencia, en ese año, podrían definirse en dos grandes ejes de luchas independientes paralelas a la lucha por la presidencia de la república. Estos dos grandes ejes dentro de la lucha autónoma podemos situarlos, el primero en el comienzo de "La otra campaña" convocada por el Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, mediante la Sexta declaración de la Selva Lacandona. En esta el EZLN convocó a la sociedad civil mexicana a unirse en un movimiento anticapitalista que lograra articular los esfuerzos independientes de organizaciones colectivos e individuos que quisieran construir un movimiento nacional de transformación social al margen de los partidos políticos. El segundo eje fue la lucha de mediados de ese año en el estado de Oaxaca.

Esta segunda lucha comenzó en apoyo a los maestros de la sección 22 del Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE), tras el desalojo violento de su plantón en el centro de la ciudad por parte de la policía estatal. Este hecho canalizó el descontento de gran parte de la sociedad civil de ese estado ante las prácticas de corrupción y autoritarismo por parte del gobernador del Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. El descontento provocó la organización de la población en la Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca (APPO). Ante el descontento generalizado decenas de miles de personas salieron a las calles exigiendo la destitución de este gobernador. La población se organizó haciendo presión por medio de marchas, platones, tomas de radio difusoras, la toma del canal local de televisión, pintas en paredes, etc. El movimiento fue reprimido en los últimos días del mes de noviembre de ese año.

La lucha de Oaxaca, conocida ahora como "La comuna de Oaxaca", pese a ser reprimida en noviembre de 2006 y no lograr la destitución del gobernador del estado, situó a Oaxaca como el laboratorio más grande de experiencias de organización autónoma en los últimos años en México después de la experiencia zapatista. La comuna de Oaxaca evidenció entre muchas otras cosas el poder de

la auto organización política y la fuerza de las prácticas de política horizontales y comunitarias. La APPO logró, en el tiempo que duró la revuelta, articular acciones como tomas y cierres de calles, pintas urbanas, la organización de festivales culturales alternativos multitudinarios, la toma y el manejo de los medios de comunicación masiva del estado, todo esto, sin necesidad de partidos políticos y sin necesidad de líderes especialistas en política.

Como dijimos con anterioridad, la revuelta de Oaxaca se convirtió en un referente de las luchas en contra del poder y en contra de la política corrompida. Las prácticas de organización mediante asambleas populares dan muestra de la realidad de una reapropiación del poder político organizado horizontalmente. La comuna de Oaxaca mostró que la organización es posible sin entrar en el terreno de la política institucional. Como también dijimos el movimiento fue fuertemente reprimido dejando en los meses que duró el conflicto más de 25 luchadores sociales asesinados por el gobierno y grupos paramilitares, varios desaparecidos y decenas de detenidos.

Cuando nos referimos a que pese a la represión y pese a no lograr el objetivo de destituir al gobernador Ulises Ruiz, la comuna de Oaxaca ha ayudado a fortalecer experiencias de organización autónoma, colectiva y comunitaria. Es porque aunque en los medios de comunicación se haya impuesto el entendimiento de que el movimiento oaxaqueño estaba derrotado, nosotros podemos decir que no, podemos ver que la construcción de organización sigue existiendo. En ese sentido queremos oponernos al entendimiento de la revuelta de Oaxaca como una derrota, queremos entenderla como el inicio de múltiples y diversas victorias.

El concepto de *impasse* desarrollado por el colectivo situaciones de Argentina, sirve bien para entender éste fenómeno. El *impasse* es entendido como una temporalidad en suspenso donde convive la hegemonía del poder y la potencia de la liberación, aunque se nos quiera hacer creer que el cambio social es imposible, tal como la hegemonía del poder lo hace exaltando las contradicciones de los movimientos sociales, sabemos que no es así, que los días de la emancipación nunca pueden tener fin, podrán cerrar ciclos internos pero no se cierran como totalidad:

> (…) no es cierto que se haya diluido de manera absoluta la perspectiva antagonista, ni mucho menos que se encuentre paralizado el dinamismo colectivo. Por el contrario, en el *impasse* coexisten elementos de contrapoder y de hegemonía capitalista, según formas *promiscuas* difíciles de desentrañar.
>
> La ambigüedad se convierte así en el rasgo decisivo de la época y se manifiesta en una doble dimensión: como tiempo de crisis que no posee un desenlace a la vista; como escenario donde se superponen lógicas sociales heterogéneas, sin que ninguna imponga su reinado de manera definitiva.
>
> Lo cierto es que la sensación según la cual la actividad política desde abajo (tal como la conocimos) estaría atascada y como adormecida, adquiere incontables matices cuando concebimos la realidad latinoamericana y de buena parte de occidente. La complejidad de situaciones que no cesan de mutar por el influjo de la crisis global nos impulsa a considerar este *impasse* como un concepto abierto –

tal vez momentáneo, tal vez duradero a todos los tonos y derivas posibles.
(Colectivo Situaciones: 6)

Es justamente en ese tiempo de incertidumbre, de ambigüedad, en ese impasse en donde queremos ubicar la historia de Lucas y "la Internacional Performance Company". Lucas es un joven mexicano, tiene 22 años y participó en la revuelta de 2006 en Oaxaca. A los 18 años, al terminar la educación media Lucas quería dedicarse a la danza, pero las condiciones de precariedad en que vive le indicaban que su futuro sería ir como indocumentado a trabajar a Estados Unidos al igual que su hermano, o entrar a trabajar de obrero en la fábrica para ayudar a su familia. Al tener que decidir cuál sería su futuro Lucas dijo ¡No! ¡No quiero pasar mi vida trabajando en una fábrica!, lo que quiero hacer es dedicarme a la danza. Lucas decidió formar su grupo de danza, el nombre de este grupo es "International Performance Company". Como Lucas lo explica, él y sus amigos querían tener una compañía de performance, lo hicieron y además decidieron que su compañía sería internacional.

Lucas

¿Por qué esperar a que el futuro y el cambio lleguen si pueden ser hoy? Tal vez esta sea la pregunta central que Lucas y su grupo de performance se plantearon o tal vez nunca se hicieron este cuestionamiento de forma precisa, lo que podemos decir con seguridad es que la motivación de Lucas parte de la negación de una lógica capitalista que condiciona el tiempo y el espacio de los sujetos. Ante esto, ante una realidad y un futuro que no es el que se quiere, es ante lo que Lucas y sus amigos se han rebelado y han decidido crear una línea de fuga a

la apropiación capitalista sobre sus vidas. El filósofo catalán Santiago López Petit ha explicado estos impulsos vitales, que se niegan a la lógica del sistema en forma extraordinaria en su teorización del breve tratado para atacar la realidad, los dos párrafos que presentamos a continuación nos hablan de esto:

> El rechazo total de la realidad abre la vía que nos permite pensarla. Sin embargo, pensar la realidad no es conocerla. Conocer significa reducir la complejidad, y se simplifica para poder dominar mejor. Nosotros no necesitamos para nada conocer la realidad. La verdad en la que habitamos —nuestra verdad no se desprende de ningún conocimiento sino de un sentimiento de rabia.

> El rechazo total de la realidad nos da la verdad del mundo, y a la vez nos pone en la verdad. De nosotros depende si queremos habitar o no en ella. Lo que es seguro es que no existe un camino único para alcanzarla. Existen tantos caminos como modos de empezar a pensar. Nuestra verdad no posee un origen puro e inmaculado sino la oscuridad de la pasión. (Petit 2009: 14)

El grupo de Lucas después de seis años de haber sido formado sigue existiendo y el año pasado estos jóvenes emprendieron un viaje por varios sitios del país, al viaje le dieron el nombre de "Gira Nacional 2009, campaña de hostigamiento al Estado". Hasta el día de hoy tienen múltiples presentaciones en distintas provincias de México. Además la compañía de performance está trabajando en un proyecto grupal que busca incluir a más gente, este proyecto tiene la tarea de experimentar en una búsqueda por reapropiarse del trabajo en forma creativa, utilizan el trabajo para liberar su cuerpo, así lo explica: "El ejercicio de la libertad, de emancipación, de descontención existe en el cuerpo, un cuerpo que hay que usarlo en las dimensiones físicas, intelectuales, emocionales. En ese sentido nosotros partimos de ese hecho y así hacemos nuestro trabajo en el escenario".[1]

Lucas nos ha platicado también que la "International Performance Company" sobrevive de lo poco que cobran en cada presentación y con un poco de dinero que su hermano les manda de Estados Unidos para poder crear el vestuario. La forma en como sobrevive la compañía de performance también nos permite entrar en un debate acerca del alcance de su lucha, pues es verdad que la compañía sigue estando mediada en muchos aspectos por la lógica del capital y que necesitan del dinero que cobran o del que manda el hermano de Lucas por trabajar en Estados Unidos, en ese sentido no podemos hablar de un hacer autónomo total o puro. Sin embargo la forma de acción propuesta por la compañía de performance, al mismo tiempo que se mueve mediada por la lógica del capital, va cuestionando y rompiendo muchos campos de influencia del capitalismo. Es importante entender en este punto dos cuestiones. La primera es que las luchas en contra del capitalismo están de alguna u otra forma mediadas por múltiples aspectos del capital entendiendo este como campo de influencia en las relaciones sociales. Y en segundo lugar tenemos que entender que la importancia radical de lo que la compañía de performance propone mediante su trabajo logra liberarlos de campos de influencia muy importantes

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[1] Entrevista realizada en octubre de 2009 en la ciudad de Oaxaca durante el Otro Seminario.

en el capitalismo como son el trabajo enajenado, a lo que la compañía de performance ha logrado combatir y vencer mediante una reapropiación del trabajo vivo creativo. Y por otro lado el ejercicio de danza como acto de descontención del cuerpo es en sí mismo una lucha constante por la recuperación de la subjetividad corporal que en el capitalismo se encuentra oprimida.

La revuelta de 2006 y la experiencia vivida durante la comuna de Oaxaca, han servido para que la compañía de performance de Lucas y sus amigos haya podido encontrarse con más colectivos de jóvenes que sueñan y construyen una realidad distinta en sus vidas. El intercambio de experiencias sobre sus vivencias se convierte por sí solo en una práctica informal de potenciación de la lucha autónoma, sin estructuras jerárquicas ni instituciones. Este es un buen ejemplo que muestra como se van tejiendo las redes de intercambio de experiencias que potencian una política y una práctica de formas de vida distintas.

V.

Segunda historia:

La lucha de los campesinos de "Ostula" en contra del despojo de sus tierras: La recuperación del derecho a la auto defensa.

Como lo explicamos con anterioridad una de las problemáticas más profundas que atraviesa a los países latinoamericanos es el despojo de territorios ricos en recursos naturales por parte de grandes compañías multinacionales en complicidad, algunas veces, con los políticos locales. Estos buscan hacer negocio y sacar la mayor ganancia posible de estos lugares por medio del engaño y el despojo. Este es el caso que marca el conflicto por la tierra en Santa María de Ostula en el municipio de Aquila en el estado mexicano de Michoacán.

En México, a principios de la última década del siglo XX se realizó la reforma al artículo 27 de la constitución. Esta reforma, una de las más importantes en la etapa neoliberal, modificó el uso de tenencia de la tierra convirtiéndola de propiedad comunal colectiva a pequeña propiedad o propiedad privada. Con esto se intentó terminar con una forma de organización ancestral sobre la propiedad de la tierra en el campo mexicano llamada propiedad ejidal. Lo que hizo la reforma constitucional al artículo 27 fue cambiar la figura jurídica que mantenía el territorio como propiedad ejidal y la volvió pequeña propiedad. Esto trajo como consecuencia que el territorio se pudiera comprar o vender como pequeña propiedad y se pudiera negociar, en forma mucho más fácil algo que anteriormente no se podía negociar por ser territorio comunitario. La reforma buscaba, entre otras cosas, que se pudiera negociar con el pequeño propietario y que esto generara la venta de la tierra de forma mucho más sencilla para los grandes capitales. Lo que antes no se podía vender por ser parte de la comunidad ahora se hacía mediante la negociación directa con un propietario. Como bien lo explica Susana Medina Ciriaco, en su extraordinario análisis sobre las consecuencias de la reforma a dicho artículo: "mientras que el

presidente de la República ofrecía a los campesinos hacerlos propietarios de sus tierras, éstos estarían más cerca precisamente de dejar de serlo"[2].

Este panorama ha traído innumerables conflictos en las últimas dos décadas para los campesinos a lo largo y ancho de México. En 2006 esta problemática pudo notarse bien en el paso de la "Otra Campaña" del EZLN por todo el país y está documentada en la serie de notas periodísticas realizadas por Herman Bellinghausen de enero a noviembre de ese año en el periódico La Jornada.[3] Dentro de la problemática desatada en el campo por las reformas neoliberales es donde ubicamos la historia de lucha y resistencia de los campesinos de Ostula.

El 29 de junio de 2009 los campesinos Nahuas de Santa María de Ostula decidieron recuperar una zona de más de 1300 hectáreas que les habían sido quitadas por los terratenientes mestizos del poblado cercano de "La Placita". Los campesinos de Ostula, tras varios intentos fallidos por recuperar estas tierras y varios intentos fallidos de que el gobierno resolviera la problemática, decidieron en asamblea, organizarse mediante la formación de un cuerpo de policía comunitaria y así regresar a ocupar las tierras que les pertenecen desde tiempos inmemorables, de esta forma lo explica uno de los comuneros: "Cuando nosotros vimos que hicimos una lucha por la vía legal y no hicimos nada porque el gobierno nunca hizo nada, el gobierno terminó favoreciendo a los caciques, nosotros decidimos organizarnos por nuestra propia cuenta".[4]

Después de un día de enfrentamientos con los guardias de seguridad de los terratenientes la policía comunitaria logró sacar del lugar a los caciques y empezar la construcción de un pequeño poblado al que ellos han decidido nombrar "Xayakalan". El lugar hasta el día de hoy se encuentra resguardado por la policía comunitaria organizada por ellos mismos y se han empezado a realizar distintos proyectos comunitarios dentro de la zona.

Antes de continuar es importante mencionar que la comunidad indígena de Santa María de Ostula mantiene desde hace varios años una relación directa con otros pueblos indígenas mexicanos que se agrupan en el espacio conocido como Congreso Nacional Indígena (CNI). En CNI es un espacio de encuentro que se creó a partir de la participación estos en los diálogos de San Andrés, estos diálogos fueron producto de la mesa de negociación entre el gobierno y las distintas etnias del país que intentaron a finales de la década de 1990 dar solución a las demandas planteadas por el EZLN sobre el reconocimiento de la autonomía indígena. En los diálogos de San Andrés el EZLN buscó involucrar no solo a los pueblos indígena del estado de Chiapas sino también a los distintos y múltiples grupos étnicos de todo el país. El CNI que funciona hasta hoy como espacio de encuentro constante entre los distintos pueblos ha logrado conformar un espacio de diálogo, intercambio de experiencias y coordinación de acciones entre los distintos pueblos que se ven amenazados por la política

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[2] http://www.cmq.edu.mx/docinvest/document/DI121407.pdf

[3] http://www.jornada.unam.mx

[4] Entrevista a comunero de Ostula realizada en estancia de trabajo de campo en enero de 2010.

económica de desprecio y despojo, Así resume un comunicado del CNI la importancia de este espacio:

> Que en el caminar que juntos hemos recorrido hemos comprobado que nosotros, como pueblos indígenas, estamos estableciendo nuevas formas de vivir la democracia, basándonos en nuestras formas de ser y de entender la vida, y en los principios de servicio, construcción, proposición, convencimiento, participación, difusión y enlace, y no queremos reproducir las formas de dominación y de control y otros vicios con que los órganos oficiales nos han querido contaminar.[5]

EL CNI ha sido una de las influencias de la lucha de los campesinos de Ostula que, desde el día de la recuperación, decidieron que en el nuevo municipio autónomo Xayakalan se construyeran 20 casas, se empezara con la organización de cultivos comunitarios de maíz, tamarindo, jamaica y papaya, y que a través de las guardias de las personas que participan en la policía comunitaria se mantenga el control del territorio. Es preciso mencionar que las 1300 hectáreas recuperadas se ubican en una zona rica en recursos naturales, Xayakalan se sitúa en la costa de Michoacán, en una franja de tierras que dividen la playa y la zona montañosa, el lugar es ocupado para la pesca, la agricultura y la caza.

El caso de la recuperación de tierras de los comuneros indígenas Nahuas de Ostula es otro ejemplo de la potencialidad de la organización política fuera del margen de la política institucional, es otro ejemplo de la potencialidad de la organización a partir del ¡No! Los campesinos de Ostula decidieron que no permitirían más que los caciques mestizos les quitaran su territorio, decidieron que ya no esperarían a que el gobierno resolviera la situación, pues las veces anteriores no lo hizo, decidieron que organizarían, mediante asamblea, su propio cuerpo de seguridad (la policía comunitaria), decidieron que ellos mismos construirían ahí sus casas, sus zonas de cultivo y con esto el futuro para sus hijos y nietos "Nosotros queremos actuar bien para el futuro, para que nuestros hijos, nietos y bisnietos vengan a trabajar aquí, y que gocen ellos, lo estamos haciendo para que ellos trabajen".[6]

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[5] http://www.redindigena.net/leyes/mex/docs/movind/casatodos.html.

[6] Entrevista a comunero de Ostula realizada en estancia de trabajo de campo en enero de 2010.

Ostula

La lucha de Ostula da muestra de que la política no es una actividad que tenga
que pasar necesariamente por el marco institucional representado por los

partidos políticos y menos cuando los políticos han dado la espalda a los campesinos y se han dejado corromper por el dinero de los grandes caciques de la zona, da muestra de que la política es también un lugar de organización de gente común y que no se necesita de políticos especialistas para construir un movimiento social de resistencia. La creación de la policía comunitaria de Ostula ha cuestionado el modelo de que el Estado detente el mando de los cuerpos de seguridad y es importante señalar aquí dos cosas: la primera es que la policía comunitaria tiene el principio de no violar los derechos humanos y bajo esta regla asamblearia actúan. La segunda cuestión es que la organización de este cuerpo de seguridad surge como forma de autodefensa en respuesta a la corrupción de los cuerpos policíacos y las autoridades estatales. Ante la complicidad entre autoridades estatales y grupos del poder mestizo de la zona, complicidad que es por supuesto económica, los comuneros indígenas Nahuas de Ostula se organizaron.

La creación de la policía comunitaria impulsa la autonomía de facto, retoma una práctica ancestral de organización de gente de la comunidad que había ido desapareciendo con la creación de cuerpos policíacos controlados por el Estado. Los campesinos de Ostula recuperan el legado del artículo seis del plan de Ayala impulsado en la época de la revolución mexicana por Emiliano Zapata, este artículo sirvió durante la lucha de revolución para que los campesinos pudieran defender sus tierras mediante la auto organización de pequeños cuerpos de seguridad creados por ellos mismos. En ese sentido, en la formación de la policía comunitaria puede explicarse, además de la emergencia de la situación actual por crear un proceso de auto defensa, la rearticulación de antiguas prácticas de auto organización.

La lucha y resistencia de Ostula continua en marcha, los campesinos siguen planeando y realizando en la cotidianidad la edificación del poblado "Xayakalan", la construcción de viviendas, de huertos, de zonas de cultivo comunales, etc. Sin embargo aun queda mucho por hacer, en los diez meses de resistencia han sido asesinados ocho campesinos del movimiento y tres están desaparecidos. La resistencia de Ostula está también amenazada por el plan de desarrollo turístico de la costa de Michoacán que pretende convertir toda esta zona en pequeños desarrollos turísticos con co-inversión entre capital privado, capital estatal y capital de los pequeños propietarios. La reflexión que habría que hacer es si esto, los proyectos de desarrollo turístico, no terminará con la forma de vida de la gente del lugar, si no los convertirá en empleados de las compañías hoteleras y terminará con sus formas de vida, si no terminará con los deseos de que, tal como nos lo explicaban los comuneros, sus hijos y nietos puedan seguir trabajando la tierra. Las prácticas de despojo en Ostula por parte de los terratenientes de la zona siguen latentes pero el camino de la organización, la autodefensa, la lucha, la resistencia y la construcción de un horizonte autónomo ya es una realidad en ese lugar.

VI.

Tercera historia:

Las juntas de buen gobierno en los municipios autónomos zapatistas: El gran laboratorio de la democracia comunitaria.

A mediados de 2003 el Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional anunció una nueva estrategia en su lucha política, en ella se explicaba que después del fallido intento por que el gobierno reconociera la ley de autonomía indígena y tras una etapa de casi dos años de silencio, el EZLN no pediría nada más al gobierno ni a los partidos políticos. Fue en ese momento cuando los indígenas Zapatistas dejaron escuchar otro de sus ¡Ya Basta!, otra vez dijeron ¡NO! ¡No vamos a dejar que la fallida negociación con el gobierno y con la clase política termine con nuestros sueños de construir un mundo distinto!, en esos días fue cuando el EZLN anunció la creación de los 30 municipios autónomos zapatistas y la estrategia de crear su propia auto organización y auto gobierno. Esto se convierte hoy en un referente de gran valor para el análisis de las luchas autónomas, pues los zapatistas han desafiado la herencia de la lógica de la democracia liberal Estado-Céntrica. En ese año, el EZLN marca también un paso decisivo en su andar pues delega la responsabilidad civil a la gente habitante de esos municipios, hace la separación entre la parte militar del zapatismo y la parte civil, y anuncian que no se involucrarían más en la toma de decisiones que toca a los habitantes de esos municipios. En un comunicado fechado en agosto de ese año el Subcomandante Marcos explicaba este logro:

> Ahora vemos que un poco ya está explicado y vemos que las Juntas de Buen Gobierno ya se formaron y están trabajando en los primeros Caracoles de Resistencia, que hoy nacen en territorio rebelde. Estamos seguros que nuevos Caracoles surgirán en todo México y en el mundo, porque frente al Poder los zapatistas ahora pintamos caracoles.

> Creemos que ya hemos cumplido como EZLN la parte que nos tocaba en estos cambios.

> Hemos levantado los Caracoles, hemos construido las casas de las Juntas de Buen Gobierno, y hemos tratado de explicar un poco los cambios.

> Así que ahora les devuelvo el oído, la voz y la mirada. A partir de ahora, todo lo referente a los Municipios Autónomos Rebeldes Zapatistas se hablará por sus autoridades y por las Juntas de Buen Gobierno, con ellas habrá que tratar también los asuntos de los municipios autónomos tales como proyectos, visitas, cooperativas, conflictos, etcétera.

> El Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional no puede ser la voz de quien manda, o sea del gobierno, aunque el que mande, mande obedeciendo y sea un buen gobierno.[7]

Con este hecho el zapatismo demuestra la multidireccionalidad que las formas de la lucha en la izquierda pueden tener y al mismo tiempo rompe con el entendimiento de la política militar vertical de la guerrilla que caracterizó los

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[7] http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/

movimientos de liberación nacional del siglo pasado. Al dejar en manos de los habitantes las funciones de gobierno el EZLN rompe también con la idea de que todas las decisiones de la política tienen que pasar por el mando guerrillero militar. Ese momento marca el comienzo de un trabajo singular de democratización en el proceso zapatista y confirma la existencia del desarrollo en nuestro mundo de una política distinta desde la izquierda.

Nos gustaría platicarles algunas características del desafío que las comunidades zapatistas han hecho a la democracia liberal, entre otras cosas, han roto con la lógica de que los gobiernos tienen que ser gobiernos de especialistas, los encargados de dirigir las juntas de buen gobierno son hombres y mujeres comunes, los gobernantes son elegidos en asambleas comunitarias y el tiempo que ocupan los cargos son periodos cortos que varían en cada junta de 7 a 15 días. En una entrevista realizada por la periodista Laura Castellanos al Subcomandante Marcos en el año 2007, el jefe militar explicaba la forma de funcionamiento de las juntas de buen gobierno al responder algunas de las interrogantes hechas en la entrevista:

> ¿Qué particularidades tienen las Juntas de Buen Gobierno? ¿Todas funcionan por diez días como la de La Garrucha?
>
> -Varían en cada caracol, a veces son diez días, a veces 7 o 15 por el lado de La Realidad. Esto trae dos problemas: uno es que los proyectos no tienen continuidad por que la gente de la sociedad civil se entiende con una junta y cuando regresa ya es otra. Pero lo que nosotros queremos evitar es que la política sea de profesionales y que se convierta en una carrera o forma de vivir. Todos los que son de las Juntas de Buen Gobierno o autoridades autónomas son campesinos que durante el período que dura su cargo dejan el campo y la comunidad los cubre, pero tienen que regresar. Este es de los pocos lugares del mundo en el que un gobernante después de ser gobierno regresa a su casa igual de pobre, con las mismas necesidades, a trabajar lo mismo. Por otro lado se trata de un proceso masivo de la forma de gobierno. Queremos acabar con la idea de que gobernar es cosa de especialistas. Lo que al principio era temor, a la hora que empieza a haber avances se dan cuenta de que no necesitan ser licenciados para saber qué es lo que le conviene a nuestra gente. (Castellanos 2008: 42)

Como lo explica el Subcomandante Marcos durante los periodos de gobierno esos hombres y mujeres no reciben ningún sueldo, en lugar de que pudieran ocupar los puestos de poder para obtener una ganancia económica individual, pierden, porque dejan de cultivar sus tierras. Sin embargo saben que en su estancia como gobernantes están ayudando a la organización de la comunidad. Cada junta de buen gobierno está, casi siempre, integrada por el mismo número de hombres y mujeres, lo que nos indica también la preocupación de la comunidad por una participación de género equitativa. Algunas de las funciones de las juntas de buen gobierno son: cuidar la impartición de justicia; la salud comunitaria; la educación; la vivienda; la tierra; el trabajo; la alimentación; el comercio; la información y la cultura; el tránsito local.

Uno de los logros más destacados que los hombres y mujeres de las comunidades zapatistas han tenido, es la transformación práctica del paradigma de la democracia representativa que ha influenciado las formas organizativas en

la política occidental. Contra el paradigma occidental de democracia representativa que hoy contribuye al colapso de nuestro mundo, los zapatistas han impulsado su propio modelo definido por el filósofo mexicano Luis Villoro[8] como "democracia comunitaria". Este es un hecho que rompe con múltiples vicios de las prácticas de la democracia universal impuesta desde occidente, la democracia comunitaria de las juntas de buen gobierno tienen características que retoman prácticas de asamblea propias de la organización pre occidental y se impulsan, mediante estas: un gobierno que permite la revocabilidad del mandato, participación de todos los miembros de la comunidad en una elección, rotación del mandato, equidad de genero en la representación, gobernantes sin sueldos, etc. Este hecho, que pareciera ser un pequeño logro, trae grandes cambios en la pretensión de un proceso de transformador, los zapatistas buscan romper con las prácticas de corrupción que podrían darse desde las autoridades y rompen con el entendimiento de la política del "especialista".

Juntas de Buon Gobierno

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[8] Audio de Luis Villoro en su participación en el Primer Festival Mundial de la Digna Rabia convocado por el EZLN en enero de 2008 en San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas: http://dignarabia.ezln.org.mx/?p=449

Sin duda el territorio zapatista de Chiapas es uno de los laboratorios en donde, hasta el día de hoy, con todas sus dificultades y bajo la lógica de acoso gubernamental y paramilitar en que se encuentran al momento de escribir estas líneas, se siguen impulsando cambios trascendentes en la búsqueda de un mundo con mayor justicia.

El ejemplo de las juntas de buen gobierno es solo una pequeña muestra del cambio en la vida de los miles de hombres y mujeres que habitan esta zona de México, pequeños-grandes cambios que en 25 años han producido una revolución en este lugar generando nuevas subjetividades mediante procesos distintos de salud, educación, gobierno, cultura, etc. Procesos en los que los habitantes de esta zona han dejado de ser peones explotados y se han convertido en sujetos auto determinados, sujetos que hoy construyen en colectividad un mundo mejor, su mundo. Los zapatistas están demostrando en su lucha cotidiana que, como ellos y ellas nos lo han dicho "otro mundo es posible", nosotros agregaríamos que ese otro mundo posible ya está siendo.

VII.

Esperamos que los tres ejemplos que hemos presentado aquí nos permitan poder pensar hoy las luchas autónomas como potencia, nos permitan evidenciar que existe en México y por supuesto en otras partes de nuestro mundo, una serie de prácticas políticas que se desarrollan fuera del margen de la política institucional. Estas resistencias y modernas luchas de emancipación, que conforman ya el horizonte autónomo, nos dejan ver que el viejo paradigma de la toma del poder estatal para transformar el mundo está siendo rebasado como parte de una necesidad, que la historia nos ha demostrado que la lucha de la izquierda no podía quedar reducida al concepto toma-del-poder-estatal y que en la cotidianidad del sótano de la sociedad se crea ya otro mundo, otra organización y otra política.

Estos procesos abren la posibilidad de que nuevas subjetividades se experimenten mediante la reconstrucción de lógicas comunitarias de apoyo mutuo, mediante la experimientación cotidiana del trabajo en colectivo, del trabajo vivo, trabajo creativo, que es finalmente la busqueda y el experimento de una vida digna, una vida donde logremos tomar el control de nuestro presente, donde los relojes desaparescan y cada sujeto o cada colectividad pueda definir su tiempo. Abren la posibilidad de que los sujetos nos encontremos en un diálogo que nos permita resolver problemas desde el "nosotros" y romper con la relación de distanciamiento sujeto-objeto que caracteriza a la política gobernados-gobernantes, nos da la oportunidad de encontrar las soluciones potenciando nuestras subjetividades. Estas luchas nos están permitiendo organizar la defensa contra una lógica mundial de terror y devastación cada vez más visible.

Otra de las reflexiones importantes que habría que plantear es cómo estos procesos pueden influenciar el campo académico y pueden abrir otros caminos para los sociólogos. Estás prácticas políticas que están potenciando una

subjetividad desde el "nosotros" nos permite también pensar un trabajo académico que deje de privilegiar el objetivismo y nos permita hacer también una sociología desde el "nosotros" una sociología que potencie el diálogo, los lugares de encuentro entre estos movimientos sociales.

Es importante entender que las formas de emancipación, que aquí hemos nombrado mediante el concepto de autonomía, son mucho más que solo prácticas autónomas, están en un proceso de crecimiento y aún están llenas de contradicciones, en ese sentido podemos decir también que es necesario no cerrar el entendimiento de las luchas autónomas volviéndolo un modelo incuestionable, debemos entender que el potencial de estas luchas radica también en no hacerlas fetiches, en no volverlas certezas ideológicas, políticas e incluso teóricas. Debemos entender que la constante crítica a estos procesos es parte de la necesidad que el presente nos reclama y que el camino no lleva una dirección única hacia el futuro, este entendimiento nos ayudaría así a entender la diversidad de formas y posibilidades que pueden tener los horizontes autónomos.

Esperamos también que los ejemplos que hemos presentado nos ayuden para reflexionar sobre la potencialidad de la organización social en el aquí y ahora, en el presente, como nos dijo alguna vez Ernst Bloch: "lo que no es puede todavía llegar a ser, lo que se ha realizado presupone lo posible en su materia. Ese algo abierto se da en el hombre, y sueños y proyectos viven aquí" (p. 284). Esto nos permite entender que no hay porque esperar a que un político especialista llegue al gobierno para que cambie la situación, que lo podemos hacer nosotros potenciando los lazos comunitarios, reconfigurando las practicas colectivas destruidas en el sistema capitalista, potenciando los lugares de encuentro, de reflexión, el diálogo, el reconocimiento en el otro y como parte del otro. "El ahora es el lugar en el que se encuentra en absoluto, en el que se pone en cuestión el foco inmediato de las vivencias; y así lo acabado de vivir es ello mismo lo más inmediato, es decir lo menos ya vivenciable". (p. 283). En ese sentido dependerá de nosotros, de todos nosotros, de cualquiera de nosotros, ir haciendo más grandes las grietas de las paredes de este enorme laberinto llamado capitalismo.

Nos gustaría que la reflexión planteada en el artículo sobre estas luchas pueda ser entendida no como parte de presupuestos teóricos, políticos o ideológicos que plantean imponer una serie de "nuevos principios" o un "nuevo programa de lucha", sino que se pueda entender como elementos que generen un debate en torno a la multiplicidad de formas organizativas que parten de las variadas formas en que el capitalismo nos oprime y que ante esto los sujetos reaccionamos desde nuestras propias y distintas experiencias. Potenciar el significado de la revolución hoy como un mosaico multi color es potenciarlo como una necesidad vital de resistencia al capitalismo que rebasa al Estado y las instituciones como sitio de organización, significa acercarnos a ver la potencialidad de la organización como miles o millones de respuestas singulares en contra de una misma lógica que es la lógica del mundo falso del poder capitalista, ese mundo en el que despertamos cada día marcado por la lógica de

la explotación, de la desigualdad entre la hambruna y los excesos, por la devastación injusta de una guerra sistemática que busca defender la propiedad privada y la riqueza de una minoría, ante ese mundo falso, presentado desde el poder como el único mundo posible, es ante el que nos rebelamos.

Un relámpago ilumina la larga y oscura noche del capitalismo, ese relámpago nos deja ver en forma momentánea una constelación de luchas en todo el mundo, estas son las luchas por la autonomía y por la autodeterminación de la vida, las luchas por la reapropiación del trabajo como trabajo creativo, las luchas de resistencia organizada en contra del saqueo de las transnacionales y los grupos de poder político, aquí hemos hablado solo de tres pero seguramente son miles o millones.

Este relámpago ilumina también la posibilidad de ver el camino de la izquierda, no como uno solo camino, sino como muchos y diversos caminos; no como la toma del poder del Estado, sino como la recuperación de nuestro "poder hacer". El brillo del relámpago nos permite rastrear caminos milenarios, permite que los deseos de las luchas del pasado puedan encontrarse con el presente y romper con las estatuas y los símbolos absolutos que la historia de los vencedores ha creado.

Pensar las luchas autónomas como potencia nos traslada a un sitio en donde cada uno de nosotros somos los creadores del camino del futuro, en donde nosotros somos los responsables de hacer realidad ese sueño de liberación que soñamos cada noche y potenciar así la idea de que no tenemos que esperar el futuro para ver la revolución, como lo hacen los zapatistas, que podemos cambiar nuestro mundo aquí y ahora; que no tenemos por qué esperar a que el partido llegue al poder para que el político atienda nuestras demandas, podemos recuperar el "poder hacer" oponiendo la lógica capitalista del trabajo abstracto a nuestro hacer desde el trabajo concreto, como el joven Lucas y la International performance company; que no tenemos que esperar a que el gobierno resuelva los problemas provocados por el capitalismo, que nosotros los podemos resolver, como lo han hecho los campesinos de Ostula. Por todo esto estamos contentos, muy contentos.

Por último nos parece que son muchas las interrogantes que quedan en la mesa y para las que aun no hay respuesta, estas respuestas tendrán que ir surgiendo en la medida en que este tipo de movimientos sociales cobren más fuerza y las prácticas se vayan fortaleciendo. Nos parece importante analizar y reflexionar sobre cómo es que en los últimos veinte o treinta años la idea de una forma de política autónoma se ha ido fortaleciendo y nos parece que esto se ha generado no por una vanguardia política de dirigencia o una postura teórica dominante dentro de estos, nos parece que la forma que ha funcionado para fortalecer estos movimientos ha sido mediante la creación interminable de espacios de encuentro y de intercambio de experiencias. Nos parece importante también que hay que pensar que estas luchas nos son perfectas, aun están llenas de contradicciones, si creemos que son movimientos de vanguardia corremos el peligro de volverlos un dogma, corremos el riesgo de que se conviertan en un

manual y no hay manuales para las luchas sociales, cada uno hace el suyo de acuerdo a su forma.

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Direcciones electrónicas

Enlace zapatista: *http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/*

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URL for this article

http://groups.google.com/group/interface-articles/web/3DuarteCorte.pdf

Labour at the 2009 Belém World Social Forum: between an ambiguous past and an uncertain future[1]

Peter Waterman

The time, the place and the focus

The time: this was the first World Social Forum (WSF) since the profound financial/industrial crisis of capitalism, late-2008, the consequent labour layoffs, and the desperate and extreme state measures to restore capitalism – largely by throwing obscene amounts of money at the financial institutions that were the immediate cause of the crisis. *The place:* Belém is a tropical city of some two million, at one mouth of the Amazon river, and therefore a potent reminder of the Amazon basin and forest - 'the lungs of the world' - whose nature and peoples are under threat of extinction by capitalist globalisation (plus local capital and the Brazilian state). *The focus:* for the first time the WSF declared a single focus – on this Amazonian environment and its peoples and movements.

Point Two of the WSF's objectives reads (in somewhat iffy official translation):

> For the release of the world domain [ie liberation from the world domination – PW] of capital, multinationals corporations, imperialist, patriarchal, colonial and neocolonial domination and unequal systems of commerce, by cancelling the impoverish[ed] countries of debt. (World Social Forum Programming 2009:7).

This may be a long-standing formulation[2] but it nonetheless did me good to see it confirmed on the front page of the Forum supplement of the regional daily, *Diario de Para* (February 1). Here it was stated (in English!) that

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[1] Although this may be the fourth report I have written on labour at World Social Forums or related events since 2002, I am unable to claim this one will be broader or deeper than previously. This may be a function of the growing extent of labour participation, of the number and spatial spread of labour events in Belém, or simply of my increasing age and uncertain health. This year, as a result of just one or two other Belém commitments, I was unable to attend all the three or four successive events on the timetable of the small, if growing, Labour and Globalisation network (L&G). What I will nonetheless here attempt is to reflect on and around this small left network. And to do so in the light of the emancipation of labour globally. This means: 1) in the face of the globalisation of capitalism, its current worldwide crisis, its increasingly pernicious effects on labour, on human life, on the natural environment; 2) going beyond either incrementalism (previously: reform or social democracy) or insurrectionism (previously: revolution or communist-stateism). Positively it implies the collective self-empowerment of all alienated by capitalism, the creation of a radically-democratic global civil society. I hope others will be provoked to either challenge my account and/or orientation or go beyond them.

[2] My compañera, Gina Vargas, who is on the WSF International Council (IC), assured me in Belém that it was a long-standing formulation which I *had not seen* because I don't read official

> Criticism against capitalism was the focus of the World Social Forum. But, after all, what are the actual alternatives to build a better world?

A fair-enough question, given that so many anti-globalisers think a re-assertion of state and inter-state power would do the trick. Also because, as we will see, the nature of the WSF is quite ambiguous, giving rise to somewhat differing left analyses (e.g. Toussaint 2009, Pleyers 2009, Costello and Smith 2009).

Another innovation, taking shape over the years, was the devotion of the Forum to 'self-managed activities', these dominating the first days of the Forum. And this move in the direction of...what?...*in*directionality? was accompanied by 'thematic tents', and extended by 'Belém Expanded' (locally and globally, in place and cyberspace) and completed by a 'Day of Sectoral Alliances', which included a final 'Assembly of Assemblies' in which it was intended the WSF would sum up or concentrate, or anyway express, its orientations and coming activities. I am myself not sure whether all this makes the WSF more *participatory,* even if it makes it more diverse. My feeling is that it rather exemplifies the notorious 'tyranny of structurelessness' (Freeman 1972) under which those with the desire, the means and the experience to dominate do so wearing a cloak of at least semi-invisibility.

A final - actually the initial - innovation was the mentioned focus on the Amazon and the indigenous peoples of the world. The indigenous peoples, in particular of the Amazon, were highly visible and integrated into much of the programming. But there were complaints from some of the Amazonians that they were still being treated as folklore. And there were — predictably — differences expressed between the comparatively long-organised Andeans and the recently-organised Amazonians. This specific problem/movement focus raised in my mind the question of when we can expect such on labour or on gender/sexuality/women — both clearly multi-voiced parties and neither particularly folkloric.

That maybe 90 percent of the participants were from Brazil (some 60-70 percent from the state of Para alone!) might have given an exaggerated impression of labour participation since the sites were full of people wearing the red teeshirts of the major Brazilian union federation, the *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (CUT). It was nonetheless my impression that the presence of national and international union organisations and of labour activists was greater than previously. Survey evidence may later confirm whether this was so.

For the rest, it must be said that — despite the customary complaints concerning its suburban siting, the distance between sites, timetable changes, room

WSF documents seriously. (A touch, a touch, I do confess!). But the WSF has been rather better known for its opposition to *neo-liberalism* than to *capitalism*. And the phrase 'domination by capital' is open to a Keynesian corollary in which this 'domination' can be offset by the state, or another in which it can be countervailed by an increased role (not qualified) of civil society (customarily undefined). Both such tendencies, separately or combined, could be found in presentations of Susan George and Walden Bello (both fellows of the Transnational Institute, Amsterdam), when I returned to the Netherlands, March 2009 (http://www.tni.org/acts/debatingeuropebello.pdf).

cancellations and the often rough accommodation – most of the experienced participants I spoke to after the event considered the Forum a success. This may have been in part due to the relatively small size of the city, and to the challenge implied by the high temperature, high humidity and frequent tropical downpours. I, in any case, found the city easy to move around, friendly...and most of my events in their scheduled places. Not every participant, of course, had a cellphone and a hotel room (with air-conditioned mosquitoes) or even an umbrella. But even the kids in the tent city on one university site seemed to be comparatively satisfied with the conditions. And the organisation of such a gigantic and complex event by a relatively small team of organisers remains something of a miracle: we saw the future and it worked (if unevenly).

Belém treated the Forum as other cities might do the Olympics.[3] And I do have to say that that bilingual supplement in the major daily paper of the State of Para, the *Diario de Para*, was not only WSF-friendly but professional, compensating for the absence of the daily edition of *Terra Viva* from the Inter Press Service, to which we have become accustomed.[4]   Indeed, I rather depended on the *Diario* for reports on what I was missing (90 % of Forum activity?), having early decided that I was NOT going to search through the 142-page, three-column, half-kilo, three-language *Programming* – to find *anything*.

It was, thus, only later, at the farmhouse of Brazilian Forum founder, Candido Grzybowski (some hours North of Rio, surrounded by mountain greenery and in the company also of other congenial Latinos/as) that I finally confronted the Frankenstein's Monster of the WSF, the Programme, in search of the word 'labour', 'union' or related terms (in one or more of three or four languages). I have to say that this further convinced me that the Forum is an agora as much in the sense of a marketplace as of a meeting-place. On the *assumption* that each of the 143 Programme pages listed just 45 events, then dividing by three (for languages), and then dropping a few pages of introduction and a back page list of sponsors, we still have 2,000 3-hour events, which, divided by four (thus excluding the Opening and Closing Days) still leaves us with some 500 events per day!

Let us consider the Labour Question for one such day. Whilst inviting anyone with a minimal command of mathematics to do better than myself here, I challenge anyone to reduce the number of competing 'labour related' events, of Theme 6, listed on page 26 for Shift One (of three), for January 29. I make it

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[3] This comes close to a problematic truth. The city is involved in 'improvement' for a World Football Cup bid as well as for our more-modest WSF. By 'improvement' I wish to suggest there is a negative side to this – the clearing of settlements of the poor to the advantage of the already excessively 'improved classes' in Belém. There is surely a problem in the WSF being complicit with evictions, just as it was complicit in the exclusion of the Nairobi poor from the WSF there in 2007. For the Belém case, see
http://eng.habitants.org/zero_evictions_campaign/observatory_belem/background_news _about_ _the_ _observatory_ _on_ _belem/the_ _chart_ _of_ _belem.

[4] For this special edition, see http://ipsterraviva.net/uploads/TV/wsfbrazil2009Pt/photos/ TERRA VIVA%_20FSM%202009_ _WEB_ 30-01-09.pdf)

around 45. These then taking place on one of two campuses, separated by a bus-ride of some 15 minutes (excluding waiting time), and then distributed (in one case) at maybe 30-40 minutes walk from the campus bus stop.

I begin at this point to feel nostalgic for the World Youth and Student Festivals of the 1950s, at which the programme was pre-determined by a Soviet-funded *apparat* that decided everything for us, shipped us to the site and then bussed us around, with its loyal national (Communist) committees further decreeing that, for example, we individualistic Brits should wear white shirts and grey trousers or skirts (which, having just recovered from the uniformity of World War Two, we signally failed to do).[5]

The 'division of labour' at the Forum

Perhaps one should talk of a field or spectrum rather than a division of labour. This would better suggest the extent to which labour events overlapped in concerns, that organisations and individuals were present at different labour events, and that individual international friendships existed or were created across or despite differences in identities, ideologies or affiliations. These characteristics are not to be lightly dismissed.

We can, however, at least distinguish between the presence and programmes of the traditional national/international union organisations and that of the 'alternative' Labour and Globalisation network. The former were present, with a whole range of closely allied NGOs (non-governmental organisations), and concentrated in or around the CUT's large 'World of Work' tent. The CUT was a founder organisation of the WSF, is represented on its International Council. It is allied with the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) and therefore with the government of President Luiz Inácio da Silva (better known as Lula, himself a former worker and union leader).[6] With its Brazilian allies (Força

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[5] In case anyone should take my nostalgia literally, I should make clear that this I am speaking tongue in cheek. This distinguishes my attitude to the Communist-controlled Festivals (in four of which I took part) from that of my friend Tord Björk (2009), who disparages Belém, comparing attendance there to that of what were state-sponsored, state-controlled Youth Festivals. Tord also seems to think that these Communist-front events contributed significantly to anti-imperialist struggles. Maybe to Soviet-inspired anti-imperialist *rhetoric*, but it does now seem to me that the World Youth and Student Festivals combined Machiavellianism with naivety, endless cries of 'Peace and Friendship' – from 1949 till 1989 - applying only to those endorsing or tolerating the Soviet worldview and accepting Communist control of the events. For evidence I refer to a video I picked up in...*Belém* (World Federation of Democratic Youth 200?)! This predictable, repetitive, propaganda exercise is done, in 1950s Cold War style, both politically and aesthetically. It airbrushes out nearly all the Communist leaders who played such a role – on banners or in person – at the Festivals. I caught the word 'Communist' just once on a pedestrian video heavily dependent on half-tone photos from the WFDY magazine. And it actually buries the drama, contradictions and pleasures experienced by myself and most Festival participants.

[6] Lula, along with other 'left' presidents in Latin America, was present at the Forum, whilst not formally invited by the WSF. Such presidential appearances have become customary at the Latin American Forums, just as customarily taking place outside the programme and outside at least

Inside the substantial World of Work tent of the Brazilian *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* at the Belém World Social Forum.

Sindical and UGT), its International (the Brussels-based International Trade Union Confederation) and its various European and Latin American links, the CUT offered a series of events which expressed the globally hegemonic union orientation, concerns and activities. These included:

1. The holding of an international trade-union forum - to which a representative of Lula was also invited;

2. A seminar on climate change and sustainable development, with invitees from South Africa and the sphere of the United Nations (this was François Houtart, customarily identified with the socialism and third-worldism of Egyptian political-economist Samir Amin);

3. A session on migration and development;

4. Others on labour rights and on the current campaign of the International Trade Union Confederation (adopted, lock, stock and barrel, from the International Labour Organisation), on 'Decent

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the main forum sites. The rights and wrongs of such presidential presences has been much disputed over the years. I do not think the Forum should be in the business of even allowing a platform to Presidents, states or regimes. Any more than it should to – say – allow space to 'socially-responsible' national corporations or multinationals. I find it a weakness of the WSF that these statesmen have a place at (if not in) the WSF whilst the EZLN (Zapatistas) of Mexico has never had such – presumably because of a very brief initial resort to arms.

Work'. This session also invited, however, the increasingly anti-capitalist Filipino academic-activist, Walden Bello (2009).

All in all, this suggests the Global Neo-Keynesian approach of the traditional trade union hegemons, seeking 'social partnership' with reasonable capitalists and reformist states - despite these being thin on the global ground, or limited in political performance - for a more-civilised capitalism (for more on this see Wahl 2008).

Such an orientation was reinforced by various West European-based, union-oriented NGOs as the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES).[7] This had its own extensive and evidently well-funded series of events elsewhere in the grounds of the Forum. Advertised on a well-designed web-site, running over three days, armed with printed or xeroxed documents, supported by well-equipped professional interpreters, the panels of this programme were filled with (presumably FES-funded) delegates and experts from various countries worldwide. I heard one such, from a Global Union Federation, utter a few words of formal greeting and accord, only to later inform me that he had come to the WSF for this two-hour event alone and then only because he had never been to Brazil! He declined my invitation to join an immediately following Labour and Globalisation event along the corridor. The FES programme covered such topics as 'union networks within multinationals' (with a background paper from the Brazilian researcher, Drummond 2008), Core Labour Standards and Union Strategies in the State of Parra, International Framework Agreements, Decent Work again, even Women and Political Reform. (See http://www.fes-globalization.org/events/download/FES_Programme_World_Social_Forum_2 009.pdf).

Whilst none of this might be totally irrelevant to the condition of at least *waged* labour I did not note in many of these activities the word 'capitalism' - far less opposition to such.[8] More, I would suggest, did this activity have to do with

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[7] See the classical critique of Evers (1982): 'In conclusion', said Evers of the relationship between the FES and its Latin-American partners,

> it is a game of 'who uses whom', which both sides are consciously playing. Perhaps the basic rule of the game can be summed up as follows: Give me opportunities to think I am using you and I will give you opportunities to think that you are using me.

The FES and its partners may have changed over the years, but recognition of 'instrumental internationalism' is still required in relation to such highly unequal 'partnerships' internationally.

[8] Here the Drummond (2008) paper is revealing in so far as it reproduces a 19-20th century European social-democratic notion that the *expansion of union organisation* and of *increased bargaining possibilities* will make it hypothetically possible for multinational workers (the most advanced sector of the class, he argues) to pass from class compromise to revolution. It seems somewhat counter-intuitive and counter-factual (in the historical sense). No evidence is provided for this hypothesis, nor does Drummond really make use of the network theory of Manuel Castells, to whom he does refer. Castells' argument would rather suggest a *generalisation* of radical-democratic networking amongst workers in all sectors of employment and then beyond the unions, and even wage-earners more generally.

routine, late-20th century union defensive strategy, or activity, for the
restoration of a capitalism in which 'social partnership' practices could be
(again) routinely carried out. This contrasts quite dramatically with the
declaration of an Assembly of Social Movements (2009), under the slogan:

We won't pay for the crisis. The rich have to pay for it !

Anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, feminist, environmentalist and socialist alternatives are necessary

The declaration continues in ringing yet detailed condemnation of capitalism
and with the proposal of an alternative society reflecting the long-standing
traditions and 21st century demands of the ecological, socialist, feminist and
indigenous movements. It is worthwhile reading in full
(http://links.org.au/node/897).[9]

How 'alternative' is the Labour and Globalisation network?

But whilst the 'alternative' Labour and Globalisation Network differentiated
itself from the traditional labour inter/nationals, was it as radical as the
Assembly's declaration? Pat Horn, a leading figure in the network, had earlier
said that the purpose of its Belém event was:

1. To jointly discuss in more depth how globalisation is shaping labour
   relations, including a joint analysis on key policy fields that are of
   particular relevance;
2. To offer a space for sharing experiences of struggles for labour rights in
   different regions;
3. To offer a space for trade unions and social movements and other social
   actors to build new relationships;
4. To develop relationships of North-South solidarity based on functional
   equality rather than financial dependence;
5. To identify a platform of issues around which such international
   solidarity can be developed through international campaigns;
6. To discuss the development of the network itself (what working program,
   what tools to work together etc.). (Email received 050109).

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[9] Costello and Smith (2009) consider this document to consist in part of 'the usual anti-
capitalist boilerplate'. Actually, amongst declarations from the WSF, this one is quite unusual.
Particularly in its definition of an alternative in terms of a synthesis of the listed ideologies and
movements.

If this specification suggests some kind of independent labour 'forum within the forum', its final declaration (Appendix 1) issued at the event by L&G was a little more specific. Referring back to the Nairobi WSF, 2007, it suggested that an L&G network could give more visibility to labour within the Forum, develop an ongoing dialogue and exchange of ideas and experiences, discuss a new and broader understanding of labour (covering also reproductive labour and the informal sector), strengthen ties between unions, movements, intellectuals and citizens, go beyond defence toward a new global capacity for action, find common objectives, consider the full meaning of production, and map all possible labour actors.

Given that L&G has miniscule resources compared with the FES or the traditional inter/national unions (compare simply the size of the FES' programme with that of L&G in Appendix 2), this boiled down to three three-hour sessions, largely in English. They dealt, in turn, with the following:

1. Labour: New Struggles, New Alliances: Towards a Charter of Labour?
2. Labour in the Global Crisis.
3. Assembly of the Labour and Globalisation Network.

Since I have a long-standing interest in a Global Labour Charter Project (appended to Waterman 2008c), I was encouraged by the numbers of unions/unionists attending this session, but discouraged by the limited time given to the idea of a charter. There was, nonetheless, a generally positive response to the idea of developing such. One must further note the following:

1. That the number of *non*-union participants in the L&G event seems to have remained stagnant;
2. That the Southern unionists who prioritised North-South union conflicts here were nearly all prominent members of national unions affiliated to the West European-based and West European-dominated ITUC - *of which these unions have never made public criticism;*
3. That whilst the less-geographically-fixated South Korean speaker stressed that capital was changing faster than labour was responding, further discussion on a charter (which could specify an anti-capitalist social-movement orientation for L&G) was postponed to some indefinite future.

My conclusion from Session One, from informal exchanges with core L&G activist, Marco Berlinguer, and the final L&G declaration (Appendix 1), is that whilst L&G does provide an independent agora in which unions and other labour-oriented movements (like Pat Horn's StreetNet) or research, support and service groups (like the US-based Global Labour Strategies network) can meet and dialogue, it does not (yet?) amount to anything like the World March of Women (with its Charter, http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/qui _nous_sommes/charte/en), and will therefore *not* impact on either the WSF itself nor all the left tendencies and labour constituencies that lie beyond union reach (presently some 80 percent of the world's labour force; more if one

includes 'housewives' amongst 'workers'). Such feelings were only strengthened by the disappearance of any reference to a global labour charter in the final L&G declaration mentioned above (Appendix 2)! I can only presume that this is due to L&G's self-definition, in this same appendix, as 'an instrument and not an organic actor'. As far as I am concerned, however, an 'instrument' is a tool with particular characteristics, wielded by certain actors, with certain interests, ideas and purposes in mind. But if, in denying a role as an 'organic actor', L&G means to suggest that it does not have a particular position, or set of such, concerning the trade unions, the labour movement or the working class(es), this is surely undermined by the other clauses in the same appendix.

The final labour (and whoever?) assembly

My scepticism had already been reinforced by the final Labour Assembly.[10] This was not only shifted a half hour away from the advertised site and one hour late in starting. It also turned out to be the Labour, Solidarity Economy, World Financial Crisis (?), and maybe even Falun Gong, Assembly. True, the Solidarity Economy contributions related to a more radical socio-political field than the labour one. True the Falun Gong contribution existed only in my over-fertile imagination (although Falun Something was present elsewhere at the Forum). True, even, that I seemed to recall that Labour had been somehow grouped with these others by some earlier International Council decision. But the result, of course, was that there was *no way* there could even begin to be any *dialogue* between the L&G presentation (which was split in two) and those of the inter/national unions or pro-union NGOs.

I tried, but failed, to imagine the women's movements and feminists agreeing to be 'grouped' with the UN Reform, Participatory Budgeting and Fair Trade — even with the indigenous movements. They would, of course, have said 'We would rather meet together under a mango tree' (given the numbers involved, possibly in a mango plantation). There could for me be no more striking demonstration of labour's lack of identity and self-confidence, and of the WSF's continued marginalisation of labour. The Amazon and its indigenous peoples rightly have their place and day. Labour has its tents and seminars. But neither the WSF IC nor the unions, nor other labour movements and NGOs seem bothered at labour being another letter in one of the Forum's alphabet soups.

To add to my unease at the labour non-assembly, the event was more or less dominated by a declaration on the world financial crisis, presented by my 1980s compañero from 'shopfloor labour internationalism', the Brazilian World Council of Churches activist, Marcos Arruda. When he urged on us a document entitled something like 'Putting Finance in its Place',[11] I began to wonder

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[10] I am in some confusion about any finality here. The final action of L&G appears to have actually been the document referred to above and reproduced in Appendix 2. A detailed descriptive and chronological account of the L&G events would be welcome.

[11] This same document, or possibly a revised version, was later published, with an impressive list of institutional and individual signatures, http://www.choike.org/campaigns/camp.php?5.

whether I had not stumbled by mistake into an unannounced World Neo-Keynesian Forum. Like the ITUC, this declaration - for which our approval was sought - seemed to assume that there is an evil, if virtual, economy (finance, manned by vicious bankers) and a good 'real economy' (manned by virtuous industrialists, loving unions, embracing the women's movement and worshipping the colour green). 'I will not vote for the restoration of a capitalism which is destroying our world and which is itself broken', I said, to some mild and scattered applause. Bearing in mind that I was hereby endorsing the official anti-capitalism of the WSF, I had expected just a little more enthusiasm...

Lost in forum 'space' – other labour activities

Apart from such ambiguities as may have existed within the two labour projects I have here chosen to contrast, there were numerous others sponsored by unions and labour-focused NGOs, which took place alongside – even simultaneously with - those of the traditional inter/national union hegemons on the one hand and L&G on the other.

- Thus the Global Network (another Brussels-based and social-reformist offspring of either the ITUC or Solidar (or both) mounted an event on 'The Impact of China on Decent Work in Africa and China'. I await some outcome that might suggest whether this was imbued with a sense of solidarity with those suffering Indecent Work(lessness) in China or yet another invocation of the late-19th century Yellow Peril.

- An event on the privatisation of education was mounted by an acronym I am unfamiliar with, GEW, involving also the leftwing SUR in France and various other European left labour or socialist bodies. Why no one outside Europe?

- The International Labour Organisation (Brazil Office) used the Decent Work label for a session on child labour and sex-traffic, and 'other forms of the precarisation of labour', together with two Brazilian ministries and various local union organisations. This may had been the sole presence at the WSF of an inter-state organisation, buttressed by a national one, even if many in the world think the ILO (75% dominated by states and employers) is part of the labour movement.

- One such marginal event even featured the presence of the World Federation of Trade Unions which, as far as I am concerned, condemned itself to irrelevance by condoning the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, August 1968 (this was at a Council meeting, four months later). Clearly, however, the soullessness of the WFTU goes marching on, followed by

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Reading it now, I think I would qualify it as *Left* Neo-Keynesian. It does seem to me that it is insufficient, right now, to talk of 'a new paradigm', including 'decent work', rather than a post-capitalist order. But as a German friend emailed me just before Belém: 'The Right is reading Marx; the Left is preaching Keynes'.

the state-approved Cuban unions and a handful of others nostalgic for
Cold War simplicities.

- The Amsterdam-based Transnationals Information Exchange (TIE),
  which I remember from the glory days of 'shopfloor internationalism' 25
  years ago, mounted an event on labour struggles against precarisation. I
  look forward to any outcome of this, too, but wonder why TIE is not
  associated with L&G.

- India's New Trade Union Initiative is, of course, present within L&G but
  held a series of events, one of which was entitled 'The trade union and
  class politics in the era of imperialist globalisation'.

- Two US networks held separate events, one on strategies to achieve
  migrant labour rights, one on social movements in the post-Bush era.
  The Karnataka Sex Workers Union held two or three events, with the
  support of a US-based labour law NGO (the International Commission
  for Labour Rights). Given my long-standing interest in 'the
  internationalism of labour's others' (Waterman 2007b), I regretted not
  being able to take up an invitation to attend.

- Other events either overlapped with or might have challenged L&G. The
  COBAS, an Italian confederation of radical unions independent of the
  major 'social partnership' confederations, actually had an event entitled
  'Contents and Shapes of an Anti-Capitalist Trade Unions International
  Network'!

So alongside my complaints of domination by the traditional union
inter/nationals I am inclined to place one on fragmentation of labour concerns
and the dispersion of labour activities! Both things can, of course, be
simultaneously true – just as they are of contemporary capitalism more
generally. What this would seem to argue for is not a re-centralisation of WSF
activities in the hands of its self-appointed International Council but of serious
labour dialogue and coordination over one or two years before each WSF to see
if we cannot agree a common programme – even a couple of such – whilst still
permitting minorities to mount their own marginal events should they so wish.
Such an effort would surely increase the impact of labour within the WSF and in
the media.

Why the L&G network has not (yet) taken shape and taken off

My last contribution to discussion on the L&G List, just before Belém, was
entitled 'Will an Alternative Global Labour Network Take Off - and Take Shape -
at the World Social Forum, Belém, 2009?' (Waterman 2009). Well, despite a
possible growth and spread of unionists or other labour activists attending, I
don't think it has done either of these things.

The *main reason* for this is that L&G sees its primary constituency and its
fundamental point of reference to be the *trade unions* – left, right or centre, old

or new, self-subordinated to the UN's ILO or independent of such, tied to national political parties or autonomous of such. I think L&G should be oriented to *human labour in general*, regardless of whether this is organised or organisable in the form typical of the national-industrial-colonial capitalist era (the trade union) or not. After all, we are talking of some 80 percent of the world's labour force! In India, as one sober union representative informed us, 90 percent are in the 'informal sector'. Such workers — migrants, sex-workers, slave workers, homeworkers, domestic workers and unpaid carers ('housewives') are increasingly organised inter/nationally in the network form. So are certain higher levels of the 'precariat', particularly in the increasingly-computerised and highly-globalised information technology and information services sectors.

A *second* limiting factor on the L&G network is its prioritising of dialogue over programme. This echoes the increasingly empty WSF exchange between those favouring 'space' and those favouring 'movement', 'organisation' or 'politics'. Given that there is no *power-free* space and that all organisation occupies a *particular* place or space, the real issue is: what *kind* of space and what *kind* of organisation? With what *kind* of worldview and values — explicit or implicit. With what *kind* of relationships both internally and externally. Fortunately, at the Belém WSF, one or two longstanding WSF friends and commentators, Walden Bello (2009) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009), seem to be in accord that the WSF has — in the face of the global capitalist crisis (financial, industrial, ecological, climatic) — to have more explicit anti-capitalist orientations. Both think it needs to trade in its self-appointed leadership structure for something more representative and publicly responsive. Santos stresses the necessity for improving the WSF's notoriously problematic communication activities. I make these points because the problems are reproduced in the L&G network.

A *third* limiting factor seems to me to follow from the prioritisation of the traditional trade unions: there is an evident lack of L&G interest in what I call the 'emancipatory' tendency within the international labour movement. I myself identify with this new tradition. But those connected with the 'solidarity economy', with precarious labour (its theorisation and experiences) are absent in large numbers from L&G. These may be discomfiting allies for union traditionalists, because they may be critical of trade unionism, but they are often on the cutting edge of innovation, and their absence is a self-crippling loss for L&G. For an example of the critical insight, consider the observations of L&G Session 1 by Chris Carlsson (http://www.processedworld.com/carlsson/nowtopian/2009/01/30/trade-unionism-long-past-the-peak/).12 And, before dismissing them, consider that

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12 The note clearly invites correction, a more detailed account, and a response from those criticised. Apart from my doubt that the South African referred to was more than, possibly, a member of the SACP, I would like to say two things about the 'guy from India': firstly this was Gautam Mody, a leader of the New Trade Union Initiative; secondly, Gautam hit a quite different note in a feminist-organised Cross-Movement Dialogue at the Forum, in which he explained, in sometimes self-critical detail, the efforts the NTUI had been making, even in the

Chris was associated with the San Francisco-based magazine, *Processed World*, that discovered the precariat some 20 years before it got this name.

A *fourth* limitation on L&G is, for me, actually, the lack of any substantial statements from several of its leading figures about what *their* positions are or what they think about renewing the labour movement globally today. Whilst Pat Horn expresses herself both vocally and in print, and whilst the position of StreetNet can be found on its website, I really do not know what, for example, Marco Berlinguer and Alessandra Mecozzi, or a half-dozen other activists, actually think about the world of work and the global emancipation of labour. From Marco I mostly hear his reactions to what I do or say. This is, however, hardly the same thing as knowing positively what one's comrades believe or desire. This problem may be related to the previous one, of prioritising the creation of a space of dialogue over the development of a position or an identity. However, one of the requirements of the newest radical-democratic movements is also the frank and free exchange of sometimes conflicting visions. Or for that matter of often *complementary* ones!

Ambiguous past? Uncertain future?

Both Marxists and union professionals tend to simplification and certainty about both the past and future of the labour movement. The past is painted in terms of its heroic moments and its undoubted achievements, be these differently seen by the two parties mentioned. For the Marxists and other revolutionary socialists, the matter is one of the centrality of the working class for global social emancipation – seen as both (potentially) the most revolutionary and (potentially) the most internationalist. For the professionals of the labour organisations, whether unionists, party members or the increasing number of NGOs produced by these, trade unions 'are the largest and longest-lived democratic organisations in the world' (I paraphrase one of several old friends who identify with this belief).[13]

Yet the Marxist tradition recognises the ambiguity of trade unionism, as simultaneously expressing/organising labour protest *and/or* integrating labour

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face of male union leader resistance, to organise or ally with young women wage-workers and with sex-workers.

[13] Another old friend, Rob Lambert, a founder of the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR), comes to terms with the new social movements and civil society by proposing that they are or will be led by the trade unions: 'The [Counter Movement] is a *movement of movements* mobilising society against the free market, against finance capital and corporate restructuring in their present neo-liberal form. What do we mean, 'Movement of movements'? In our view, such a movement will be initiated by the trade union movement, because we are the largest and most organised civil society movement in the world. That is to say the trade union movement, locally, nationally and internationally, will take the initiative to link and coordinate all other progressive civil society movements into a new alliance of movements at each of these levels in a singularly focused global campaign to end free market rule' (Bailey and Lambert 2009).

into capitalism. This is why Marxism has customarily depended on the Revolutionary Vanguard (ex-machina, and today, possibly ex-machista) to provide the working class with the consciousness it really, *really*, ought to have. Labour's professionals and activists are increasingly obliged to come to at least pragmatic terms with the transformations of capitalism, its globalisation, its informatisation, its shifting of precarisation from the periphery (of both the capitalist core and of labour-control strategy) to the centre. Whilst there has been considerable such pragmatic adjustment by unions – taking increasing interest in women, in the 'informal sector', in the migrants and marginalised, even in climate change – this has been so far done without abandonment of at least *the hope* that 'good' capitalism (umm...Sweden 1975?) can be restored - but, now, on a regional or global scale! Since no evidence or argument is produced for this, it remains a utopia. But, then, this is a utopia of the past since it only ever applied to particular national, occupational or industrial sectors, often to ethnic/racial/gender categories amongst such. At a time when even *these* workers are threatened with unemployment, homelessness, the reduction or disappearance of health or welfare guarantees, this seems a limited foundation on which to base the notion that 'another world of labour is possible'.

I was fortunate enough to carry with me to Belém a couple of books that suggest additional or alternative bases for a labour movement of the future. And then to have the time, *after* the Forum, to read them whilst still in Brazil. Whilst one is an international compilation, focussed on women workers (Colgan and Ledwith 2002), and the other is on marginal/ised workers in the USA alone (Tait 2005), I consider them to belong to a new and growing tradition of what should be called 'emancipatory labour theory and practice'. The women authors/editors are all labour-linked, feminist, cognisant of the transformations of labour under globalisation and of the necessity to positively accept gender, ethnic and racial difference amongst workers. Both books throw doubt on 'the rise and rise of labour' or its 'inevitable resurgence', suggesting how 'success', 'progress', 'achievement', has been often won at the cost of exclusion of 'other' workers, or by self-subordination to 'social partnership', or 'industrial peace', or 'national competitivity', or of some right to discriminate against those workers and organisations that are not likewise 'male, pale or stale'. Both books I think, recognise that capitalism is complex, multi-faceted, and that its power rests not only on class divisions but also on those of gender, community, ethnicity, nationality, etc.

The customary inconclusions

Here I just want to make two points that can be illustrated from labour activities in Belém, but that have an application to the WSF more generally.

Overcoming money/power inequalities between participants. If we turn again to a mere measurement of the difference in *size* between the L&G activities and those of the FES (Appendices 4-5 again), we see a difference of – let us say – 1:3.

This is to ignore the extended layout of L&G in the appendix, the compressed one of the FES. It is also to leave out of consideration the difference in facilities at the events, the amount of money spent on each, and the *source* of the funding (the German capitalist state in the case of FES, unknown (to me) in the case of L&G).

I can think of no argument based on the principles of the WSF, or those of global justice and solidarity more generally, that justifies such a disproportion. The principle here expressed is simply a capitalist/statist one: those who have more get more. Applied to this particular case, the principles of justice and solidarity would suggest redistribution to create equality. (I understand that at the 2009 meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter, in Mexico DF, all funding went to the organising committee, which was then able to re-distribute it to interested women's movements and NGOs. The matter deserves further investigation). At the very least there could be a principle that participant organisations/movements declare how much money is behind their WSF attendance and presence (the principle of transparency).

This argument applies to the WSF more generally (which *does* publish financial reports, of which the most extensive is Lopez, van Koolwijk and Shah (2006). Yet, despite the WSF being full of (and surrounded by) political-economists, none has, to my knowledge, yet produced a critique of the political-economy of the WSF. In its simplest formulation, political-economy refers to the power-wealth complex within a particular society, place or space. We are surrounded — since Belém more than ever — with political, ideological and cultural reflection and critique of the WSF. It is clearly time to study the WSF in terms of money, power and - to move toward Marxist political-economy - class and hegemony within it. (Whereas I customarily complain about the political-economic determinism of the left, the fact is that without considering this fundament of the WSF we are condemned to *in*determinism). For that matter, we could do with an ecological impact study of the WSF. But perhaps I have said enough — for many of my comrades and friends, maybe too much! But if we do not 'live the change we want to see', we are self-condemned to reproduce the social relations that, outside the WSF, we condemn.[14]

The left is dead, long live emancipation! I have said this before elsewhere but find it necessary to repeat in the light of the Belém L&G and the WSF more generally. The origin of the word 'left' lies in the seating of the most democratic and egalitarian elements in the national assembly created by the French Revolution (also know as the *Montagne* because it sat top left). This ties the term to that particular revolution, and its outcome, a bourgeois liberal national industrial capitalist society. 'Left' is also a relative term (relative, obviously, to 'centre' and 'right'). It is surely the term most deserving of qualification as 'a

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[14] Discussion on 'the future of the Forum' has been occurring since 2002. It can be found all over the left side of the Web. It is also to be found in the compilation of Sen, Anand, Escobar and Waterman (2004) and subsequent publications of Cacim, http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications. A recent selection of analyses and opinions can be found on the site of the Maghreb Social Forum, http://www.e-joussour.net/en/node/927.

floating signifier'. Were the Communist states more 'left' than Social-Democratic ones. Are Trotskyists (which?) more 'left' than Anarcho-Syndicalists (which)? In contemporary times the concept has become problematic, even apparently amongst Marxist lexicographers (http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/l/e.htm)! In so far as we are not only 200 years from the French Revolution but, more significantly, living under a globalised, informatised, capitalist (dis)order, and insofar as we wish to distinguish ourselves from what has passed for 'left', then, surely, 'another concept is possible'. I propose 'emancipation'/'emancipatory' as appropriate to the radical-democratic transformation of contemporary capitalism. It has, of course, a history, relating to slaves, women, serfs, peasants, the working class (the first Russian Marxist body was called the 'Emancipation of Labour') and other oppressed groups.

'Emancipation' and 'emancipatory' can and will be as much disputed as 'left', but at least they provoke a serious contemporary discussion that might surpass the arid and partisan claims amongst those still attached to the state, the party, the state-defined nation, the trade-union form traditional to the Eurocentric national industrial capitalist era. I have suggested above that the contemporary trade union left – national and international - is a prisoner of such traditional trade union forms (and ignores the pre-history of this particular form as well as the 'virtual trade union of the future' (Hyman 1999). As for a preliminary understanding of 'emancipatory' under contemporary globalised conditions, one could start with this:

> Social emancipation must…be understood as a form of counter-hegemonic globalization relying on local-global linkages and alliances among social groups around the world which go on resisting social exclusion, exploitation and oppression caused by hegemonic neoliberal globalization. Such struggles result in the development of alternatives to the exclusionary and monolithic logic of global capitalism, that is to say, spaces of democratic participation, non-capitalistic production of goods and services, creation of emancipatory knowledges, post-colonial cultural exchanges, new international solidarities. (http://www.ces.uc.pt/emancipa/en/index.html).

This introduction to an extensive project of Boaventura de Sousa Santos today needs possible qualification, in terms of struggles beyond *capitalism* (as well as old and new fundamentalisms and pre-capitalist oppressions/exploitations), or the self-determined struggle of all such categories against alienation (the loss of past rights or powers, the denial of future possible alternatives), and the expansion of a radically-democratic civil society.

Such an understanding may seem to be embodied in the WSF (and the L&G network), but whilst I would grant it to the creation and early years of the WSF, it seems to me that *no* emancipatory project is guaranteed eternal life, that *every* such project is subject to what in the labour movement has traditionally been called *incorporation*. In other words, *every* would-be emancipatory project has to be subject to self-criticism and re-invention and such repeated critique and re-invention must be part of the meaning of emancipation.

Appendix 1

Developing the Labor and Globalization Network
Statement from Belém, Brazil
World Social Forum, 2009

Preamble

"Neoliberal globalization is the most vicious attack against labor in living memory": so began the appeal we issued in Nairobi, at the first assembly of the Labor and Globalization Network. The current crisis will only underline that appeal.

Labor is weak and has been in retreat almost everywhere for more than 20 years. The once powerful labor organizations and institutions that were created in the 20th century face challenges as never before. The current global economic crisis means that labor movements that have so far managed to escape the worst ravages of neoliberalism will be swept up in the current downward spiral engulfing global economy. It is no secret that there is no clear way out.

Fragmentation and precarity are increasingly the condition of labor throughout the world. And worker movements have not yet figured out how to cross borders and create a new global perspective and new global strategies. Old notions of organization have already been exploded as women and anti-colonial, anti-racist and anti-discrimination organizations and movements have demanded that their voices be heard and their interests addressed. This has increased the diversity inside the world's labor movements. Margins have become centers (and vice versa); new forms of labor have emerged in the information economy; and the informal sector has grown rapidly even in the rich and OECD countries of the West and Asia.

Globalization links and recombines literally thousands of forms of labor, both new and old. But, while they are linked *de facto* in the global economy, they scarcely meet or even communicate each the other.

In these conditions, is there a common language and discourse that global labor can speak? Is there another politics of labor? And what can a labor strategy be, in a world, where the planet is threatened by environmental crises; where an enormous part of the population is in extreme poverty; and where corporate led globalization is driving us to a global disaster?

Against this backdrop, the Labor and Globalization Network initiative emerged from the Nairobi World Social Forum in 2007. At the Belém World Social Forum in 2009 the initiative was refined and developed. The guiding idea is to create an inclusive space for worker organizations and their allies from around the world to confront critical issues of common concern. The L&G Network is specifically committed to reach out to organizations and individuals

representing all of the many forms of labor in the world in both the formal and informal economy.

The Labor and Globalization Network was also created with the aim of strengthening the voice of labor inside the World Social Forum process. As well as it is our goal to reinforce the use by labor of the WSF and other forms of organization that have emerged in the global movement and to contribute to the debate about the development of the WSF itself and of the global movement from a labor perspective.

Functions

Prior to the Belém WSF, a working group of the Labor and Globalization Network was formed to shape a discussion on ways to provide more structure to the network to make it more useful for network participants. The working group proposed six basic functions to those assembled at Belém and these were accepted by consensus:

- To maintain a flow of useful information on common issues to network participants.

- To help create and shape a global discourse on critical issues of mutual concern.

- To link and reinforce the cooperation between worker organizations and their allies across the divides of geography, language, structure, program, and constituency.

- To renew and enlarge the political conception of labor, including not only productive but also reproductive work; not only formal, but also informal work; not only dependent but also autonomous work.

- To demand that labor rights be respected everywhere and that violations be exposed and addressed through global solidarity by labor and its allies.

- To confront the question of the meaning of production: what to produce, how, for whom.

Principles

The following principles were also agreed to:

- The L&G Network is an instrument and not an organic actor;

- The L&G Network will actively reach out to organizations and individuals representing all forms of labor, throughout the world;

- The L&G Network will forge links with other social movements fighting for economic justice and for an alternative model of development;

- The L&G Network will serve as a nexus for the communication and

exchange of information and cooperation directly among members;

- The L&G Network will become an open and plural space where different analysis and opinions are treated equally and respectfully.

Next Steps

The following steps were taken by the members of the Labor and Globalization Network present in Belém.

- A temporary facilitation group was formed [members are listed below] at Belém to move the work of the Network forward. Two representatives will represent each area, but the group is open to others that would like to participate. The facilitation group will create a more distributed responsibility and will seek ways to maintain a dynamism in the network between the Forums, to increase internal communication, debate and initiative, access resources, organize conferences, stimulate face to face contact, and develop new ideas. It will report regularly to the Network.

- The creation of a committee was proposed to recommend ways to create an interactive user friendly communication infrastructure utilizing available technologies. Membership is open to those who would like to join.

- The L&G Network will address—but will not be limited to—the following immediate themes:

- The current economic crisis, the climate crisis, their convergence, and ways to share strategies and tactics to confront these crises which are of immediate concern to worker movements everywhere. Particular benchmarks for addressing these crises are the upcoming G-20 economic talks in London in March, and the global climate talks taking place in Copenhagen in December, 2009.

- The L&G Network is committed to developing ways to build global labor solidarity through frank discussion of mutual interests, particularly between labor movements in the North and labor movements in the emerging economies of the world. The L&G Network is also particularly committed to building solidarity with workers and their organizations in all forms of work in the formal and informal economy.

The temporary facilitation group is formed by: Gautam Mody (NTUI – India) and Lee Changgeun (KCTU – Korea); Africa: Pat Horn (StreetNet – South Africa)*; Kjeld Jakobsen (CUT/Observatorio Social – Brazil)*; Marco Berlinguer (Lavoro in movimento – CGIL / Transform – Italy)*; Tim Costello (Global Labor Strategies – USA) and Carlos Jimenez/Sarita Gupta (Jobs with Justice – USA). Bruno Ciccaglione (SDL Intercategoriale – Italy) and Alessandra Mecozzi (FIOM-CGIL – Italy) are going to facilitate the connection between L&G and the cross-networks spaces on crisis created at Belém and in Europe.

*   N.B. Pat Horn and Kjeld Jakobsen can propose a second facilitator for Africa and Latin America; for Europe, the participation is going to be better defined at the next meeting of the network L&G in Europe.

Appendix 2

Labor and globalization network

Activities at the WSF 2009

DAY	TIME SLOT	PLACE	TITLE OF THE ACTIVITY	Title as it appears on the program	ORGANIZATION	Inscribed by
29th of January	2	UFRA Prédio Central - Bloco B B 001	**Labor: New Struggles, New Alliances. Towards a Charter of Labor?**	crisis global; crisis de la globalizacion	**Labor and Globalization Network**	FIOM-CGIL
30th of January	3	UFPA Profissional Fp Fp 08	**Labor in the Global Crisis: Threats, Challenges, Strategies**	Effects of the financial crisis on the jobs and work conditions	**Labor and Globalization Network**	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
31st of January	1	UFPA Basico Eb E 1	**Assembly of the Labor and Globalization Network**	Meeting of the labour and globalization network	**Labor and Globalization Network**	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro

Labor and Globalization Network is also co-promoter of the:

- **Cross-networks meeting on crisis** (date and place yet to be confirmed)
- **Final assembly on labor** (to be held on the **1st of January morning**, place yet to be confirmed)

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Peter Waterman (born London, 1936) has spent a lifetime in international labour, socialist and other social movements. He was a labour educator for the (Communist) World Federation of Trade Unions in Prague (1966-9). He taught and researched Third World and international labour and social movements at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague (1972-98). He edited the *Newsletter of International Labour Studies* (1980-90). He initiated the international dialogue on 'social movement unionism' in the later-1980s. His latest book is *The New Nervous System of Internationalism and Solidarity*, published in Lima (in Spanish), 2006. His first online book is *Recovering Internationalism: Creating the New Global Solidarity* (Waterman 2007). He is the co-editor, with Jai Sen (New Delhi) of a continuing series of compilations on the World Social Forum. He can be contacted at peterwaterman1936 AT gmail.com

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"Another world is possible as long as it is feminist too": dissenting discourses and acts by Greek leftist feminists

Maria Kyriakidou

Abstract

The present note draws upon the example of Greek feminists who undertook action against sexist perceptions underlying the leftist political formations in which they participated. The perspective of gender as a powerful tool of political analysis seems indispensable to Greek feminists who experienced gender biases within the leftist movement and expressed their concerns regarding the persistence of patriarchal structures. They are motivated by a "politics of lived experience" approach to activist struggle, a concept that has been recently re-introduced in the feminist discourse. Along with the local bases of their concerns they are closely connected to transnational networks such as the World March of Women, an anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal group. It is on this basis that the Greek feminists, similarly to their international counterparts, encourage alternative social movements to fight against patriarchy within the movements and insist that the envisioned "another world" will not be radically transformed and alternative unless it is based on feminist premises.

The issue of leftists' sexism is old but persistent. Greek feminists had uneasy relationships with their male comrades during the "second wave" feminist movement in Greece immediately after the end of the military junta in 1974. The parties of the Left (the traditional / "orthodox" KKE and the euro-communist KKE interior) established women's organizations that were subjected to traditional party hierarchy and were regarded by many feminists as additional pools of voters rather than grassroots sources of radical social change and the elimination of patriarchy. In turn, the autonomous, leftist, feminist groups that started to appear in the major urban centers during the mid-1970s, were viewed with distrust by many members of the parliamentary Left that saw autonomous feminism as a mere imitator of Western practices which at the time were chastised as American, thus capitalist, values.

For their part, and in the atmosphere of increasing politicization of social life, autonomous feminists tried hard to convince their male counterparts of their true commitment to socialist and communist ideology, overlooking at times the value of gender as a forceful tool for political analysis. Weary of ideological conflicts (Varika 2000) with state feminism and associated reformist practices introduced in the early 1980s, the "second wave" autonomous movement in Greece stagnated towards the end of the 1980s.

The feminist fight against sexism within political parties and associations of the Left has many parallels in the West. Since the emergence of the women's liberation movement in the 1960s, gender was often overshadowed by other issues on the agenda of leftist political leaders (Gray-Rosendale and Rosendale 2005). Such prioritisations frequently revealed

differing approaches to institutional politics and definitions of power (e.g. in the case of Italy) between the autonomous feminists and the left-wing party organisations and trade unions (Gómez Sánchez and Martín Sevillano 2006: 350-351). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s in various European countries, feminists uncomfortably found themselves "in and against" parties of the Left (Benn 1987; Lovenduski 1986).

In Greece, society remained quite traditional and androcentric, but it was not until the late 1990s that an increasing number of autonomous feminist groups started to re-appear, often in concert with the anti-globalisation movement and the development of international and local social forums. These feminist groups are associated with the Left of the political spectrum, particularly with the so called *Coalition of the Radical Left and Progress* (Syriza) that officially appeared in 2004, though its formation goes back to 2001. The *Coalition* is linked to the politics of European and World Social Forums on which leftist feminists based their hopes for "another possible world as long as it is a feminist one" (Kontothanassi and Pentaraki 2006). Male comrades often prioritized class struggle against neoliberal globalisation over other structural social inequalities (such as gender asymmetries). This oversight disturbed contemporary leftist feminist women in Greece who, in turn, emphasized their different experiences as women to articulate innovative partisanship within the leftist movement. Here I plan to focus on the nature of these experiences and on how feminists used political praxis to counteract the discomfort and marginalization they experienced within parties of the radical Left.

Although they work towards gender equality, the women members of the KKE (a party which currently has a female secretary general) are not included within the definition of "leftist feminists" I use here for the following reasons: First, for the most part, they do not characterize themselves as feminists since they view feminism as a movement with bourgeois origins working independently and, at times, against class struggle. Thus, they do not value the concept of gender as an essential tool for political analysis and they do not have a distinct public presence as leftist feminists; in turn, they are strictly loyal to party lines and consistently refuse to be called "feminists". Second, they discredit anti-globalisation movements and struggles and consider meetings such as the Social Forums as haphazard and inept. Therefore, my references to leftist feminists do not include women KKE members in this particular note.

Leftist feminists are commonly self-described as women with a clear understanding of gender oppression who consider this oppression a chief human problem and struggle for a society free from gender-based and other (e.g. class) inequalities. The feminist question, simply posed, is "how can I, the leftist feminist, come into terms with gender discrimination within the leftist movement"? In a meaningful expression of complaint the women members of the *Coalition of the Radical Left* maintained that: "We have participated in social and political struggles within and outside organizations for the introduction of a gender perspective in politics and in the Left. We are distressed to realize that male-dominated structures in the *Coalition of the Left* and the neglect of persistent gender hierarchies still prevail and that we are now way behind even from what we had gained during the last few decades" (*Women of Syriza Network* declaration, 2008).

Given that Greek leftist women are up against the male privilege they encounter within parties of the Left, they undertook original political initiatives. To use a rather far fetched analogy from Gramsci, they moved from a war of position to a war of maneuver (frontal

attack), the most representative expression of which was a novel and innovative coalition group called *Women for another Europe*. The group was hastily and urgently organized just three weeks before the European elections of June 2004 and the ballot was exclusively made up of women; a fact noticeably unprecedented in Greece. Most of them had already established a public presence in political parties, organizations, women's groups and the anti-globalisation movement.

They insisted that the common thread which tied them together was not their biological makeup as women but their distinctive viewpoint concerning politics. Men were not part of the ballot not because they didn't or couldn't work with them successfully but because these women did not wish to create just another, "conventional" party. Instead, they attempted to clearly condemn the hierarchical structure of the Greek political parties (even the ones of the Left). This ballot brought the problems of women (working, unemployed, housewives, victims of violence) to the fore of public discourse, as well as urban and environmental concerns they claimed to perceive differently than men. They addressed their call to people of the Left, to anyone concerned and foremost, to women. Their European objective was to work towards a social and political Europe that would give voice to the citizens and not to the leaders.

An all-female ballot was the aspiration of leftist feminists for a long time. However, it was not until 2004 that they decided to move ahead with it, exasperated by the persistence of leftist political procedures that continued to marginalize women's voices. With the exclusively female ballot, "they did not wish to make a spectacular but rather a symbolic move" (*Women for Another Europe* Interview, 2004). The effort was met with unanticipated success (Mpompolou 2004) since the coalition ranked seventh in votes, first among the parties which did not elect a representative in the European parliament[1].

This effort remained unique and was not followed by a new electoral attempt in the 2009 European elections. Instead, many of the same women created the *Panhellenic Network of women in the Leftist Coalition* in March 2008, claiming that "we are here to declare that we will not accept gender inequality, particularly on the part of the Left". Although they acknowledge that the Left is structured and operates within the tight framework of a patriarchal society, they still believe that "women's and feminist struggles within the broader alternative globalisation movements and the Left in other European countries have earned a better place and equal representation for women in party and movement structure. [In Greece, however], party conferences, panel discussions and the public image of the *Leftist Coalition* is male-dominated and women's issues are marginalized despite the existence of many and capable women members and despite the fact that the *Coalition* appeals more to women than men...." (*Women of Syriza Network* declaration, 2008)

Most of those who questioned sexist practices of their male comrades constitute the core members of the Greek section of an international network called the *World March of Women*. Its *Declaration of Values*, inspired by contemporary expressions of globalised feminist activism, refers to the potential of "building a peaceful world, free from

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[1] The coalition gained 46.565 votes, corresponding to the 0.76% of the popular vote. During these elections of 1999, the percentage of votes for the *Coalition of the Left* was reduced approximately by 1%, See the official results of the 2004 elections for the European Parliament at the site of the Greek Ministry of Interior, http://www.ypes.gr/ekloges/content/gr/elec_data/2004UE_epi_res.asp, last accessed on 24/11/2009.

exploitation and oppression, a world in which people enjoy full human rights, social justice, democracy and gender equality... In short, we believe that together we can and must build another world". This statement implies a radical transformation of societies which, they claim, can be achieved through "resistance to neoliberal globalisation, war, racism, poverty and all forms of discrimination... To advance women's liberation... it is important to ally with other social movements and strengthen our cooperation through common action".[2]

A primary objective of the *World March of Women* is to challenge the legitimacy of international military and economic structures and, at the same time, to encourage alternative social movements to challenge the sexist perceptions underlying their practices and fight against patriarchy even within movements. This is what the Greek feminists sought to do within the Greek leftist *Coalition*.

In an attempt to contextualise the activism of Greek feminists, I would like to refer to the significant notion of the "politics of experience". It is a concept vested with a variety of meanings and connotations and was dear to the feminist circles of the 1970s and 1980s as a key term to the interpretation of women's social experience and the formation of a collective consciousness (Mulinari and Sandell 1999: 288). In Greece, as well as in other societies where patriarchy persists, feminist activists reclaim the notion of experience not just as the collective, female social experience of patriarchy but also in a way which combines the embodied, lived subjective experience with women's collective consciousness and locates it within specific historical circumstances. The concept has been re-introduced both in feminist theory and in activism primarily by Chandra Mohanty, whose work focuses on transnational and post-colonial feminist theory ascribing value and significance to multifarious sources of feminist activism (Mohanty 2003: 106-123). Through her work she strives "to strike a careful balance between the discursive and the material, between experience and theory, and refuses to privilege one term over the other. Instead, she argues forcefully that feminist struggles are fought on both an ideological, representational level and an experiential, everyday level; thus she reminds us that the value of theory resides finally in its political effectiveness" (Cupples 2005).

Greek feminist voiced the argument that women's lived experiences shape distinct female discourses. In their own words: "A female discourse is very much based on experience. Our arguments, our public positions and actions are oriented or derive from what we have experienced as women, experiences that are very different from those of men. We also think that this female discourse is very complicated. This is not to say that a male discourse is simplistic but that the female one takes into account a wide variety of parameters that men do not always do. Plus, female discourse is usually less rhetoric than that of men and its current marginalization constitutes a deficiency both for the political discourse of the Left and for politics at large" (Interview of two Greek feminists at Modlich, 2004/5). This female discourse goes beyond any essentialist conceptualization of femininity; rather, it attempts to create a fissure in the current political synthesis of the Greek leftist parties, to contest conventionally reified identities and to reinvent new ways of acting and thinking.

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[2] See the aforementioned 'Declaration of Values' at the site of the *World March of Women*, http://www.marchemondiale.org/qui_nous_sommes/valeurs/en/base_view, last accessed on 24/11/2009.

This return to personal experience can potentially include certain ideological traps since it could lead to an individualistic and apolitical conceptualization of experience. Therefore, the notion itself and its role for political action has long been contested by those who suggested that the simple narration of personal experience runs the risk of been too empirical. Mohanty-inspired scholars advocate the view that experience is informed by politics and interpreted in a variety of ways. As experience is conditioned by sociopolitical and cultural frames, we can use its interpretation to analyze and criticize them (Stone-Mediatore 1998: 117-120). In this case, women's experiences are informed not only by their leftist political ideas but also by their attachment to feminist theory and praxis. It is the politics of gender that shapes their interpretation of experience.

One can see the relevance of experience regarding political commitment and the prospect of creating common political projects. Experience motivates and informs participation in political struggles. In this way, lived experiences and their narration by marginalized women are crucial to radical feminist praxis through the making of an "oppositional consciousness," which is more than resistance and can actually contribute to a community awareness, disrupt the private and public divide in favour of a reinterpretation of the historical context in which such experiences are formed and, in turn, lead to the articulation of subjecthood, political agency and struggle (Stone-Mediatore 1998: 120-125; Mohanty 1991). In our specific example, this "oppositional consciousness" is formed not only against the capitalist world but also against patriarchal structures of traditional parties.

The worth of lived experience for activist work is considerable. The alliance of activist women, through their everyday experiences of sexism, facilitate the movement's direction towards an increasingly open and collaborative course of action. Moreover, it weakens essentialist assumptions regarding women and helps activists comprehend the interplay between their own agency and socio-political context. Individual lived experiences can successfully produce a "feminist perspective that claims it is possible to produce knowledge about the world that can and should be used to name, illuminate and overcome social inequalities" (Mulinari and Sandell 1999: 294).

There is an inherent contradiction in the fact that one can fight against the capitalist state and war as part of a movement within which he embodies and reproduces the power structure, authority and hierarchy of patriarchal societies. All those who employ androcentric practices within the leftist, anti-globalisation movement, eventually disregard the practices of such social movements and the value of solidarity in struggle. In the current state of crisis, the actions of the leftist women's movement seem more appropriate than ever. Women are particularly hit by the crisis and leftist movements will develop and succeed not by placing women's concerns at the margins, but at the forefront of their struggles.

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About the author

Maria Kyriakidou completed her B.A. and M.A. studies in Greece and the USA respectively and received her Ph.D. with a thesis investigating the politicization of the inter-war feminist movement in Greece at King's College, University of London. She participated in a number of international conferences and has published articles in Greek and international scientific journals and a book on women's participation in municipal councils in Thessaloniki, Greece. She is currently an assistant professor of Greek and gender history at the American College of Thessaloniki and an adjunct instructor of Greek

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The outdoor games of the 2009 Winter Unlympiad at Washington Park

Anne Elizabeth Moore

Location: Washington Park, Chicago.

Just a stone's throw away from the home of Barack Obama, the President of the United States of America, Washington Park was originally part of South Park, a plot that included the famed Midway Plaisance at the Chicago World's Fair and neighboring Jackson Park. Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in 1871, the Great Fire that same year delayed improvements to the park until 1872 (at which point their "South Open Green" section of the park still featured sheep that grazed through open ball fields.) Renamed in 1881 to honor George Washington, the first president of the United States, Washington Park currently consists of 372 acres on Chicago's South Side. In advance of this renaming, Daniel Burnham's architectural firm was brought to design several buildings for the park, including stables, a refectory, and the administrative headquarters for the South Park Commission, where the DuSable Museum of African-American History moved in 1973. The park holds the world's earliest completed concrete sculpture, *Fountain of Time*, and has acted as the setting for several works of literature including James T. Farrell's investigation of race in the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, scenes in Richard Wright's *Native Son,* and parts of St. Clair Drake and Horace Roscoe Cayton's *Black Metropolis*. The play *Raisin in the Sun* was inspired by Lorraine Hansberry's early residence in the neighborhood. Because it figures prominently in the cultural development of the city, the park is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Because it is one of the largest remaining green spaces in Chicago, Washington Park is actively used by locals and by residents traveling from the far reaches of the city.

Demographics: **White—0.52%**
Black—97.5%
Hispanic—0.95%
Asian—0.04%
Other—0.95%

The early days of South Park, up through its renaming to Washington Park in 1881, primarily saw Irish and German visitors to the public neighborhood facility. A development boom in the early 1900s caused many European-Americans to leave the area; white Protestants quickly formed the exclusive nearby South Shore Country Club in 1906, which excluded Jews and blacks from membership. By 1930, the white population around Washington Park had dwindled to 7.3%; by 1960 it was 0.5%. This was shortly after the 1955 Amendment to the Blighted Areas Redevelopment Act, which allowed the

Chicago Land Clearance Commission to develop land seized through
condemnations and evictions for commercial use. This act is considered the
primary force behind the total population decline in the neighborhood from
57,000 in 1950 to 14,146 in 2000. The median annual income around
Washington Park currently stands at $15,160. For comparison, the national
median income is around $50,000 per year.

Impetus: An 80,000-seat Olympic Stadium for the 2016 Games

Chicago 2016 was a not-for-profit organization, founded in 2006 under the
mission to bring the 2016 Olympic Games to Chicago and funded
predominantly by local developers. Chicago 2016 chose Washington Park as the
site for an 80,000-seat Olympic Stadium, later to be scaled back to an 8,000-
seat permanent facility after the Games (as the Olympic bid became less and less
popular, this was scaled back further to a 2500-seat facility.) Neighborhood
groups including the active Washington Park Forum voiced consistent
displeasure with the decision: the Washington Park Advisory Council even
released a memo in 2007 detailing a list of changes to the Olympic Bid
necessary to enlist the organization's support in bringing the Games to Chicago.
In addition to community benefit agreements, referendums on taxes and
eminent domain, job opportunities, and low-income housing, the memo
demanded the move of the stadium to another location entirely. (Few of these
demands were ever acknowledged, and none met, in any stages of the
committee's work).

Perhaps misreading Burnham's advice to "Make no small plans," Chicago 2016
barreled ahead with its plans to revamp not only the park but the entire historic
neighborhood regardless of a lack of community support, falsifying it in well-
publicized if undocumentable statistics that proclaimed 80% of Chicagoans
supportive of the bid. (In fact, the *Chicago Tribune* conducted an online poll on
February 12, 2009, the day the bid book was due to go to the International
Olympic Committee, and found that close to 80% of Chicagoans would vote
against the bid if offered the chance to do so.) Many factors contributed to
residents' mistrust of the Chicago 2016 committee, including: back-room city
council agreements to grant Chicago 2016 leases to public park facilities;
eminent domain, evictions, redevelopment projects, and already rising rents;
Mayor Daley's already broken promises to fund the games privately; and the
plain realization that the stadium would severely limit or destroy most users'
abilities to play in their neighborhood park.

Even more divisive was the realization that the planned Olympic Stadium would
destroy Burnham and Olmsted's original vision for the park as an open, publicly
accessible space; turn one of the larger public green spaces in the city over to
private interests with little hope that funds would come back to the community;
and commit irreparable damage to Washington Park in favor of a stadium
wholly unnecessary to the neighborhood. (To make matters worse, the planned
use of Washington Park may have been illegal: the use of federal funds in

National Register properties requires public hearings). Later, it was further revealed that the plans for Washington Park's Olympic Stadium would put a recently completed brand-new gym and pool in a West Side school in jeopardy—these would be destroyed in order to build 6,000-seat velodrome for the Games.

In short, all aspects of Chicago 2016's planned use of Washington Park to house the Olympic Stadium, the central facility in the organization's bid plan, were found by the local community to be either destructive to current facilities, unnecessary, unwanted, or in violation of federal laws. The unaddressed aspects of the plan—historically associated with all Olympic Games but never acknowledged in public meetings or statements—involved the displacement of mass numbers of residents in order to build a varying number of nearby luxury hotels. Approximately 2 million local residents had been displaced from all cities combined in the 20 years of Olympic Games prior to 2008; Beijing's 2008 Games alone displaced 1.5 million more.
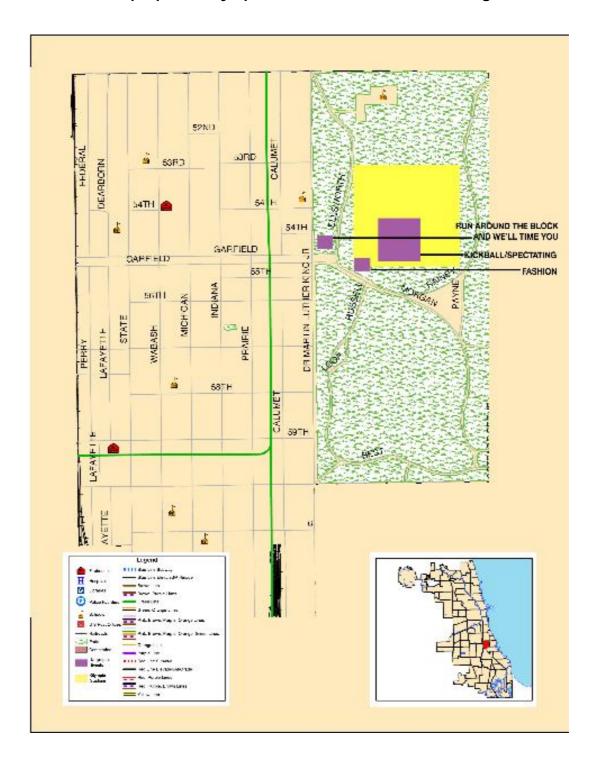
Organization: The Unlympic Organizing Committee.

Part organizing effort and part reaction to the economic and emotional depression hitting Chicago in the early days of 2009, the Unlympic Organizing Committee (UOC) was an ad-hoc group of artists and activists that planned a creative response to Chicago 2016's lack of transparency, disinterest in democracy, and heavy marketing efforts. Anne Elizabeth Moore, in conjunction with local arts organization InCUBATE and others, created a series of games to be held over four consecutive Saturdays and in the diverse parts of the city that would be most affected by a successful 2016 Olympic bid. Eventually, the UOC decided on a spate of games that included real sports, fake sports, and things that should be sports but aren't yet, including Class-Conscious Kickball, Fashion, Karaoke, Live Action Role Play Family Dinner, Dry Humping, and Spelling.

Still in operation while awaiting funding for a planned 2016 Displaced Persons Games in Rio, the Unlympics aims to investigate highly organized, internationally recognized, massively marketed, thoroughly branded, and extremely expensive sporting events not from a pro or con standpoint, but from a questioning standpoint, while invoking the spirit of fun and healthy competition, originally the point of large-scale sporting events. Each game day in the Winter 2009 Unlympiad was sponsored by a local neighborhood organization with a stake in the 2016 Olympic bid. Indoor and outdoor games were held throughout the city. All were open to the public. Games were open to all ages of participants, most were free to participate in and all were free to watch.

The purpose of the UOC's 2009 Winter Unlympiad was to raise public awareness of aspects of the bid unacknowledged by the Chicago 2016 committee or press coverage of their activities, create an openly inviting and playful situation in which to meet some of the residents that would be most affected by the 2016 Olympic Games in Chicago, and survive a bitter Midwestern winter.

(Documentary footage, press coverage, and related reporting are housed at
http://unlympics.wordpress.com.)

Events and proposed Olympic stadium locations in Washington Park

The Outdoor Games: January 29, 2009

Events: **Run Around the Block and We'll Time You
(Judged in Speed and Style)**

Fashion Competition

Class-Conscious Kickball

The Spectator Sport

Sponsor: The Chicago Working Group on Extreme Inequality.

Chicago Working Group on Extreme Inequality (CWGEI) generates educational materials, performs creative direct action strategies, and promotes public policies that challenge accumulated wealth and power in the United States. "As fundraising and big-time urban planning is underway for the Chicago Olympics," CWGEI organizer Kristen Cox told the press, "we see the private sector sideswiping their local philanthropy in order to support the Olympics at a critical time when non-profits need it most. People living in Washington Park, a lower income community of color on the mid-south side, will be subject to displacement due to the Olympic plans. Not to mention parks are one of our cities' last remaining public goods that many Chicagoans enjoy as a commons, together. It would be a shame to eradicate this green space and displace a percentage of our city who would be left behind because of a quest for power and status."

Narrative:

Around 30 people—artists, activists, and local community residents—came to Washington Park on a cold but bright Saturday at the end of January to compete in kickball, fashion, running, and spectating contests in the Winter 2009 Unlympic Games. Part of the Indoor/Outdoor Games, which also included an evening indoor event called the Live Action Role Play Family Dinner, the primary event of the day was Class-Conscious Kickball, which attracted passersby to our activities. This game was intended to highlight the privileges some are granted in Chicago, and presented the Chicago 2016 race for the torch as favoring the wealthy.

"The playing field isn't even," Anne Elizabeth Moore, Secretary for the Unlympics Organizing Committee, commented to the press. "Some are trained from birth to compete and others are never even told about the game. That's not what living in a democracy is supposed to be about."

Following a rousing game of Run Around the Block and We'll Time You with referee Bryce Dwyer, Class-Conscious Kickball kicked off with a welcome

message from CWGEI's Kristin Cox. "What you are about to experience will not be your average ordinary kickball game," Cox shouted into a loudspeaker. "[I]t is NOT hard work and athleticism that score you a homeroom in life—that's right, no it is not. In most cases, your place in society is already set by the time you pop out of your mom's kooch. Not fair you say! Life is not fair, my friend. Even if you catch your ball, the game is stacked, the deal is already done. Many of us are born with more privileges, landing us on second or third base, while others are left behind, even struggling to get to first. And by good faith, luck and or in some cases, stealing, they get to second, third and maybe, fourth. But rarely. Fourth base is reserved for the lottery winners, CEOs, inheritors, and celebrities. Ladies and gents and all those in between: we are living in a cat and mouse game of chase with high hopes of kicking a homerun, to earn that American Dream or first Olympic Medal."

To wild applause and occasional jeers, participants then stepped forward to play various roles called out by Salem Collo-Julin: Edwina the Eagle, a British competitor in the 1988 Winter Olympic ski-jumping team forced to self-fund her training, even wearing seven layers of socks to accommodate her donated pair of skis, ultimately failed to place in the Games. Ada, a middle-class, second-generation Mexica-American female almost got to first base when a high-interest bearing loan weighed her down and she could no longer compete. Greta Cummings, who married into the Phillip-Morris USA family and comfortably situated herself on third base and a life in big tobacco. Susie "Ski" Medal, born on second base in the beautiful mountains of Colorado and given every athletic advantage from an early age sweeps the competition easily. Sylvester, who grew up on no base, next to a garbage incinerating plant in Indiana, perishes even before reaching first base. And Max Power, always up to bat as Max was born into wealth and owns the bases, was the Official Corporate Sponsor of this and many other Kickball Fields. Insulted by referee Roman Petruniak (and played by Colllo-Julin), Power stormed off the field mid-play, proclaiming, "I own this ball, I own the Olympics, I own the Unlympics, *and I win.*"

Competitors then displayed their fashionable attire and spectators were judged for excellence spectating before the awards ceremony closed the successful if freezing cold event.

Had Chicago been chosen as the 2016 Olympic host city, the Washington Park setting—planned site for an 80,000-seat Olympic Stadium venue—the area would go under construction in as little as four years, some estimates said. The corresponding Olympic Village hotel and housing construction activities may have made such community activities impossible at that time.

"We'll certainly remember Washington Park, though," UOC Secretary AEM stated. "We met a lot of amazing people that day. I hope they're able to stay in the neighborhood."

Unlympic Organizing Committee Co-chair and InCUBATE member Matthew Joynt takes first base in the Winter 2009 Unlympiad's Class-Conscious Kickball competition during the Outdoor Games.

Max Power, played by Salem Collo-Julin, officially ends her sponsorship of Class-Conscious Kickball by proclaiming herself the winner and storming off the field. Roman Petruniak calls foul but is ignored.

Economic impacts

The projected cost of the 2016 Olympic Games was $10 billion. ($100 million was the original estimated cost to be awarded host-city status on October 2; the 80,000-seat stadium in Washington Park was predicted to cost $397.6 million.) While Mayor Daley promised repeatedly that the Olympics would be a privately funded affair, he immediately created a TIF (tax-increment financing) district in neighboring Bronzeville, essentially creating a hidden fund from tax increases used at the sole discretion of Mayor Daley, and slated to fund the Olympic Village. In addition to related back-room deals between the parks district, the Chicago 2016, and various corporate funders, Daley also signed a guarantee of public funding, should the private funds originally promised to cover the full cost of the Games fail to come through. Economic commentators such as the University of Chicago's Dr. Allen Sanderson noted from the outset, however, that even a wholly private fund for the Games would still have decreased the available amount of funding for other public programs, including the arts, public schools, social services, and public transportation.

The total cost of Chicago's unsuccessful bid for the 2016 Olympic Games was between $70 and $100 million. Arts programs, public schools, social services, and public transportation have all taken severe hits in the six months since the announcement.

The total cost of the 2009 Winter Unlympiad was $375. This was covered entirely by private donations, including the $5 entry fee to compete the February 7, 2009 Intellectual Games' Spelling Bee. The projected cost of the 2009 Winter Unlympiad was originally $500, but the games came in $125 under budget due to a vast show of volunteer support and the extensive provision of donated materials.

Personal impacts

After four consecutive weeks of Unlympic Games, extensive local and national media coverage, movement building, public appearances, the release of two video documentaries, and with the assistance of over 500 direct participants and over 10,000 website hits to the Unlympics' site, the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid was eliminated in the first round of International Olympic Committee voting on October 2, 2009. Industry site Gamesbids.com called it "the most stunning elimination in Olympic bid history." President Obama, who had put aside a debate over national health care reform as well as two international wars and several escalating international incidents to fly to Copenhagen and personally pitch for the bid, expressed his deep and sincere regrets. He did not comment on the impact this might have on his neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago, and the hundreds of thousands of low-income neighbors who might not now be forcibly displaced from their homes in advance of Olympic Village construction.

The four events of the Outdoor Games portion of the Winter 2009 Unlympiad – Run Around the Block and We'll Time You, the Fashion Competition, the Spectator Sport, and Class-Conscious Kickball – were held on just one afternoon during the entire 22-day schedule of Unlympic Games, which ran from January 24th 2009 through February 14th, 2009. The opening ceremonies consisted of a Parade of Notions, an art parade in the middle of winter where participants dressed in attire appropriate to the national, creative, ethnic, political, economic, social, linguistic, imaginary, or other affiliation they intended to represent, and the Game Where You Win, which simply presented medal to all attendees in a team-building spirit of generosity.

Following the Outdoor Games on January 29th, participants then participated in a Live Action Role Play Family Potluck Dinner, during which the merits of megasports events were debated over drink and foodfights. The Intellectual Games' Adult Spelling Bee on February 7th raised questions about the undemocratic process under which Olympic bid decisions were being made in Chicago. Most significantly, the Emotional Games on February 14th, held two days after the bid book was due the IOC but only one day after the Chicagoans who would be most affected were able to look at it for the first time, offered participants in all the other games—plus those who were unable to compete in the Winter 2009 Unlympiad from, say, prison—a final chance to come together as a team.

Because it so perfectly summed up the intent behind the Unlympic Games, and focused on the unique issues impacting the South Side under Chicago 2016's Olympic bid process, below is the final press statement of the Winter 2009 Unlympiad, dated February 17:

> CHICAGO—The final series of events . . . featured tears and several full-room sing-a-longs, marking an extremely emotional end to a nail-biting race that pitted social justice against Olympic glory. Around 60 people gathered to hear opening remarks from South Side resident Stanley Howard – tortured by Jon Burge and Chicago Police Officers under his command, then sentenced to death based on confessions extracted under torture but later commuted by Governor Ryan – who called from prison to kick off the Emotional Games with a plea to bring existing problems of police torture under control before Chicago embarks on a project like the Olympics.

> Julien Ball of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty and Laurie Jo Reynolds and Stephen F. Eisenman of Tamms Year Ten set up the Solitary Isolation Game after 29-year-old Mustafa Afrika described his early imprisonment and subsequent isolation at Tamms Supermax, as well as the lingering physical and emotional effects of spending several years with no human contact. Afrika, who has since returned to life on the South Side of Chicago, described the daily, ongoing police activity in his neighborhood, acknowledging that any increase to this hostility, such as that brought about by the Olympic Games' presence in the area, would be extremely damaging to residents. During the Solitary Isolation Game, Johnnie Walton, incarcerated at Tamms, described to the hooded audience the chilling long-term effects of solitary isolation. Describing

prisoners whose only human contact was shouting over walls to fellow inmates for several years and men who became so desperate for human contact they would create a ruckus, causing guards to come in and physically quiet them, Walton was deeply moving: several hooded attendees explained later that they were relieved for the hoods because it kept others from being able to see them cry.

"If Chicago's not able to bring justice . . . I don't think we should even be talking about the Olympics right now," Stanley Howard explained over the phone from prison.

Shameless Karaoke then convinced the audience to "dance it out" with a rousing Karaoke Competition that had the roomful of attendees joined in songs such as "You Oughtta Know," "Man in Motion," "Sweet Transvestite" and more than one Neil Diamond hit. Following, the Judge Competition allowed competitors to sit in judgment of game officials. Unlympics Judges from the The Game Where You Win, the Fashion Competition, Run Around the Block and We'll Time You, Class-Conscious Kickball, Spectator Sport, Telekenetic Synchronicity, and the Karaoke Competition were awarded a range of points based on their display of Fairness, Accuracy, and Awesomeness. A special write-in category was added to judge the Chicago 2016 Committee in the competition for the Hearts and Minds of Chicagoans in the Blazin' Hot Trail for the Torch. Heidi Wiegandt, the Telekenetic Synchronicity judge, won with a total of 57,541 points.

Of a potential point range well exceeding 50,000, the PR firm-backed Chicago 2016 committee was awarded 2 total points, none in the category of Fairness.

"When the Unlympic Games started, Chicago 2016 was promising CTA improvements and no use of public funds in Olympic Village construction, and claimed 88% support for the Olympic Games among Chicagoans. Now the city has agreed to fund the Olympic Village with the Bronzeville TIF, CTA improvements were nowhere to be seen in the final bid book, and a Chicago Tribune poll showed support for hosting the Games closer to a very low 21%," says Anne Elizabeth Moore, Co-Secretary for the UOC. "The Unlympic Spirit proves we don't need highly organized, internationally recognized, massively marketed, thoroughly branded, and extremely expensive sporting events to unite around. We just need to work together."

About the author

Anne Elizabeth Moore is the author of *Unmarketable: Brandalism, Copyfighting, Mocketing, and the Erosion of Integrity* (The New Press, 2007), and *Hey Kidz, Buy This Book* (Soft Skull, 2004). She is the founding editor of the *Best American Comics* series from Houghton Mifflin and initiated the *Comics Journal Special Edition* anthologies and edited the *Comics Journal* magazine. Co-editor and publisher of now-defunct *Punk Planet*, Moore teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and conducts comics, writing, and

self-publishing work with young women in Cambodia. Moore lectures throughout the globe, has been the subject of two documentary films, and can be found online at www.anneelizabethmoore.com

URL for this article

http://groups.google.com/group/interface-articles/web/3Moore.pdf

New openings for movement and consciousness in the U.S.

Beth Gonzalez and Walda Katz-Fishman

In 2010, two years into the deepest systemic crisis of capitalism the world has ever experienced, the question is how to secure the basic necessities of life for all humanity and to protect Mother Earth. In the United States, social movements and revolutionaries are analyzing, envisioning, strategizing, and converging. Over the years, the passivity of the broad mass of the American people has kept the world waiting and wondering if, when, and how the American sleeping giant – the U.S. working class – will begin to understand and fight for its own interests.

It will be a complex process – an intertwining of objective economic and social processes, historical and ideological forms, and the struggle for consciousness of class and political interests. But the break in the continuity of social passivity is coming into view.

Today the struggle for the immediate needs of a broadening section of the American people can be done in tandem with the struggle for a consciousness of actual interests and the inability of the capitalist system to meet these needs. At this historical moment, like never before in the history of the U.S., these two processes depend on one another. Neither can move forward in isolation from the other.

The following analysis is divided into three parts:

(1) What is new about today's economic crisis? Economic revolution, economic crisis; government response to financial collapse.

(2) How is this new and different in the U.S. today? Changes in society, property, and the state; historical particularities.

(3) Why does it matter? Ramifications for strategy and struggle.

What is new about today's economic crisis?

The breadth and depth of the current economic crisis has threatened financial markets and economies throughout the world. It is destabilizing governments and threatening delicate geopolitical balancing acts. In the U.S. it has unleashed broad popular fear and anger that are shaping the beginning stages of political polarization and opening new channels of struggle and consciousness.

For those aiming to work strategically and politicize broadly within the developing social struggle, it is critical to assess the underlying economic processes and to anticipate the resulting new openings for the movement and its consciousness.

On one level, the current recession and financial collapse represent a cyclical crisis. The crisis began with an over-production and over-pricing of real estate, fueled by a loosening of lending laws and practices that lured millions of workers into buying homes at terms of debt they could not afford. In some counties, home prices had doubled in a matter of years. Banks kept on lending and consumers took on more debt. Even before the crash of 2008, the job market was contracting, wages were declining, and healthcare costs were soaring; millions went into default. After the financial crash in the fall of 2008, the surge of new layoffs sent more homes into foreclosure. The economy was locked in a downward spiral.

As of February 2010, the recession that began in 2007 had cost 8.4 million jobs – bringing the total official unemployment figure to about 15 million. The crisis has cost the construction industry about 25% of its workforce (1.9 million jobs); it cut the manufacturing workforce by 15.8% (2.1 million jobs). Of those U.S. workers who still have jobs, 26.2 million (approximately 17%) are under- and unemployed, marginally attached and involuntary part-time workers. (See the Economic Policy Institute website at www.epi.org.)

Most economists acknowledge that any recovery will be a jobless recovery. Although there are many explanations of the current crisis of capitalism, most recognize this crisis as an expression of something new. New motive forces of production are today ushering in an economic revolution.

During the Industrial Revolution, steam-powered industry (and later electro-mechanically driven industry) enhanced human labor. It locked capital and labor into a relationship of both contradiction and mutual dependence. The transition at the foundation of society today is far different. With its capacity for the digital organization and execution of production, for automation and robotics, the computer chip replaces human labor.

Where the Industrial Revolution unleashed labor-enhancing technology and opened the way for the full development of capitalism, the labor-replacing technology of today's Electronic Revolution presents an antagonism to capitalist production relations. It clashes with the capitalist form of private property. [1]

On another level, therefore, the current crisis is not simply a routine cyclical crisis occurring within the stages of capitalism's growth. It is rooted in the current economic revolution and is unfolding within the early stages of the destruction of the objective foundation for capitalism. In this sense, the overproduction of housing, the financial deregulation, and the mortgage crash were not the underlying causes of the crisis; they were its triggers. The crisis was based in the introduction of a labor-replacing mode of production into an

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[1] Capitalist production relations are defined by the buying and selling of labor power: The exploitation of labor is the source of surplus value and the profits of the capitalists. The amount of labor embodied in a commodity determines its value. The beginning of production without labor is the beginning of the destruction of value (that is, the measure of the amount of labor time embodied in a product).

economic system based on the exploitation of labor. The resulting overall decline in value and loss of jobs set the stage for the collapse of the market.

The U.S. government had to take extraordinary measures because the cyclical crisis and financial collapse are extraordinary. The September 2008 financial crash threatened to take down the entire world financial system. The U.S. Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve Bank worked together round the clock with CEOs of major financial institutions to restructure and support the core of the U.S. financial sector. (Estimates and actual amounts fluctuate, but as of September 2009, the bailout had cost nearly $12 trillion.) The bailout was more complex than just giving money to the banks. It was a decisive step in the ongoing merger of the government and the corporations, in this case, private financial entities. Global capital and the government needed to find a way to stabilize the global financial system and to ensure the flow of credit to keep the commodities markets moving. They guaranteed profits and protected private property – not jobs, homes, or medical care for the American people.

Soon after, in early 2009, the U.S. government engineered the bankruptcy reorganization of two of the three major U.S. auto companies. The restructuring and partial nationalization of General Motors and Chrysler was the only alternative to immediate bankruptcy and collapse. For U.S. autoworkers, it was, as many of them called it, a "stay of execution." The collapse of the pension fund of even one of these auto companies would have sunk the entire U.S. system for financing pension funding. Even for the government, as the "executive committee for the capitalist class," there were no easy solutions. By virtue of its nature and its history, the state had to protect private property under the new and volatile conditions.

The social effects of the crisis have cut deeply, especially for a country that fancies itself a "middle-class" paradise. Both the spreading economic distress and the government action are destabilizing the country politically and ideologically.

All this points to a revolutionary moment in the U.S. Not yet revolutionary in the sense of one class ready to challenge another class in a struggle to seize political power – but revolutionary in the sense of a qualitatively new economic foundation for the spreading problems and the growing struggle. This struggle may appear to be a continuation of the same old struggle against the injustices and inequalities of capitalism. But today the foundation of the problems is new – and the struggle to resolve them holds new potential.

(2)   How is this new and different in the U.S. today?

To fully realize the potential of the emerging struggle in the U.S., we also need to look at the emergence of new social forces, developing changes in the state, and some historical particularities that shape the development of struggle and consciousness.

Rising social forces

As labor-replacing technology makes its way from one sector of the economy to another, capital simply does not need the U.S. working class in the same way it did through the stages of early capitalism, maturing capitalism, and even the stage of imperialism. This is the basis for the destruction of the social contract that once guaranteed economic security for a large section of the working class and a safety net for the rest.

Both the ongoing economic revolution and the current economic crisis are intensifying the polarization of wealth and poverty in the U.S. today. The last five years have seen the steepest drop in homeownership; in the last three months of 2009, almost one million families lost their homes to foreclosure. Among the world's 21 "economically developed" countries, only Mexico and Turkey have higher rates of poverty than does the U.S.

But the poverty today is not just more of yesterday's poverty. We are seeing something new. There is emerging and growing in the U.S. a mass of dispossessed whose very survival is threatened, who are dispossessed from the means of their survival, and whose lives are being destroyed. This mass is formed from all sections of society — not only from the poor who have lived for generations at the margins of employment, but also from among the educated and professional workers, from among the well paid industrial workers.

At the core of this growing mass is a class formed by the new, labor-replacing means of production. Expelled from the productive process, they are barely hanging on to temporary or part-time jobs or condemned to caste-like conditions at the margins of society. Though not consciously articulated as such, the actual demands of this emerging class cannot be met without the abolition of private property. This class can be formed politically in the struggles over how to resolve the life-threatening social questions of the day.

Changes in the state

As long as capitalism was expanding and the productive capitalists relied on the industrial workers of the U.S., the state protected the connection between these two classes — in production and in society. Even as U.S. capital was exported to less developed countries, the capitalists still depended on a stable domestic work force; super-exploitation abroad paid for privileged lives for a large section of the U.S. population.

Now something new is happening. Where at one time capital needed the national state to enforce laws and policies that would help guarantee a reliable domestic workforce and market, today capital demands that such barriers be removed. And so they are — through a variety of neoliberal policies around labor, trade, capital, and social reproduction.

Private corporations set public policy. Public assets and functions are privatized — transferring property from public to private ownership. Education and utilities (such as water) are turned over to corporations; public policy on health

care is bought and paid for by the insurance, medical, and pharmaceutical industries. The sovereignty of private property is destroying society.

The changes in the state today are not simply a bad situation getting worse. The bailout was the largest transfer of resources from public to private hands; but it was more than a simple give-away. In the U.S., the state, the corporations, the banks and speculators are merging to enforce the political power of those who own the means of accumulating wealth based on a system of exploitation. The current economic crisis is further strengthening the stranglehold of finance capital, particularly in its speculative form, over the processes of global capitalism and the state in the U.S. and globally.

As the machinery of force and political power of one class over another, the state is being reconstructed to serve the needs of private property under today's qualitatively new economic conditions. The state does not transform all at once. But the direction is clear. The U.S. state is undergoing a profound shift — from protecting the social relations of capitalism and the market within one country, to expanding the market and protecting the sanctity of private property globally, while abandoning responsibility for society nationally.

We are, at this point, crossing a political line. On the one hand, the state is based on the relations of production of capitalism. On the other hand, the forces of production are coming into conflict and antagonism with those relations of production. The state, by its history and purpose, has to guard the laws and sanctity of private property and protect the wealth of the capitalists, even as its base is being destroyed.

All this makes for a very unstable and volatile situation. Such a contradictory situation cannot be managed except by the subjective — by the force of the state. Fascism arises out of such crisis. As is clear in the current crisis, the state has no alternative but to intervene in the economy. Far from a subjective policy or decision, fascism arises to ensure the continuity of private property as the forces of production evolve. Taking shape in the U.S. today as the unity and merging of the government and the corporations, fascism in this historical moment is emerging out of the attempts to solve the problems posed by economic revolution.

In the U.S., fascism is developing in historically evolved American forms. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to fully assess these specific forms and their roots, it is important to note that the ideological preparation of the American people need not be in the language of fascism *per se.* The history of the color question in the U.S. gives the ruling class a time-tested mechanism and ideological framework for diverting economic distress away from a class perspective. It is already happening.

Like other powerful forces rattling society and rupturing our lives, these changes in the state are the beginning of a new process. An individual or a particular presidential administration may advance or retard the process of change; they may affect the features of the process. But they are not the cause of today's political changes.

Historical particularities

In the U.S. today, the shift from the dominance of forms of property resting on the exploitation of labor is beginning to destabilize everything in society based on the connection between the capitalist class and the working class in production – including the state. A comparison of different historical periods points to the potential of these changes to open new channels of thinking.

Before the rise and growth of modern industry in Europe, land was the predominant form of private property; the state took a form and performed a role that promoted the accumulation of wealth by landowners. The lines separating the means of exploitation and the means of political control were not clearly drawn. Feudal lords not only accumulated wealth based on the labor of the serfs on their land; they also commanded armies and collected taxes directly from those who lived on that land. Their privileges and authority in the state apparatus derived directly and openly from their ownership of land.

The rising capitalist class needed a new form of state – one that protected its property and wealth, based on the exploitation of labor. Thus, in one country after another, the rise of industry and a new class of exploiters ushered in an epoch of political revolutions that reconstructed the state. The modern state played a coercive role in the interests of the ruling class, but the coercion by both the state and the market had the appearance of being separate from the capitalist class itself (see Wood 2003).

This history of the modern state's appearance of class neutrality is particularly significant given the history of the U.S. and actions the state has to take today. Here we had no feudal relations and, therefore, no history and tradition of political struggle by one class against another. Now, in face of the financial crash and threats to the global market, the government had to act – openly in the interests of the banks and other corporations. In the U.S. today, the state has to shed its supposed class neutrality and step in boldly and shamelessly on the side of private property. The social response is still misdirected and confused, but the doors to political engagement and political consciousness of class interests are opening.

Changes in the state today are rooted in the qualitative changes in the economy wrought by the economic revolution of the current epoch. This reality is evident not only in the government bailout of investment banks, but also in the Federal government's bankruptcy-restructuring lay-off of autoworkers. The ongoing privatization of education, public utilities, and other formerly public resources and services further strips the state of responsibilities to the public and reveals its political core as an organ of force and intimidation for the ruling class.

In popular consciousness, the response is taking the form of anti-bank anger and a growing awareness of the hold of the corporations on U.S. social and political life. From students laden with college loan debt, from laid-off workers, from families facing home foreclosure – the immediate common response to the bank bailout was, "If you can bail out the banks, you can bail us out, too." The

current explosion of racist backlash agitates this widespread economic distress and warranted fear. Its aim is to divert people from their actual interests and to cultivate a mass base for the fascist reorganization of American society and the state. With its direct intervention into the economy on behalf of private property, the government has opened a political battlefield. The struggle today is over whose interests the government will serve — the public or the corporations?

Despite all the glorification of past periods of militant trade unionism and social struggle, the U.S. has not really seen the objective foundation for class struggle since the defeat of Reconstruction after the Civil War. The War had essentially been between two wings of the capitalist class, with the ideological battle lining up first over the Union and ultimately over slavery. The military and political defeat of the South made possible a class unity of Northern industrial and financial capitalists with the Southern planters — to ensure the suppression of the freed slaves. With the backing of the Northern capitalists and the withdrawal of the Federal troops, Southern planters enlisted terrorist mobs (the Ku Klux Klan and others) and violently overthrew the Reconstruction governments. These state and local governments had been elected by Freedmen and pro-Union white Southerners after the North's defeat of the South in the Civil War. The capitalist class — in neither the North nor the South — could not allow any challenge these democratically elected governments might pose to the private property interests of the Southern planters.

That violent overthrow of one class by another was the prelude to and prerequisite for a century of imperialism, expansion of the capitalist system, and growing benefits for a politically decisive section of the U.S. working class. This period saw some spikes in the level of social struggle. But the capitalist system was expanding, and the economic struggle could deliver significant reforms and concessions. Although the interests of labor and capital were contradictory, these two classes were locked together — both in production and in a growing, expanding system. Class struggle was not an objective reality or possibility.

We are, today, seeing the emergence of something qualitatively new. Objective conditions for class struggle are maturing.

Ramifications for struggle and strategy today

The underlying economic trends are challenging old means of ruling class control, closing off old channels of struggle, and opening new possibilities for consciousness.

As the social and political ramifications of the economic revolution take shape in the U.S., they put the social struggle on a new foundation. The economic revolution is destabilizing old parameters of struggle, consciousness, and ideology.

Government action in response to the cyclical economic crisis is opening new avenues of political contention — over whose interests the government serves

and what should be done to meet the needs of the broad masses of people facing economic distress. The emerging situation cries out for strategy as well as struggle. It sets the objective conditions to develop independence from the political parties of the capitalist class.

A key expression of this process is a shift in the political center of gravity in the U.S. During the stages of expansion of capitalism, the wages and generous benefits of the stably employed industrial worker tied the whole working class to the ruling class politically and ideologically. Unions could struggle for and negotiate better wages and working conditions for a significant section of the stably employed workers. In the economic expansion after World War II, the social bribe for this large middle-income section of the population also bought a mechanism of control and passivity of the broader population.

The question of health care shows how this means of control has worked – and what is happening as it breaks down. The U.S. has no history of government responsibility for health care for the population as a whole. Starting in the 1950s, unions could negotiate generous health care and pensions for their members; the broader movement did not have the means to hold the government responsible for these social necessaries.

As the effects of the economic revolution have worked their way through society over the last few decades, these well paid workers – especially in the industrial sector – have been laid off from their jobs. With health care benefits tied to jobs rather than government responsibility, these formerly privileged workers are suddenly in the same vulnerable position as those who never had health benefits.

In 2010, California, Illinois, and many other states are sounding the alarm of budget deficits in order to justify the breaking of wage and benefit contracts negotiated by public sector unions – and to justify sharp cuts in social services. School children face shorter school years in worse schools. Cash-starved cities are selling public resources. Private investors are buying up everything from schools and public utilities to toll bridges and parking meters on public streets.

Under these conditions, there is very little the unions and the broader economic struggle can do to improve – or even maintain – the terms of the sale of labor power and the basic necessities of life. As the interests of private property strengthen their grip on every aspect of social life, the economic routes of struggle – by unions and grassroots organizations of civil society – are closing.

Bourgeois options do not address the problems tearing apart people's lives. None of the solutions within the system speak to the real problems of those being dispossessed of the American Dream and its social safety net. The events of the day pose the big questions. At the guts of U.S. society, today's problems are real and immediate: for one-industry, Rust Belt towns that lose their one industry; for the families who can afford neither medications for one child with chronic health problems nor college tuition for another; for the millions facing foreclosure and joining the already homeless and forgotten millions. Mobilizing the fight for the "lesser evil" bourgeois solution is no longer a defensible route.

As the thinking of the masses of people loses its roots in the past prosperity, qualitatively new thinking becomes possible on a broad scale. Economic changes are polarizing society in the U.S. The politics of the country will, ultimately, polarize along these economic lines.

Each social disaster – the destruction of the environment, a rapacious health care system, the spread of foreclosures and homelessness, a dysfunctional education system – is a battle over who the government protects. The demands of the developing movement are beginning to challenge the sanctity of private property. The battle over each burning issue opens the possibility to develop the capacity of the growing class – whose interests are the abolition of private property – to act for itself politically. Objective forces are shifting. The tide is turning. But this process will not take a smooth and direct route.

The rabid racist, fascist agitation against the healthcare reform expresses the ugly history that will shape the context for the politicizing and polarizing battles that lie ahead. Every bit of rot and confusion gets thrown into the brew, along with the real needs of people for healthcare. In the U.S. today, the resolution of every social question comes up against the block of private property, including the rights of the corporations and the hold they have on the laws and politics of this country. The struggle for the resolution of these questions will have to fight its way through messy and ideologically dangerous confusion. The polarization of ideology and politics – along lines that reflect the polarization of the economy – has to fight its way through all that mess. We in the U.S. are in for some difficult times. Polarization in the economy is the beginning of social change; polarization of ideology is the beginning of the fight for the political capacity to resolve the problems of society.

The current moment holds tremendous revolutionary potential. This potential can be realized only by expanding and developing the consciousness of the combatants. This has to be done from deep within the day-to-day struggles around concrete needs – housing, water, health care, education, environment, and more – and within the convergence spaces of social movements and public discourse.

The human mind is capable of revolutionary change before society as a whole goes through its transformative convulsions and leap. Whether the direction of that change is in the interests of private property or the interests of humanity depends on the development of consciousness of social and class interests. Now is the time to educate and unleash the human mind – to embrace the opportunity that history offers.

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Organizing for the anti-capitalist transition

David Harvey

Editors' introduction

David Harvey's piece "Organizing for the anti-capitalist transition" was prepared for the tenth anniversary of the World Social Forum, published by its Seminário internacional 10 anos depois: desafios e propostas para um outro mundo possível *in December 2009* <*http://seminario10anosdepois.wordpress.com/*>, *widely circulated online and given as a talk in Porto Alegre in January 2010. It is reproduced here for non-profit educational purposes and with the kind permission of David Harvey.*

Interface *decided to organise a debate around this piece in the context of this issue's theme on "Crises, social movements and revolutionary transformations", and solicited responses from movement participants and researchers around the world. We left it up to respondents whether they wished to engage directly with Harvey's arguments or rather use the piece as a springboard for their own reflections on the topic. [LC]*

The historical geography of capitalist development is at a key inflexion point in which the geographical configurations of power are rapidly shifting at the very moment when the temporal dynamic is facing very serious constraints. Three-percent compound annual growth (generally considered the minimum satisfactory growth rate for a healthy capitalist economy) is becoming less and less feasible to sustain without resort to all manner of fictions (such as those that have characterized asset markets and financial affairs over the last two decades). There are good reasons to believe that there is no alternative to a new global order of governance that will eventually have to manage the transition to a zero growth economy. If that is to be done in an equitable way, then there is no alternative to socialism or communism. Since the late 1990s, the World Social Forum became the center for articulating the theme "another world is possible." It must now take up the task of defining how another socialism or communism is possible and how the transition to these alternatives is to be accomplished. The current crisis offers a window of opportunity to reflect on what might be involved.

The current crisis originated in the steps taken to resolve the crisis of the 1970s. These steps included:

(a) The successful assault upon organized labor and its political institutions while mobilizing global labor surpluses, instituting labor-saving technological changes, and heightening competition. The result has been global wage repressions (a declining share of wages in total GDP almost everywhere) and the

creation of an even vaster disposable labor reserve living under marginal conditions.

(b) Undermining previous structures of monopoly power and displacing the previous stage of (nation-state) monopoly capitalism by opening up capitalism to far fiercer international competition. Intensifying global competition translated into lower non-financial corporate profits. Uneven geographical development and inter-territorial competition became key features in capitalist development, opening the way towards the beginnings of a hegemonic shift of power particularly but not exclusively towards East Asia.

(c) Utilizing and empowering the most fluid and highly mobile form of capital – money capital – to reallocate capital resources globally (eventually through electronic markets) thus sparking deindustrialization in traditional core regions and new forms of (ultra-oppressive) industrialization and natural resource and agricultural raw material extractions in emergent markets. The corollary was to enhance the profitability of financial corporations and to find new ways to globalize and supposedly absorb risks through the creation of fictitious capital markets.

(d) At the other end of the social scale, this meant heightened reliance on "accumulation by dispossession" as a means to augment capitalist class power. The new rounds of primitive accumulation against indigenous and peasant populations were augmented by asset losses of the lower classes in the core economies (as witnessed by the sub-prime housing market in the US which foisted a huge asset loss particularly upon African American populations).

(e) The augmentation of otherwise sagging effective demand by pushing the debt economy (governmental, corporate, and household) to its limits (particularly in the USA and the UK but also in many other countries from Latvia to Dubai).

(f) Compensating for anemic rates of return in production by the construction of a whole series of asset market bubbles, all of which had a Ponzi character, culminating in the property bubble that burst in 2007-8. These asset bubbles drew upon finance capital and were facilitated by extensive financial innovations such as derivatives and collateralized debt obligations.

The political forces that coalesced and mobilized behind these transitions had a distinctive class character and clothed themselves in the vestments of a distinctive ideology called neoliberal. The ideology rested upon the idea that free markets, free trade, personal initiative, and entrepreneurialism were the best guarantors of individual liberty and freedom and that the "nanny state" should be dismantled for the benefit of all. But the practice entailed that the state must stand behind the integrity of financial institutions, thus introducing (beginning with the Mexican and developing countries debt crisis of 1982) "moral hazard" big time into the financial system. The state (local and national) also became increasingly committed to providing a "good business climate" to attract investments in a highly competitive environment. The interests of the people were secondary to the interests of capital, and in the event of a conflict

between them, the interests of the people had to be sacrificed (as became standard practice in IMF structural adjustments programs from the early 1980s onwards). The system that has been created amounts to a veritable form of communism for the capitalist class.

These conditions varied considerably, of course, depending upon what part of the world one inhabited, the class relations prevailing there, the political and cultural traditions, and how the balance of political-economic power was shifting.

So how can the left negotiate the dynamics of this crisis? At times of crisis, the irrationality of capitalism becomes plain for all to see. Surplus capital and surplus labor exist side by side with seemingly no way to put them back together in the midst of immense human suffering and unmet needs. In midsummer of 2009, one third of the capital equipment in the United States stood idle, while some 17 per cent of the workforce were either unemployed, enforced part-timers, or "discouraged" workers. What could be more irrational than that!

Can capitalism survive the present trauma? Yes. But at what cost? This question masks another. Can the capitalist class reproduce its power in the face of the raft of economic, social, political, geopolitical, and environmental difficulties? Again, the answer is a resounding "yes." But the mass of the people will have to surrender the fruits of their labor to those in power, to surrender many of their rights and their hard-won asset values (in everything from housing to pension rights), and to suffer environmental degradations galore, to say nothing of serial reductions in their living standards, which means starvation for many of those already struggling to survive at rock bottom. Class inequalities will increase (as we already see happening). All of that may require more than a little political repression, police violence, and militarized state control to stifle unrest.

Since much of this is unpredictable and since the spaces of the global economy are so variable, then uncertainties as to outcomes are heightened at times of crisis. All manner of localized possibilities arise for either nascent capitalists in some new space to seize opportunities to challenge older class and territorial hegemonies (as when Silicon Valley replaced Detroit from the mid-1970s onwards in the United States) or for radical movements to challenge the reproduction of an already destabilized class power. To say that the capitalist class and capitalism can survive is not to say that they are predestined to do so nor does it say that their future character is given. Crises are moments of paradox and possibilities.

So what will happen this time around? If we are to get back to three-percent growth, then this means finding new and profitable global investment opportunities for $1.6 trillion in 2010 rising to closer to $3 trillion by 2030. This contrasts with the $0.15 trillion new investment needed in 1950 and the $0.42 trillion needed in 1973 (the dollar figures are inflation adjusted). Real problems of finding adequate outlets for surplus capital began to emerge after 1980, even with the opening up of China and the collapse of the Soviet Bloc.

 The difficulties were in part resolved by creation of fictitious markets where speculation in asset values could take off unhindered. Where will all this investment go now?

Leaving aside the undisputable constraints in the relation to nature (with global warming of paramount importance), the other potential barriers of effective demand in the market place, of technologies, and of geographical/geopolitical distributions are likely to be profound, even supposing, which is unlikely, that no serious active oppositions to continuous capital accumulation and further consolidation of class power materialize. What spaces are left in the global economy for new spatial fixes for capital surplus absorption? China and the ex-Soviet bloc have already been integrated. South and Southeast Asia is filling up fast. Africa is not yet fully integrated but there is nowhere else with the capacity to absorb all this surplus capital. What new lines of production can be opened up to absorb growth? There may be no effective long-run capitalist solutions (apart from reversion to fictitious capital manipulations) to this crisis of capitalism. At some point quantitative changes lead to qualitative shifts and we need to take seriously the idea that we may be at exactly such an inflexion point in the history of capitalism. Questioning the future of capitalism itself as an adequate social system ought, therefore, to be in the forefront of current debate.

Yet there appears to be little appetite for such discussion, even among the left. Instead we continue to hear the usual conventional mantras regarding the perfectibility of humanity with the help of free markets and free trade, private property and personal responsibility, low taxes and minimalist state involvement in social provision, even though this all sounds increasingly hollow. A crisis of legitimacy looms. But legitimation crises typically unfold at a different pace and rhythm to that of stock markets. It took, for example, three or four years before the stock market crash of 1929 produced the massive social movements (both progressive and fascistic) after 1932 or so. The intensity of the current pursuit by political power of ways to exit the present crisis may have something to do with the political fear of looming illegitimacy.

The last thirty years, however, has seen the emergence of systems of governance that seem immune to legitimacy problems and unconcerned even with the creation of consent. The mix of authoritarianism, monetary corruption of representative democracy, surveillance, policing and militarization (particularly through the war on terror), media control and spin suggests a world in which the control of discontent through disinformation, fragmentations of oppositions, and the shaping of oppositional cultures through the promotion of NGOs tends to prevail with plenty of coercive force to back it up if necessary.

The idea that the crisis had systemic origins is scarcely mooted in the mainstream media (even as a few mainstream economists like Stiglitz, Krugman, and even Jeffrey Sachs attempt to steal some of the left's historical thunder by confessing to an epiphany or two). Most of the governmental moves to contain the crisis in North America and Europe amount to the perpetuation of business as usual which translates into support for the capitalist class. The "moral hazard" that was the immediate trigger for the financial failures is being

taken to new heights in the bank bailouts. The actual practices of neoliberalism (as opposed to its utopian theory) always entailed blatant support for finance capital and capitalist elites (usually on the grounds that financial institutions must be protected at all costs and that it is the duty of state power to create a good business climate for solid profiteering). This has not fundamentally changed. Such practices are justified by appeal to the dubious proposition that a "rising tide" of capitalist endeavor will "lift all boats" or that the benefits of compound growth will magically "trickle down" (which it never does except in the form of a few crumbs from the rich folks' table).

So how will the capitalist class exit the current crisis and how swift will the exit be? The rebound in stock market values from Shanghai and Tokyo to Frankfurt, London, and New York is a good sign, we are told, even as unemployment pretty much everywhere continues to rise. But notice the class bias in that measure. We are enjoined to rejoice in the rebound in stock values for the capitalists because it always precedes, it is said, a rebound in the "real economy" where jobs for the workers are created and incomes earned. The fact that the last stock rebound in the United States after 2002 turned out to be a "jobless recovery" appears to have been forgotten already. The Anglo-Saxon public in particular appears to be seriously afflicted with amnesia. It too easily forgets and forgives the transgressions of the capitalist class and the periodic disasters its actions precipitate. The capitalist media are happy to promote such amnesia.

China and India are still growing, the former by leaps and bounds. But in China's case, the cost is a huge expansion of bank lending on risky projects (the Chinese banks were not caught up in the global speculative frenzy but now are continuing it). The overaccumulation of productive capacity proceeds apace, and long-term infrastructural investments, whose productivity will not be known for several years, are booming (even in urban property markets). And China's burgeoning demand is entraining those economies supplying raw materials, like Australia and Chile. The likelihood of a subsequent crash in China cannot be dismissed but it may take time to discern (a long-term version of Dubai). Meanwhile the global epicenter of capitalism accelerates its shift primarily towards East Asia.

In the older financial centers, the young financial sharks have taken their bonuses of yesteryear and collectively started boutique financial institutions to circle Wall Street and the City of London, to sift through the detritus of yesterday's financial giants to snaffle up the juicy bits and start all over again. The investment banks that remain in the US — Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan — though reincarnated as bank holding companies have gained exemption (thanks to the Federal Reserve) from regulatory requirements and are making huge profits (and setting aside moneys for huge bonuses to match) out of speculating, dangerously using taxpayers' money in unregulated and still booming derivative markets. The leveraging that got us into the crisis has resumed big time as if nothing has happened. Innovations in finance are on the march as new ways to package and sell fictitious capital debts are being

pioneered and offered to institutions (such as pension funds) desperate to find new outlets for surplus capital. The fictions (as well as the bonuses) are back!

Consortia are buying up foreclosed properties, either waiting for the market to turn before making a killing or banking high value land for a future moment of active redevelopment. The regular banks are stashing away cash, much of it garnered from the public coffers, also with an eye to resuming bonus payments consistent with a former lifestyle while a whole host of entrepreneurs hover in the wings waiting to seize this moment of creative destruction backed by a flood of public moneys.

Meanwhile raw money power wielded by the few undermines all semblances of democratic governance. The pharmaceutical, health insurance, and hospital lobbies, for example, spent more than $133 million in the first three months of 2009 to make sure they got their way on health care reform in the United States. Max Baucus, head of the key Senate finance committee that shaped the health care bill, received $1.5 million for a bill that delivers a vast number of new clients to the insurance companies with few protections against ruthless exploitation and profiteering (Wall Street is delighted). Another electoral cycle, legally corrupted by immense money power, will soon be upon us. In the United States, the parties of "K Street" and of Wall Street will be duly re-elected as working Americans are exhorted to work their way out of the mess that the ruling class has created. We have been in such dire straits before, we are reminded, and each time, working Americans have rolled up their sleeves, tightened their belts, and saved the system from some mysterious mechanics of auto-destruction for which the ruling class denies all responsibility. Personal responsibility is, after all, for the workers and not for the capitalists.

If this is the outline of the exit strategy then almost certainly we will be in another mess within five years. The faster we come out of this crisis and the less excess capital is destroyed now, the less room there will be for the revival of long-term active growth. The loss of asset values at this conjuncture (mid 2009) is, we are told by the IMF, at least $55 trillion, which is equivalent to almost exactly one year's global output of goods and services. Already we are back to the output levels of 1989. We may be looking at losses of $400 trillion or more before we are through. Indeed, in a recent startling calculation, it was suggested that the US state alone was on the hook to guarantee more than $200 trillion in asset values. The likelihood that all of those assets would go bad is very minimal, but the thought that many of them could is sobering in the extreme. Just to take a concrete example: Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, now taken over by the US Government, own or guarantee more than $5 trillion in home loans, many of which are in deep trouble (losses of more than $150 billion were recorded in 2008 alone). So what, then, are the alternatives?

It has long been the dream of many in the world that an alternative to capitalist (ir)rationality can be defined and rationally arrived at through the mobilization of human passions in the collective search for a better life for all. These alternatives – historically called socialism or communism – have, in various times and places, been tried. In former times, such as the 1930s, the vision of

one or other of them operated as a beacon of hope. But in recent times they have both lost their luster, been dismissed as wanting, not only because of the failure of historical experiments with communism to make good on their promises and the penchant for communist regimes to cover over their mistakes by repression, but also because of their supposedly flawed presuppositions concerning human nature and the potential perfectibility of the human personality and of human institutions.

The difference between socialism and communism is worth noting. Socialism aims to democratically manage and regulate capitalism in ways that calm its excesses and redistribute its benefits for the common good. It is about spreading the wealth around through progressive taxation arrangements while basic needs — such as education, health care and even housing — are provided by the state out of reach of market forces. Many of the key achievements of redistributive socialism in the period after 1945, not only in Europe but beyond, have become so socially embedded as to be immune from neoliberal assault. Even in the United States, Social Security and Medicare are extremely popular programs that right-wing forces find it almost impossible to dislodge. The Thatcherites in Britain could not touch national health care except at the margins. Social provision in Scandinavia and most of Western Europe seems to be an unshakable bedrock of the social order.

Communism, on the other hand, seeks to displace capitalism by creating an entirely different mode of both production and distribution of goods and services. In the history of actually existing communism, social control over production, exchange, and distribution meant state control and systematic state planning. In the long run this proved to be unsuccessful though, interestingly, its conversion in China (and its earlier adoption in places like Singapore) has proven far more successful than the pure neoliberal model in generating capitalist growth for reasons that cannot be elaborated upon here. Contemporary attempts to revive the communist hypothesis typically abjure state control and look to other forms of collective social organization to displace market forces and capital accumulation as the basis for organizing production and distribution. Horizontally networked as opposed to hierarchically commanded systems of coordination between autonomously organized and self-governing collectives of producers and consumers are envisaged as lying at the core of a new form of communism. Contemporary technologies of communication make such a system seem feasible. All manner of small-scale experiments around the world can be found in which such economic and political forms are being constructed. In this there is a convergence of some sort between the Marxist and anarchist traditions that harks back to the broadly collaborative situation between them in the 1860s in Europe.

While nothing is certain, it could be that 2009 marks the beginning of a prolonged shakeout in which the question of grand and far-reaching alternatives to capitalism will step-by-step bubble up to the surface in one part of the world or another. The longer the uncertainty and the misery is prolonged, the more the legitimacy of the existing way of doing business will be questioned and the

more the demand to build something different will escalate. Radical as opposed to band-aid reforms to patch up the financial system may seem more necessary.

The uneven development of capitalist practices throughout the world has produced, moreover, anti-capitalist movements all over the place. The state-centric economies of much of East Asia generate different discontents (as in Japan and China) compared to the churning anti-neoliberal struggles occurring throughout much of Latin America where the Bolivarian revolutionary movement of popular power exists in a peculiar relationship to capitalist class interests that have yet to be truly confronted. Differences over tactics and policies in response to the crisis among the states that make up the European Union are increasing even as a second attempt to come up with a unified EU constitution is under way. Revolutionary and resolutely anti-capitalist movements are also to be found, though not all of them are of a progressive sort, in many of the marginal zones of capitalism. Spaces have been opened up within which something radically different in terms of dominant social relations, ways of life, productive capacities, and mental conceptions of the world can flourish. This applies as much to the Taliban and to communist rule in Nepal as to the Zapatistas in Chiapas and indigenous movements in Bolivia, and the Maoist movements in rural India, even as they are worlds apart in objectives, strategies, and tactics.

The central problem is that in aggregate there is no resolute and sufficiently unified anti-capitalist movement that can adequately challenge the reproduction of the capitalist class and the perpetuation of its power on the world stage. Neither is there any obvious way to attack the bastions of privilege for capitalist elites or to curb their inordinate money power and military might. While openings exist towards some alternative social order, no one really knows where or what it is. But just because there is no political force capable of articulating let alone mounting such a program, this is no reason to hold back on outlining alternatives.

Lenin's famous question "what is to be done?" cannot be answered, to be sure, without some sense of who it is might do it where. But a global anti-capitalist movement is unlikely to emerge without some animating vision of what is to be done and why. A double blockage exists: the lack of an alternative vision prevents the formation of an oppositional movement, while the absence of such a movement precludes the articulation of an alternative. How, then, can this blockage be transcended? The relation between the vision of what is to be done and why and the formation of a political movement across particular places to do it has to be turned into a spiral. Each has to reinforce the other if anything is actually to get done. Otherwise potential opposition will be forever locked down into a closed circle that frustrates all prospects for constructive change, leaving us vulnerable to perpetual future crises of capitalism with increasingly deadly results. Lenin's question demands an answer.

The central problem to be addressed is clear enough. Compound growth for ever is not possible and the troubles that have beset the world these last thirty years signal that a limit is looming to continuous capital accumulation that

cannot be transcended except by creating fictions that cannot last. Add to this the facts that so many people in the world live in conditions of abject poverty, that environmental degradations are spiraling out of control, that human dignities are everywhere being offended even as the rich are piling up more and more wealth (the number of billionaires in India doubled last year from 27 to 52) under their command, and that the levers of political, institutional, judicial, military, and media power are under such tight but dogmatic political control as to be incapable of doing much more than perpetuating the status quo and frustrating discontent.

A revolutionary politics that can grasp the nettle of endless compound capital accumulation and eventually shut it down as the prime motor of human history requires a sophisticated understanding of how social change occurs. The failings of past endeavors to build a lasting socialism and communism have to be avoided and lessons from that immensely complicated history must be learned. Yet the absolute necessity for a coherent anti-capitalist revolutionary movement must also be recognized. The fundamental aim of that movement is to assume social command over both the production and distribution of surpluses.

We urgently need an explicit revolutionary theory suited to our times. I propose a "co-revolutionary theory" derived from an understanding of Marx's account of how capitalism arose out of feudalism. Social change arises through the dialectical unfolding of relations between seven moments within the body politic of capitalism viewed as an ensemble or assemblage of activities and practices:

a) technological and organizational forms of production, exchange, and consumption

b) relations to nature

c) social relations between people

d) mental conceptions of the world, embracing knowledges and cultural understandings and beliefs

e) labor processes and production of specific goods, geographies, services, or affects

f) institutional, legal and governmental arrangements

g) the conduct of daily life that underpins social reproduction.

Each one of these moments is internally dynamic and internally marked by tensions and contradictions (just think of mental conceptions of the world) but all of them are co-dependent and co-evolve in relation to each other. The transition to capitalism entailed a mutually supporting movement across all seven moments. New technologies could not be identified and practices without new mental conceptions of the world (including that of the relation to nature and social relations). Social theorists have the habit of taking just one of these moments and viewing it as the "silver bullet" that causes all change. We have

technological determinists (Tom Friedman), environmental determinists (Jared Diamond), daily life determinists (Paul Hawken), labor process determinists (the autonomistas), institutionalists, and so on and so forth. They are all wrong. It is the dialectical motion across all of these moments that really counts even as there is uneven development in that motion.

When capitalism itself undergoes one of its phases of renewal, it does so precisely by co-evolving all moments, obviously not without tensions, struggles, fights, and contradictions. But consider how these seven moments were configured around 1970 before the neoliberal surge and consider how they look now, and you will see they have all changed in ways that re-define the operative characteristics of capitalism viewed as a non-Hegelian totality.

An anti-capitalist political movement can start anywhere (in labor processes, around mental conceptions, in the relation to nature, in social relations, in the design of revolutionary technologies and organizational forms, out of daily life, or through attempts to reform institutional and administrative structures including the reconfiguration of state powers). The trick is to keep the political movement moving from one moment to another in mutually reinforcing ways. This was how capitalism arose out of feudalism and this is how something radically different called communism, socialism, or whatever must arise out of capitalism. Previous attempts to create a communist or socialist alternative fatally failed to keep the dialectic between the different moments in motion and failed to embrace the unpredictabilities and uncertainties in the dialectical movement between them. Capitalism has survived precisely by keeping the dialectical movement between the moments going and constructively embracing the inevitable tensions, including crises, that result.

Change arises, of course, out of an existing state of affairs and it has to harness the possibilities immanent within an existing situation. Since the existing situation varies enormously from Nepal, to the Pacific regions of Bolivia, to the deindustrializing cities of Michigan and the still booming cities of Mumbai and Shanghai and the shaken but by no means destroyed financial centers of New York and London, so all manner of experiments in social change in different places and at different geographical scales are both likely and potentially illuminating as ways to make (or not make) another world possible. And in each instance it may seem as if one or other aspect of the existing situation holds the key to a different political future. But the first rule for a global anti-capitalist movement must be: never rely on the unfolding dynamics of one moment without carefully calibrating how relations with all the others are adapting and reverberating.

Feasible future possibilities arise out of the existing state of relations between the different moments. Strategic political interventions within and across the spheres can gradually move the social order onto a different developmental path. This is what wise leaders and forward-looking institutions do all the time in local situations, so there is no reason to think there is anything particularly fantastic or utopian about acting in this way. The left has to look to build alliances between and across those working in the distinctive spheres. An anti-

capitalist movement has to be far broader than groups mobilizing around social relations or over questions of daily life in themselves. Traditional hostilities between, for example, those with technical, scientific, and administrative expertise and those animating social movements on the ground have to be addressed and overcome. We now have to hand, in the example of the climate change movement, a significant example of how such alliances can begin to work.

In this instance the relation to nature is the beginning point, but everyone realizes that something has to give on all the other moments, and while there is a wishful politics that wants to see the solution as purely technological, it becomes clearer by the day that daily life, mental conceptions, institutional arrangements, production processes, and social relations have to be involved. And all of that means a movement to restructure capitalist society as a whole and to confront the growth logic that underlies the problem in the first place.

There have, however, to be some loosely agreed-upon common objectives in any transitional movement. Some general guiding norms can be set down. These might include (and I just float these norms here for discussion) respect for nature, radical egalitarianism in social relations, institutional arrangements based in some sense of common interests and common property, democratic administrative procedures (as opposed to the monetized shams that now exist), labor processes organized by the direct producers, daily life as the free exploration of new kinds of social relations and living arrangements, mental conceptions that focus on self-realization in service to others, and technological and organizational innovations oriented to the pursuit of the common good rather than to supporting militarized power, surveillance, and corporate greed. These could be the co-revolutionary points around which social action could converge and rotate. Of course this is utopian! But so what! We cannot afford not to be.

Let me detail one particular aspect of the problem which arises in the place where I work. Ideas have consequences and false ideas can have devastating consequences. Policy failures based on erroneous economic thinking played a crucial role in both the run-up to the debacle of the 1930s and in the seeming inability to find an adequate way out. Though there is no agreement among historians and economists as to exactly what policies failed, it is agreed that the knowledge structure through which the crisis was understood needed to be revolutionized. Keynes and his colleagues accomplished that task. But by the mid-1970s, it became clear that the Keynesian policy tools were no longer working at least in the way they were being applied, and it was in this context that monetarism, supply-side theory, and the (beautiful) mathematical modeling of micro-economic market behaviors supplanted broad-brush macro-economic Keynesian thinking. The monetarist and narrower neoliberal theoretical frame that dominated after 1980 is now in question. In fact it has disastrously failed.

We need new mental conceptions to understand the world. What might these be and who will produce them, given both the sociological and intellectual

malaise that hangs over knowledge production and (equally important) dissemination more generally? The deeply entrenched mental conceptions associated with neoliberal theories and the neoliberalization and corporatization of the universities and the media has played more than a trivial role in the production of the present crisis. For example, the whole question of what to do about the financial system, the banking sector, the state-finance nexus, and the power of private property rights cannot be broached without going outside of the box of conventional thinking. For this to happen will require a revolution in thinking, in places as diverse as the universities, the media, and government as well as within the financial institutions themselves.

Karl Marx, while not in any way inclined to embrace philosophical idealism, held that ideas are a material force in history. Mental conceptions constitute, after all, one of the seven moments in his general theory of co-revolutionary change. Autonomous developments and inner conflicts over what mental conceptions shall become hegemonic therefore have an important historical role to play. It was for this reason that Marx (along with Engels) wrote *The Communist Manifesto, Capital,* and innumerable other works. These works provide a systematic critique, albeit incomplete, of capitalism and its crisis tendencies. But as Marx also insisted, it was only when these critical ideas carried over into the fields of institutional arrangements, organizational forms, production systems, daily life, social relations, technologies, and relations to nature that the world would truly change.

Since Marx's goal was to change the world and not merely to understand it, ideas had to be formulated with a certain revolutionary intent. This inevitably meant a conflict with modes of thought more convivial to and useful for the ruling class. The fact that Marx's oppositional ideas, particularly in recent years, have been the target of repeated repressions and exclusions (to say nothing of bowdlerizations and misrepresentations galore) suggests that his ideas may be too dangerous for the ruling classes to tolerate. While Keynes repeatedly avowed that he had never read Marx, he was surrounded and influenced in the 1930s by many people (like his economist colleague Joan Robinson) who had. While many of them objected vociferously to Marx's foundational concepts and his dialectical mode of reasoning, they were acutely aware of and deeply affected by some of his more prescient conclusions. It is fair to say, I think, that the Keynesian theory revolution could not have been accomplished without the subversive presence of Marx lurking in the wings.

The trouble in these times is that most people have no idea who Keynes was and what he really stood for while the knowledge of Marx is negligible. The repression of critical and radical currents of thought, or to be more exact the corralling of radicalism within the bounds of multiculturalism, identity politics, and cultural choice, creates a lamentable situation within the academy and beyond, no different in principle to having to ask the bankers who made the mess to clean it up with exactly the same tools as they used to get into it. Broad adhesion to post-modern and post-structuralist ideas which celebrate the particular at the expense of big-picture thinking does not help. To be sure, the

local and the particular are vitally important and theories that cannot embrace, for example, geographical difference, are worse than useless. But when that fact is used to exclude anything larger than parish politics then the betrayal of the intellectuals and abrogation of their traditional role become complete.

The current populations of academicians, intellectuals, and experts in the social sciences and humanities are by and large ill-equipped to undertake the collective task of revolutionizing our knowledge structures. They have, in fact, been deeply implicated in the construction of the new systems of neoliberal governmentality that evade questions of legitimacy and democracy and foster a technocratic authoritarian politics. Few seem predisposed to engage in self-critical reflection. Universities continue to promote the same useless courses on neo-classical economic or rational choice political theory as if nothing has happened and the vaunted business schools simply add a course or two on business ethics or how to make money out of other people's bankruptcies. After all, the crisis arose out of human greed and there is nothing that can be done about that!

The current knowledge structure is clearly dysfunctional and equally clearly illegitimate. The only hope is that a new generation of perceptive students (in the broad sense of all those who seek to know the world) will clearly see it so and insist upon changing it. This happened in the 1960s. At various other critical points in history student-inspired movements, recognizing the disjunction between what is happening in the world and what they are being taught and fed by the media, were prepared to do something about it. There are signs, from Tehran to Athens and onto many European university campuses of such a movement. How the new generation of students in China will act must surely be of deep concern in the corridors of political power in Beijing.

A student-led and youthful revolutionary movement, with all of its evident uncertainties and problems, is a necessary but not sufficient condition to produce that revolution in mental conceptions that can lead us to a more rational solution to the current problems of endless growth.

What, more broadly, would happen if an anti-capitalist movement were constituted out of a broad alliance of the alienated, the discontented, the deprived, and the dispossessed? The image of all such people everywhere rising up and demanding and achieving their proper place in economic, social, and political life is stirring indeed. It also helps focus on the question of what it is they might demand and what it is that needs to be done.

Revolutionary transformations cannot be accomplished without at the very minimum changing our ideas, abandoning cherished beliefs and prejudices, giving up various daily comforts and rights, submitting to some new daily life regimen, changing our social and political roles, reassigning our rights, duties, and responsibilities, and altering our behaviors to better conform to collective needs and a common will. The world around us – our geographies – must be radically re-shaped as must our social relations, the relation to nature, and all of the other moments in the co-revolutionary process. It is understandable, to

some degree, that many prefer a politics of denial to a politics of active confrontation with all of this.

It would also be comforting to think that all of this could be accomplished pacifically and voluntarily, that we would dispossess ourselves, strip ourselves bare, as it were, of all that we now possess that stands in the way of the creation of a more socially just, steady-state social order. But it would be disingenuous to imagine that this could be so, that no active struggle will be involved, including some degree of violence. Capitalism came into the world, as Marx once put it, bathed in blood and fire. Although it might be possible to do a better job of getting out from under it than getting into it, the odds are heavily against any purely pacific passage to the promised land.

There are various broad fractious currents of thought on the left as to how to address the problems that now confront us. There is, first of all, the usual sectarianism stemming from the history of radical action and the articulations of left political theory. Curiously, the one place where amnesia is not so prevalent is within the left (the splits between anarchists and Marxists that occurred back in the 1870s, between Trotskyists, Maoists, and orthodox Communists, between the centralizers who want to command the state and the anti-statist autonomists and anarchists). The arguments are so bitter and so fractious as to sometimes make one think that more amnesia might be a good thing. But beyond these traditional revolutionary sects and political factions, the whole field of political action has undergone a radical transformation since the mid-1970s. The terrain of political struggle and of political possibilities has shifted, both geographically and organizationally.

There are now vast numbers of non-governmental organizations (NGO's) that play a political role that was scarcely visible before the mid-1970s. Funded by both state and private interests, populated often by idealist thinkers and organizers (they constitute a vast employment program), and for the most part dedicated to single-issue questions (environment, poverty, women's rights, anti-slavery and trafficking work, etc), they refrain from straight anti-capitalist politics even as they espouse progressive ideas and causes. In some instances, however, they are actively neoliberal, engaging in privatization of state welfare functions or fostering institutional reforms to facilitate market integration of marginalized populations (microcredit and microfinance schemes for low-income populations are a classic example of this).

While there are many radical and dedicated practitioners in this NGO world, their work is at best ameliorative. Collectively, they have a spotty record of progressive achievements, although in certain arenas, such as women's rights, health care, and environmental preservation, they can reasonably claim to have made major contributions to human betterment. But revolutionary change by NGO is impossible. They are too constrained by the political and policy stances of their donors. So even though, in supporting local empowerment, they help open up spaces where anti-capitalist alternatives become possible and even support experimentation with such alternatives, they do nothing to prevent the re-absorption of these alternatives into the dominant capitalist practice: they

even encourage it. The collective power of NGOs in these times is reflected in the dominant role they play in the World Social Forum, where attempts to forge a global justice movement, a global alternative to neoliberalism, have been concentrated over the last ten years.

The second broad wing of opposition arises out of anarchist, autonomist, and grassroots organizations (GROs) which refuse outside funding even as some of them do rely upon some alternative institutional base (such as the Catholic Church with its "base community" initiatives in Latin America or broader church sponsorship of political mobilization in the inner cities of the United States). This group is far from homogeneous (indeed there are bitter disputes among them pitting, for example, social anarchists against those they scathingly refer to as mere "lifestyle" anarchists). There is, however, a common antipathy to negotiation with state power and an emphasis upon civil society as the sphere where change can be accomplished. The self-organizing powers of people in the daily situations in which they live has to be the basis for any anti-capitalist alternative. Horizontal networking is their preferred organizing model. So-called "solidarity economies" based on bartering, collectives, and local production systems is their preferred political economic form. They typically oppose the idea that any central direction might be necessary and reject hierarchical social relations or hierarchical political power structures along with conventional political parties. Organizations of this sort can be found everywhere and in some places have achieved a high degree of political prominence. Some of them are radically anti-capitalist in their stance and espouse revolutionary objectives and in some instances are prepared to advocate sabotage and other forms of disruption (shades of the Red Brigades in Italy, the Baader Meinhof in Germany, and the Weather Underground in the United States in the 1970s). But the effectiveness of all these movements (leaving aside their more violent fringes) is limited by their reluctance and inability to scale up their activism into large-scale organizational forms capable of confronting global problems. The presumption that local action is the only meaningful level of change and that anything that smacks of hierarchy is anti-revolutionary is self-defeating when it comes to larger questions. Yet these movements are unquestionably providing a widespread base for experimentation with anti-capitalist politics.

The third broad trend is given by the transformation that has been occurring in traditional labor organizing and left political parties, varying from social democratic traditions to more radical Trotskyist and Communist forms of political party organization. This trend is not hostile to the conquest of state power or hierarchical forms of organization. Indeed, it regards the latter as necessary to the integration of political organization across a variety of political scales. In the years when social democracy was hegemonic in Europe and even influential in the United States, state control over the distribution of the surplus became a crucial tool to diminish inequalities. The failure to take social control over the production of surpluses and thereby really challenge the power of the capitalist class was the Achilles heel of this political system, but we should not forget the advances that it made even if it is now clearly insufficient to go back

to such a political model with its social welfarism and Keynesian economics. The Bolivarian movement in Latin America and the ascent to state power of progressive social democratic governments is one of the most hopeful signs of a resuscitation of a new form of left statism.

Both organized labor and left political parties have taken some hard hits in the advanced capitalist world over the last thirty years. Both have either been convinced or coerced into broad support for neoliberalization, albeit with a somewhat more human face. One way to look upon neoliberalism, as was earlier noted, is as a grand and quite revolutionary movement (led by that self-proclaimed revolutionary figure, Margaret Thatcher) to privatize the surpluses or at least prevent their further socialization.

While there are some signs of recovery of both labor organizing and left politics (as opposed to the "third way" celebrated by New Labor in Britain under Tony Blair and disastrously copied by many social democratic parties in Europe) along with signs of the emergence of more radical political parties in different parts of the world, the exclusive reliance upon a vanguard of workers is now in question as is the ability of those leftist parties that gain some access to political power to have a substantive impact upon the development of capitalism and to cope with the troubled dynamics of crisis-prone accumulation. The performance of the German Green Party in power has hardly been stellar relative to their political stance out of power and social democratic parties have lost their way entirely as a true political force. But left political parties and labor unions are significant still, and their takeover of aspects of state power, as with the Workers' Party in Brazil or the Bolivarian movement in Venezuela, has had a clear impact on left thinking, not only in Latin America. The complicated problem of how to interpret the role of the Communist Party in China, with its exclusive control over political power, and what its future policies might be about is not easily resolved either.

The co-revolutionary theory earlier laid out would suggest that there is no way that an anti-capitalist social order can be constructed without seizing state power, radically transforming it, and re-working the constitutional and institutional framework that currently supports private property, the market system, and endless capital accumulation. Inter-state competition and geoeconomic and geopolitical struggles over everything from trade and money to questions of hegemony are also far too significant to be left to local social movements or cast aside as too big to contemplate. How the architecture of the state-finance nexus is to be re-worked along with the pressing question of the common measure of value given by money cannot be ignored in the quest to construct alternatives to capitalist political economy. To ignore the state and the dynamics of the inter-state system is therefore a ridiculous idea for any anti-capitalist revolutionary movement to accept.

The fourth broad trend is constituted by all the social movements that are not so much guided by any particular political philosophy or leanings but by the pragmatic need to resist displacement and dispossession (through gentrification, industrial development, dam construction, water privatization,

the dismantling of social services and public educational opportunities, or whatever). In this instance the focus on daily life in the city, town, village, or wherever provides a material base for political organizing against the threats that state policies and capitalist interests invariably pose to vulnerable populations. These forms of protest politics are massive.

Again, there is a vast array of social movements of this sort, some of which can become radicalized over time as they more and more realize that the problems are systemic rather than particular and local. The bringing together of such social movements into alliances on the land (like the Via Campesina, the landless peasant movement in Brazil, or peasants mobilizing against land and resource grabs by capitalist corporations in India) or in urban contexts (the right to the city and take back the land movements in Brazil and now the United States) suggests the way may be open to create broader alliances to discuss and confront the systemic forces that underpin the particularities of gentrification, dam construction, privatization, or whatever. More pragmatic rather than driven by ideological preconceptions, these movements nevertheless can arrive at systemic understandings out of their own experience. To the degree that many of them exist in the same space, such as within the metropolis, they can (as supposedly happened with the factory workers in the early stages of the industrial revolution) make common cause and begin to forge, on the basis of their own experience, a consciousness of how capitalism works and what it is that might collectively be done. This is the terrain where the figure of the "organic intellectual" leader, made so much of in Antonio Gramsci's work, the autodidact who comes to understand the world firsthand through bitter experiences but shapes his or her understanding of capitalism more generally, has a great deal to say. To listen to peasant leaders of the MST in Brazil or the leaders of the anti-corporate land grab movement in India is a privileged education. In this instance the task of the educated alienated and discontented is to magnify the subaltern voice so that attention can be paid to the circumstances of exploitation and repression and the answers that can be shaped into an anti-capitalist program.

The fifth epicenter for social change lies with the emancipatory movements around questions of identity – women, children, gays, racial, ethnic, and religious minorities all demand an equal place in the sun – along with the vast array of environmental movements that are not explicitly anti-capitalist. The movements claiming emancipation on each of these issues are geographically uneven and often geographically divided in terms of needs and aspirations. But global conferences on women's rights (Nairobi in 1985 that led to the Beijing declaration of 1995) and anti-racism (the far more contentious conference in Durban in 2001) are attempting to find common ground, as is true also of the environmental conferences, and there is no question that social relations are changing along all of these dimensions at least in some parts of the world. When cast in narrow essentialist terms, these movements can appear to be antagonistic to class struggle. Certainly within much of the academy they have taken priority of place at the expense of class analysis and political economy. But the feminization of the global labor force, the feminization of poverty

almost everywhere, and the use of gender disparities as a means of labor control make the emancipation and eventual liberation of women from their repressions a necessary condition for class struggle to sharpen its focus. The same observation applies to all the other identity forms where discrimination or outright repression can be found. Racism and the oppression of women and children were foundational in the rise of capitalism. But capitalism as currently constituted can in principle survive without these forms of discrimination and oppression, though its political ability to do so will be severely curtailed if not mortally wounded in the face of a more unified class force. The modest embrace of multiculturalism and women's rights within the corporate world, particularly in the United States, provides some evidence of capitalism's accommodation to these dimensions of social change (including the environment), even as it re-emphasizes the salience of class divisions as the principle dimension for political action.

These five broad tendencies are not mutually exclusive or exhaustive of organizational templates for political action. Some organizations neatly combine aspects of all five tendencies. But there is a lot of work to be done to coalesce these various tendencies around the underlying question: can the world change materially, socially, mentally, and politically in such a way as to confront not only the dire state of social and natural relations in so many parts of the world, but also the perpetuation of endless compound growth? This is the question that the alienated and discontented must insist upon asking, again and again, even as they learn from those who experience the pain directly and who are so adept at organizing resistances to the dire consequences of compound growth on the ground.

Communists, Marx and Engels averred in their original conception laid out in *The Communist Manifesto*, have no political party. They simply constitute themselves at all times and in all places as those who understand the limits, failings, and destructive tendencies of the capitalist order as well as the innumerable ideological masks and false legitimations that capitalists and their apologists (particularly in the media) produce in order to perpetuate their singular class power. Communists are all those who work incessantly to produce a different future to that which capitalism portends. This is an interesting definition. While traditional institutionalized communism is as good as dead and buried, there are by this definition millions of de facto communists active among us, willing to act upon their understandings, ready to creatively pursue anti-capitalist imperatives. If, as the alternative globalization movement of the late 1990s declared, 'another world is possible' then why not also say 'another communism is possible'? The current circumstances of capitalist development demand something of this sort, if fundamental change is to be achieved.

These notes draw heavily on my forthcoming book, The Enigma of Capital, *to be published by Profile Books in April 2010.*

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A new and unsettling force:
the strategic relevance of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign

Wille Baptist

Abstract

This essay moves from the fact, demonstrated in every major struggle, that all oppressed people, including the poor can think, speak and fight for themselves. It endorses David Harvey's critique of capitalism but suggests that effective resistance to capitalism will have to be led by the poor. This will require a a new and unsettling force, a united struggle of the poor which will, in turn, require a massive program of training poor people as political leaders.

My name is Willie Baptist, like a Baptist Church. I am formerly homeless and still poor. I have been poor all my life and have been organizing among poor people in the United States for over 40 years. I participated as one of the organizers in the National Union of the Homeless nationwide organizing drive back in the late 1980s and early 1990s. We developed chapters in 25 cities across the US with over 15,000 members and it t was perhaps the first time that homeless people organized homeless people on this scale. I also served as the Education Director for the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, an organization of poor and homeless white, Black and Latino families based in Kensington, the poorest community in the entire state of Pennsylvania, for 10 years. I have worked to build networks of grassroots organizations fighting poverty and connect them with international struggles of the poor including the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) of Brazil and the Abahlali baseMjondolo Shackdwellers movement of South Africa. I currently serve as the Poverty Initiative Scholar-in-Residence at Union Theological Seminary and the Coordinator of the Poverty Initiative's Poverty Scholars Program.

All of my life experiences and all my life studies and all of the experiences of this growing national and international network of which I am a part confirm at least one important and inescapable point. That is, that we the poor can think for ourselves, we can speak for ourselves, we can fight for ourselves, and we can lead not only for ourselves but that we can take part in world leadership.

The majority of the world's population are the poor of every age, gender, educational background, ethnic group and color. There is somewhere between 3.5 to 4 billion human beings who are eking out a meager and miserable life globally. This is compared to some 400 to 500 billionaires who own and control most of the world's wealth and means of subsistence. We the poor are unlike the poor in past. We live and die under new conditions shaped by the new information technology, which has given humankind an unheard of productive

capability to end all poverty now and forever. Of course the political will is not there; there is only the complicity of complacency.

Poverty with all of its complexity is the defining issue of our time, particularly within the wealthiest nation in the world. In today's Great Recession, realities of growing poverty are soaking into American consciousness. While recent periods of economic growth overshadowed the poor—rarely portraying poor people as agents of change—poor leaders and their organizations waged successful campaigns to demand access to living wage jobs, healthcare, immigrant rights, workers rights, education reform, and housing. Today, emerging and veteran organizers stand poised to offer leadership to a broader movement to end poverty as more Americans face increasingly insecure times. In order to resolve this growing and defining problem, we need a movement to unravel not only poverty's manifestations, but also its roots and causes. Segments of our population most affected by poverty must be central in shaping both strategic questions and resolutions to this complex problem at the local, state, national and international levels.

Historically, successful social movements have been led by those most affected by the problems they are working to resolve. Slaves and ex-slaves led the anti-slavery movement; people of color led the Civil Rights Movement; women led the women's suffrage movement. In their own time, those very people struggled for recognition that the problem they were facing was immoral and their struggle was legitimate. They fought to be considered fit for leadership of such a movement themselves. Yet today, we recognize the moral evil of slavery, and the right – and necessity – of slave and ex-slaves to lead the struggle to end it.

The social position of the poor gives them the least stake in the economic *status quo*. And given the current economic and political direction of society this position of the poor anticipates the position of the mass of the population. Both these and other circumstances make the poor, whether they are yet aware of it or not, the leading social force for ending poverty and accordingly changing society and a system that creates poverty. Our mission to unite and organize the poor is essentially to raise their consciousness of their social position, shared across borders and lines of difference, thereby giving them greater mass influence and impact.

Based on my experience organizing amongst the poor for more than 40 years, I believe the crucial question today is: "what is the social force that has the potential if united to make fundamental social change?" I believe this question intersects with David Harvey's essay, "Organizing for the Anti-Capitalist Transition".

David Harvey's work is very important because he consistently goes deeper than the superficial discussions of policy that dominate much of left critique of the economy. His focus on the structure and dynamics of the economy is necessary if we are to understand the challenges of our times. It is Harvey's comprehensive survey of left social actors in this recent essay of his where I would like to make my intervention. While Harvey identifies the need to

coalesce five broad wings, tendencies and epicenters of anti-capitalist sentiment (including NGOs, anarchist GROs, traditional labor organizing and left political parties, those movements that resist displacement and dispossession, and emancipatory identity movements), I propose that a social movement to end poverty, and the system that creates it, led by the poor in the 'belly of the beast' - a core country of the capitalist world like the United States - represents our best hope for the future, especially if it is intimately linked to the struggle of the poor internationally.

The poor and dispossessed today differ from the poor and dispossessed of the past. They are compelled to fight under qualitatively new conditions and to creatively wield new weapons of struggle. In other words, the socio-economic position of the low waged, laid off, and locked out is not that of the industrial poor, the slave poor, or of the colonial poor of yesterday. The new poor embody all the major issues and problems that affect the majority of other strata of the country's population. Our growing ranks are filled with people economically "downsized" and socially dislocated from every walk of life. Therefore the massive uniting and organizing of the poor across color and all other lines has "a freedom and a power" to inspire and galvanize the critical mass of the American people needed to move this country toward the abolition of all poverty. The late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called this leading social force the "non-violent Army or 'freedom church' of the poor," about which more will be said shortly.

Any discussion of poverty and the poor that tends towards a very narrow definition of these terms falls into the stereotypes and images that are projected by the forces that are arrayed against us. To not have an accurate estimate of who are the poor and why they are poor would have us all descend into subjective and divisive personal judgments of who's poor and who's not. To leave out people who are in fact poor is to fall into the trap of the Powers That Be and their representatives that say that we should only be concerned with 'extreme poverty' and not all poverty. If you can't get the basic necessities of life, you're poor. A narrow definition of poverty further isolates and the divides the poor. When you have a narrow definition of poverty, it leads to separating the homeless poor from the day laborer poor from poor artists, obscuring what people have in common, when the task before us is to unite all the poor. The division of the growing ranks of the poor upholds the powerful stereotypes, which blind the main mass of the people from understanding the cause and cure of all poverty.

Presently, we are experiencing the wholesale economic destruction of the so-called "middle class" in the United States. This is huge in terms of U.S. domestic political power relations and strategy and tactics. This "middle class" is beginning to question the economic status quo. And this has major economic and political implications for the middle strata and poor globally. The point here is that the economic and social position of the poor is not one to be pitied and guilt-tripped about, but rather that it indicates the direction this country is

heading if nothing is done to change it. Poverty is devastating me today. It can hit you tomorrow.

If poverty is to be ended the minds of the bulk of the 300 million people that make up the U.S. need to be changed. The united actions of the poor across color lines break down stereotypes and unsettle the thinking of the mass of the people. We are building a big movement to solve a big problem, and we need a lot of leaders, coming from different social strata bringing different social skills and resources to carry this out. Central to the uniting and organizing of the poor as a social force is the identifying and training of massive numbers of leaders from the ranks of the poor. This has to be our point of concentration at this initial stage of building a movement broad enough to end poverty. However, for this very reason we must challenge every person, including those coming from other important social ranks, to commit themselves as leaders and to be trained as leaders as well. Only leaders can ensure the development of leaders. This is no easy task.

Here we must understand the strategic difference between the leadership of the poor as a social group and the leadership of individuals from the ranks of the poor as well as from other ranks. History and our hard won experiences have taught us a lot in this regard. Leadership of the poor as a social group is secured primarily through united actions and organization. The development of individual leaders is secured primarily through political education and training. The content of the development of individual leaders is the acquiring of the clarity, competence, and commitment necessary for the development of the leadership of the poor as a social group united around their immediate and basic human needs. For example, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who initiated the organizing of the historic Poor People's Campaign, was himself not poor. However he was a highly insightful and trained leader committed to organizing the poor across color lines and giving his life to the struggle to end all poverty everywhere. His words and work contributed greatly to the development of both kinds of leadership, social and individual. A very important lesson for us today from his life, especially his last years, is that we can and must develop "many Martins" especially from the ranks of the poor.

The problems of poverty today are not those of scarcity and limited productivity. They are the problems of increasing abandonment in the midst of increasing abundance. Today no one in the world has to be hungry. Today no one has to be homeless. No one should have to die from curable diseases. The tremendous economic and social wealth and tremendous production capacity we have today makes poverty and death from poverty immoral, unjust and insane. Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane FEMA (the U.S. government's disastrous response to Hurricane Katrina that continues to this day throughout the U.S. Gulf Coast) revealed the social fact that this poverty, immorality, injustice, and insanity exist here in the land of the free and the home of brave, here in the United States of America.

There are many people today who are beginning to awaken and to take up honestly with a strong sense of not simply charity but justice, the expanding

problem of poverty in the midst of plenty. However, there are those who either out of ignorance or out of a real lack of true compassion despite their crocodile tears and rhetoric to the contrary are moving quickly and loudly to "save the poor before the poor save themselves". They are presenting, or what we call "pimping" the plight of the poor, in such a way as to prevent or preempt the fight of the poor.

On August 11, 1965 some 60,000 to 100,000 people took to the streets of Watts, California in violent protest against inhuman conditions of poverty and police injustice. I was 17 years old then and I was one of the so called "looters" and "rioters" in that uprising. The 1965 Watts Rebellion of poor blacks unleashed the most violent social upheaval in this country since the Civil War, engulfing in flames over 300 major cities during the last half of the 1960s. These events shook everyone, including Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King. One summary he gave of these events was that these "riots were the voice of the unheard." Indeed through the "riots" this desperate voice of the poor black masses was heard around the world. However, Martin Luther King was concerned that this voice and the anger behind it needed to be more constructively and nonviolently channeled and that its message about the injustice of poverty in the midst of plenty needed to be made more clear and effective. This is what his 1968 Poor People's Campaign was all about. And this is what got him killed.

As opposed to the representatives of the Powers That Be, Martin Luther King did not see poor people as a threat. He saw them as "the least of these", "Gods Children". He saw them as a potentially powerful and positive force. He stated in December of 1967,

> "There are millions of poor people in this country who have very little, or even nothing, to lose. If they can be helped to take action together, they will do so with a freedom and a power that will be a new and unsettling force in our complacent national life..."

The Powers That Be have done a great disservice with regards to curriculum and the philosophy of education in the US. They've left out whole periods of history and obscured certain periods of history that have direct bearing on what we are trying to do today. The experience of Martin Luther King in the last period of his life is obscured. It is something that is pushed under the rug. Clearly up until a certain point in his development, he was a leader in the Civil Rights Movement that was focused on *de jure* racial apartheid in this country. But at a certain point towards the end of his life, he began to recognize that – even though they were able to get the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Right Act of 1965 passed - the black masses who were succumbing to economic exploitation couldn't benefit from the results of the Civil Rights Movement. He pointed out: What good is it to be able to go into a restaurant now since they've taken down the "whites only" sign if you can't afford a hamburger? Today you don't have the "whites only" sign in the front window of restaurants. You have another sign. It's the menu, and the menu has the different items and their costs. And if you can't afford what's on that menu, I don't care what color you are; there's no need for you to go in there.

King's recognition was a very significant development because it offers us the opportunity to move American thinking in a way that focuses on power shifts and social change. But we've got to grapple with this reality. Martin Luther King said "It didn't take a penny to integrate lunch counters in this country" (that is, to defeat *de jure* segregation). But when we talk about ending poverty, to paraphrase him, you're talking about a whole reconstruction of "economic and political power" relationships. He recognized that. And the Powers That Be saw that not only did he recognize that, but that he had begun to utilize his great international prestige to take actions that were a real political threat to them and their domestic and foreign policies. That's why he was killed; that was proven by the 1999 MLK assassination trial in Memphis, Tennessee – an event for which there was a virtual media black-out.

King recognized that for the load of poverty to be lifted, the thinking and behavior of a critical mass of the American people would have to be changed. To accomplish this change a "new and unsettling force" had to be formed. In late 1967, he described this force as a multi-racial "nonviolent army of the poor, a freedom church of the poor." In other words, the poor would have to be organized to take action together around their immediate and basic needs, thereby becoming a powerful social and political force capable of changing the terms of how poverty is understood, dispelling the myths and stereotypes upholding the mass complacency that leaves the root causes of poverty intact.

King proceeded to translate this analysis into activity. He got from behind the pulpit and hit the pavement, launching the organizing drive of the Poor People's Campaign. He brought people together, across racial and regional lines to plan for a new march to Washington. He aligned with the struggle of the poor and black sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. Their struggle for dignity, King suggested, was a dramatization of the issues taken up by the Poor People's Campaign—a fight by capable, hard workers against dehumanization, discrimination and poverty wages in the richest country in the world.

In a number of respects the Poor People's Campaign of 1968 anticipated the challenges of our times. We are in a time of acute economic crisis, both in the United States and globally. The acuteness of the crisis has revealed its unique chronic aspects as expressed in the impoverishment of increasing segments of the middle income strata, the so-called "middle class." Alongside rising hunger, homelessness and economic inequality we find hints of a growing protest movement at the grassroots level. At the same time, the current economic crisis has seriously questioned the prevailing ideological and theological orthodoxies, which have defined the limits of the "realistically" possible for at least the last forty years.

I agree with David Harvey's assessment that the global financial collapse has shown that economic arrangements are contingent and fallible, and that we can and must legitimately imagine new and different ways to structure economic institutions. I would add however that without a movement issuing specifically from the bottom demanding a more just set of arrangements, it is unlikely that the current crisis will be resolved in a direction qualitatively different than that

of the past two decades, which saw a historically unprecedented redistribution of wealth upward. An accounting of the lessons of King's Poor People's Campaign and a study of their application to the contemporary struggles of the dislocated and dispossessed is thus both timely and necessary.

Concerned about the lack of careful and systematic study of the Poor People's Campaign—both its goals and the reasons for its demise—the Poverty Initiative at Union Theological Seminary decided to concentrate much of its energies on study and historical analysis of King's last years. This project brought together leaders from different poor communities across the U.S. who agreed to join this effort mostly because they felt that networking with other community and religious leaders would greatly strengthen their struggles and organizations. This joint exploration led to the Poverty Initiative's decision to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Poor People's Campaign with the development of a Poverty Scholars Program. With these leaders, the Poverty Initiative began by identifying and connecting with local organizing work in impoverished communities and holding strategic dialogues. Learning from the crippling effects of King's assassination, it becomes clear that there is a need to develop many "Martin Luther Kings." Such leaders do not develop naturally—they must be systematically educated and trained.

The Poverty Scholars Program is the cornerstone of the Poverty Initiative, reflecting its mission to raise up "generations of religious and community leaders committed to building a movement, led by the poor, to end poverty," —a mission inspired by the historical and strategic conclusions King arrived at about the poor united across color lines being "a new and unsettling force."

One thing that's very crucial in this period is the role of education and consciousness raising. What I've learned in my experiences in organizing is that building socio-political movement is about more than simply mobilizing bodies. It's essentially about moving minds and hearts. And education is central, especially in an information age. The technological revolution I alluded to earlier has created the ability to impact people's worldviews and ultimately influence people's political wills, which is what we're trying to get at. Today, unlike any other period, these influences work like a 24/7 netwar against the poor as the first line of attack against all of us.

In looking at the way you fight today as opposed to how we fought yesterday, the question of the relationship of education to organizing is more intimate and integral. You've got to talk as you walk. You've got to teach as you fight. You've got to learn as you lead. These things are inseparable to the problem of movement organizing, and I think the Saul Alinsky community organizing influence and some of the trade union organizing influences have separated those questions for social movements in the U.S. These approaches tend to de-emphasize the importance of education and thus miss out on the opportunity of using the daily struggles as a school to elevate consciousness particularly in terms of leadership development for a broad social movement.

I can give you an example of this need for education and analysis as well as the creativity and ingenuity of the poor from 1993 during the homeless organizing. We had formed a Homeless Union in Houston, Texas, so we had some notoriety because we had done the kinds of things that we needed to do in terms of organizing from service programs like job programs, to protests that brought attention to the issues. We were known for moving families in the dead of winter into empty HUD housing that was deteriorating. It was civil disobedience basically, bringing attention to the conditions and trying to get some kind of response in terms of negotiations. So groups from time to time would ask us to come in to help them organize.

A group in Austin, Texas asked us to come in to deal with a situation where there were no programs to deal with people who had been laid off and then were evicted because they couldn't pay their rent. Austin had massive numbers of homeless families living in the downtown area in vacant lots, in alleyways, and in structures no bigger than doghouses. We saw it when we walked the streets. They were trying to figure out what to do, so we exchanged experiences, sharing what we had done in other cities to bring attention to the issue and break our isolation. Then we divided up into research groups. Homeless people became researchers, looking at different areas of the city to find out the extent of the problem, the cities priorities, how that found expression, and so on.

One of the research groups went to the city council and got a hold of the budget. They looked at every item on the budget and found that there was nothing being allocated to assist people who were being evicted--no housing programs. What they did find though was a curious item on the budget--monies allocated for the purchase of Canadian Geese to the tune of $800 per goose. The geese that you see downtown that the yuppies and buppies do lunch with and throw bread at, they pay for those bad boys. I didn't know that. That was one of the reports on Austin's budget priorities.

Based on that analysis and research we came up with an action plan. Every city has a historic district where someone important did something important-- some famous personality came down and used the bathroom or something and they now have a historical marker. We identified this historic district in downtown Austin with these mansions where important people resided, and they have tours where you can come and visit these mansions. Based on our research, we decided to move into one of the mansions. The idea was to bring attention to the issue, so we called the police and the media to tell them about it. The news vans and the police cars race to the scene. With the news cameras rolling the police jump out of the cars with their guns out, come knock on the door, and yell "come out, we know you're in there, open the door, come out of there". For a moment there's complete silence. Finally the door slowly opens and you see a brother and sister holding one of the geese at knifepoint, and they say "if you come one step closer this goose is cooked". You know they held the media attention for two weeks discussing what kind of priorities we have when we don't put human lives and human beings first. Out of that struggle they were able to build connections with the trade union leaders, religious leaders and

students. They were able to solve the problem of their isolation and expand their network based on their research, analysis and leadership.

About the author

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"Daily life" not a "moment" like the rest: notes on Harvey's "Organizing for the anti-capitalist transition"

A K Thompson

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There's something sobering about taking stock. Coming to terms with the enormity of a problem, cataloguing the resources at our disposal, daring to dream, and plotting a course out of the storm by fixing our sights on that sun rising in the sky of history: these *should* be the habits of highly effective radicals. However, as David Harvey rightly points out in his provocative "Organizing for the Anti-Capitalist Transition," we are currently living through a moment when the exact opposite appears to be true. And so, while the current capitalist crisis *should* be pushing "the future of capitalism itself" to "the forefront of ... debate," the sad truth is that there's "little appetite for such discussion, even among the left."

I know the truth should hurt. But even as I wrote that paragraph, I thought about deleting it.

It ruffled my feathers, and the rebuke flew from my mouth before the words hit the page: surely Harvey is overstating the problem. True, the crisis of capitalist legitimacy that threatened to overwhelm the system in 2008 may be on the wane for the countless millions who rely on *Fox* for their news of the world. But can the same really be said for "the left?" For those of us who have devoted our lives to infusing that category with substance, the current crisis (and the possibilities it's opened up!) can often seem like the *only* thing we talk about. And more: though they remain pitifully small, we shouldn't ignore the many new forms of anti-capitalist analysis and action that have come into being as a result of the meltdown.

In Toronto, where I currently live, a newly formed workers' assembly has brought together diverse forces from the social movement and trade union left. It's stated objective has been to forge a fighting collective capable of exerting a power greater than that of its constituent parts. Along with its diligent assessment of opportunities for mobilization, the assembly has also committed itself to developing popular anti-capitalist educational resources for use in workplaces

and community spaces. As outlined on their website, their goals are:

> To bring together activists within the broad working class movement, ... [t]o share our understanding of the problems created by capitalism and the current economic crisis and the need to develop alternative visions ... [and] ... to identify and develop concrete strategies and organizational forms of struggle which defend working-class people's immediate needs and lay the groundwork for an equitable and democratic alternative to our present economic and political system.[1]

On the other side of the planet (and well outside the bounds of the familiar activist scene), mainstream Japanese book publishers have begun cashing in on the renewed popularity of works by Karl Marx. According to EastPress representative Yusuke Maruo, "people are looking to Marx for answers to the problems with the capitalist society... Obviously, the recent global crisis suggests that the system isn't working properly." In 2008, EastPress issued a comic book version of *Capital*. It quickly became a hot commodity. According to Maruo, the publisher envisioned that the book would strike a chord with thirty-something office workers. It turns out that they were right.[2] A lover of both communist kitsch and sequential art, I'm still awaiting the North American edition.

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Depending on how broadly we set our criteria (and depending on how optimistic we might be feeling after a good demo or a few drinks), the number of possible entries to a catalogue like the one I just began assembling can seem inexhaustible. So why did I allow Harvey's assessment, recounted in the first paragraph, to stand?

The sad truth is that, despite their promise, current anti-capitalist experiments remain insignificant when measured against the monumental challenges we face. And though the dynamics of crisis may call taken-for-granted assumptions into question, there's no guarantee that these assumptions will be replaced with anything resembling a coherent program for change. Indeed, radical responses to crisis often tend to oscillate between an unstrategic immediatism and a fetishistic devotion to the challenging work of a "first instance" that, in fact, never ends.

To get a sense of these oscillations, it suffices to consider how, in response to the looming ecological catastrophe, forest defense activist Jeff Free Luers has advanced antithetical propositions as though the crisis itself reconciled them. Sentenced to 23 years for setting three SUVs ablaze in Oregon, Luers writes that the ecological crisis requires that we "smash it, break it, block it, lock down to it." In fact, Luers proclaims, "I don't care what you do or how you do it. Just stop it. Get out there and stop it" (2004: 8). However, a few pages later, Luers calls this

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[1] http://www.workersassembly.ca/contact

[2] "Japan goes manga over Karl Marx comics" *Seattle Times* (December 23, 2008). http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/nationworld/2008550877_marxcomic23.html

very same bravado into question. "Building community is the first phase of building effective revolutionary movement (it also takes a really long time...)" (2004: 16). Considered independently, both pronouncements appear coherent and wise. Taken together, however, it's difficult to ignore how profoundly unresolved they remain from the standpoint of strategy.

There's no doubt that crisis stimulates action. However, there's no guarantee that this action will be strategically coherent or consistent. We must therefore concede that, despite the enormity of the obstacles we face, the only thing worse than *doing nothing* is *doing anything*. It's therefore important that we contemplate (as Harvey does) Lenin's perennial question: what is to be done?

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But while I find Harvey's account of the current capitalist crisis to be for the most part correct, and while I think his typology of forces capable of partaking in the struggle to transform the world is for the most part accurate, I have some concerns with his presentation of the "co-revolutionary" theory of political transformation. According to Harvey, "social change arises through the dialectical unfolding of relations between seven moments within the body politic of capitalism." In order for this process to add up to a revolutionary transformation, it's crucial that the "political movement" move from "one moment to another in mutually reinforcing ways."

All of this sounds fine. Things get complicated, however, upon consideration of the divisions that Harvey draws between the seven "moments." According to Harvey, the co-revolutionary process must operate within and between 1) "technological and organizational forms of production, exchange and consumption," 2) "relations to nature," 3) "social relations between people," 4) "mental conceptions of the world," 5) "labor processes," 6) "institutional, legal, and governmental arrangements," and, finally, what he calls 7) "the conduct of daily life that underpins social reproduction." Harvey notes that each of these moments is dependent on and evolves with the others. Consequently (although he does not say so explicitly), the distinction between them is best understood as a formal-conceptual one rather than one grounded in social ontology.

I will concede the value that such an approach may have when trying to schematically convey the multiple intersecting aspects of this world. However, as a conceptualization of the *terrain of struggle*, I fear that such schematism is doomed to be inadequate. This is so not only because consideration of actual social relations reveals the extent to which the distinctions drawn between Harvey's different "moments" is arbitrary; it is also because – from the standpoint of social ontology – the conceptual categories that make up Harvey's schema are in no sense isomorphic or analogous. More specifically, I fear that Harvey's formalization of the seven moments misses the fact that what he calls "daily life" should, in fact, be granted analytic and strategic primacy.

In making this case, I'm aware that Harvey will likely dismiss me along with other social theorists that view one "moment" as the "'silver bullet' that causes all change." However, such a response must still contend with the fact that "daily life" is not a "moment" like the rest. Despite being cast as one term among others in Harvey's formal typology, "daily life" both predates and permeates all the others. It is their social base and their condition of possibility. And it's on this basis that it must be given both analytic and strategic primacy. This does not mean that the other moments are unimportant; however, it does mean that — if we are to understand them correctly — it's necessary to avoid describing (or engaging with) them solely from within the framework of their own conceptual relevancies.[3]

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In what follows, I highlight what I view to be the analytic centrality of daily life in Marxist thought. However, my objective is not simply to refurbish orthodoxy in the face of its inevitable decline. Instead, I raise the question of daily life's analytic importance in the hope of clarifying what I view to be its strategic significance for contemporary radicals. Significantly, the connection between daily-life-as-analysis and daily-life-as-strategy finds expression in Harvey's own contribution in his consideration of contemporary "anarchist, autonomist, and grass roots organizations." Despite their small size and political limitations, these formations are significant for their tendency to emphasize the importance of "daily situations" and for their "experiments with anti-capitalist politics." As such, I argue that they must be at the forefront of our strategic considerations when determining how to constitute a new anti-capitalist "we" in the global north.

But while the anarchist and autonomist formations mentioned by Harvey are unique in making daily life the basis of their anti-capitalism, it's not my intention to claim that these forces are in and of themselves sufficient. Nor do I believe that, when a broad anti-capitalist "we" is finally constituted, it will resemble these formations in any obvious sense. However, given the Left's limited energies and the enormity of the challenges we confront, I believe that it's necessary for us to

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[3] And here we are simply proceeding in accordance with Marx's own premises. For instance, in his analysis of estranged labor in the *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx outlines how "the premises of political economy" allowed him to demonstrate how political economy itself envisions the laborer reduced to the level of the commodity. Nevertheless, "political economy starts with the fact of private property but does not explain it to us. It expresses in general, abstract formulas the material process through which private property actually passes, and these formulas it then takes for laws. It does not comprehend these laws..." For this reason, Marx urges us to avoid returning to the "fictitious primordial condition" presupposed by political economy when it tries to explain the dynamic process it contemplates. "Such a primordial condition explains nothing; it merely pushes the question away into a gray nebulous distance" (1964: 106-107). It goes without saying that our objective in this instance is to do the opposite.

consider both what can be learned from these formations and how their insights might be extended and clarified in the process of constituting a broader anti-capitalist "we" capable of initiating a revolutionary transformation.

By infusing their consideration of the dynamics of everyday life with a deeply felt anti-capitalism, today's autonomists distinguish themselves from the other forces on Harvey's list. It's therefore not surprising that, when considered alongside "NGOs," "traditional labor organizations and left political parties," and "contemporary emancipatory movements focused on questions of identity," these formations show exceptional vitality. Whereas the other forces listed by Harvey have all (to varying degrees) been absorbed into the representational paradigm of liberal democracy, autonomists have been resolute in their disavowal of what some theorist's have called the politics of demand. As Harvey himself notes, they are marked by "a common antipathy to negotiation with state power and an emphasis upon civil society as the sphere where change can be accomplished."

What these groups lack in terms of coordination, scale, and discipline is offset by their robust – if primarily affective – conception of the promise and possibility of building, living, and loving in another world. Alongside those movements that Harvey identifies as fighting displacement and dispossession, contemporary autonomists have made the everyday a site of analysis and strategic engagement. However, unlike movements against displacement and dispossession, the anarchist and autonomist engagement with the everyday has not been "pragmatic." Instead, it has been informed by what Harvey calls a "particular political philosophy." And so, despite the possible emergence of "organic intellectuals" within the struggle against dispossession, it's only amongst autonomists that the material apperception of everyday reality is currently linked directly to an explicit theory of revolutionary change.

Whenever these movements have escaped the bounds of their own natural ecologies, the results have striking. It's therefore not surprising that, when considering the past few years, anarchist or autonomist inflections have marked many of the most intense and inspiring mobilizations against capitalism. Or, to say the same thing in a slightly more precise way: in their actions, these movements have managed to concoct an intoxicating mix of what Herbert Marcuse called a "biological hatred" of capitalism and a disavowal of political claim-making in favor of a (sometime naïve) conception of unmediated actualization.[4]

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[4] In the new "Political Preface" to *Eros and Civilization* penned in 1966, Marcuse recounts how, in the anti-colonial resistance movements, colonizing countries encountered "not only a social revolt in the traditional sense, but also an instinctual revolt – a biological hatred. The spread of guerilla warfare at the height of the technological century is a symbolic event: the energy of the human body rebels against intolerable repression and throws itself against the engines of repression" (1974: xix). Although readers may have misgivings about Marcuse's romanticism, it's hard to deny the similarity between the impulse to rebellion described by Marcuse and that felt by many contemporary radicals. It is in this light that we can make sense of John Holloway's (2002) decision to begin his assessment of the possibility of "changing the world without taking power" with an account of "the scream," that seemingly universal feeling of revolt against the present.

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The uprising in Greece at the end of 2008 and the ongoing wave of student occupations in the United States (to cite but two recent and prominent examples) are best understood in these terms. At the outset of the uprising in Greece, Valia Kaimaki reported in *Le Monde Diplomatique* that the revolt was being led by "the very young." This was because "daily life for most young Greeks is dominated by intensive schooling aimed at securing a university place... But once the lucky ones get there, they soon discover the reality of life after university: at best, a job at €700 ($1,000) a month." In this account, the connection drawn between daily life and analysis is explicit. But the emphasis on daily life permeated the movement's strategic considerations too.

As Kaimaki reports, everyday people in the riot zones intervened on behalf of those with whom they shared social bonds: "they have often tried to chase off the riot police. Small shopkeepers shout at them to get lost; passers-by wade in to try and rescue students they've arrested. Having understood they cannot keep their children at home, parents and grandparents join them on the streets in order to look after them."[5]

In the US, students involved in the occupation of the UC system have issued startling pronouncements that (despite their undeniably romantic inflection) have elaborated an analysis and a radical refusal of the capitalist catastrophe from the standpoint of their own situated experience. Here, for instance, is an account from *After the Fall*, a collection of communiqués from "Occupied California."

> Before the Fall we felt it briefly, in each hour and a half interval: the ten minute grace period between classes, waiting for a lecture to begin, assigning ourselves one uncomfortable chair amongst 130 other uncomfortable chairs... We are kept alive, vaccinated, some even plump, yes, but we feel our surplus status. Excess. Excessive. This excessiveness animates our underlying dissatisfaction... And yet in the Fall something broke. Students and staff made a different claim on the university...[6]

Historically speaking, the actions in Greece and the occupations in California find their most obvious antecedent in the uprisings of May '68. International in scope but expressed most vividly on the streets of Paris, these uprisings were notable for their politicization of daily life. Situationist agitator Raoul Vaneigem produced what remains one of the most provocative accounts of this emphasis: "People who talk about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life, without understanding what is subversive about love and what is

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[5] Kaimaki 2009

[6] http://afterthefallcommuniques.info/

positive in the refusal of constraints — such people have a corpse in their mouth"
(2003: 26).

The obvious connection between today's politicization of daily life and the events
of May '68 signals both promise and danger. As in 1968, the emphasis on the
everyday reveals how analysis can be materialized so as to constitute a "we" on
the grounds of an increasingly concrete universality. However, as a political
category, "the everyday" has always traced a hazardous course between concrete
reckoning and self-valorizing subjectivism. Indeed, the events of May '68 reveal
just how easily the tremendous energetic outbursts of a movement focused on
daily life might be reabsorbed by the shrewd maneuvers of constituted power and
the seemingly infinite flexibility of capitalism.[7] Given these hazards, it's necessary
to develop a clear analysis of (and clear strategic orientation to) the limitations of
current movement conceptions of the everyday.

However, the need to clarify doesn't arise from hazards alone. It also arises from
the recognition that the anarchist and autonomist emphasis on daily life provides
one of the most promising points of engagement for those interested in breaking
the Left's current impasse. As in 1968, it's likely that these forces, while perhaps
not objectively suited to leading a generalized and violent anti-capitalist
rebellion, are nevertheless well positioned to be its impetus.

As should by now be clear, by emphasizing the analytic and strategic primacy of
daily life, my intention is not simply to celebrate those groups that are, at present,
most preoccupied with this question. Indeed, the way that "daily life" gets taken
up in contemporary radical scenes often tends toward the self-valorizing
subjectivism mentioned above. As I've argued elsewhere,[8] this impulse finds its
roots not in revolutionary politics but rather in early 19th century romanticism. As
a radical expression of the antithetical pole of bourgeois consciousness, the
romantic orientation to daily life is wholly at odds with the demands of the class
war.

At best, movement romanticism provides a catalogue of wish images that can
remind people of the *reasons* they're struggling. At worst, it encourages forms of
self-valorization wholly commensurate with the logic of the market. As many now
recognize, the tragic outcome of the partial revolution of May '68 was that it
ended primarily by revolutionizing capital. For this reason, it's necessary to
clarify (both analytically and strategically) what we mean by "daily life."
Practically speaking, this means supporting the movement impulse to emphasize

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[7] As George Katsiaficas recounts in his definitive *The Imagination of the New Left*, "as the
popular base of the New Left became increasingly dissolved in avenues of purely personal
advancement and in the openings provided for the expression of professional dissent, tendencies
within the movement developed which, if anything, only served to deepen the popular
disillusionment with politics" (1987: 198).

[8] See Thompson (2010).

daily life while quarreling with its particular conceptions whenever these appear to be at odds with those demanded by the material conditions of struggle.

Despite their shortcomings, today's anarchist and autonomist formations are unique in simultaneously emphasizing daily life and anti-capitalism (it's a telling sign of the times that such an orientation has all but completely disappeared from today's trade unions). As such, it's necessary to take them very seriously. To be sure, it's likely that these formations will not be the dominant force in the new anti-capitalist "we." Nevertheless, as was the case in 1968, they remain the force most likely to ignite widespread opposition to capitalism's convenient – but ultimately untenable – answers.

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Since I'm not an economist, I've avoided commenting on Harvey's numeric descriptions of the current implosion. Nevertheless, as a radical who came of age during the triumphant and catastrophic ascent of neo-liberalism, I found his phenomenal description of this period to be spot on. At its highpoint, neo-liberalism managed to embody the contradictory logic of capitalism with a perfect and ferocious intensity. It was simultaneously more weightless and more brutally material than the remaining vestiges of the New Deal to which I clung without conviction. In response to the shake up, students of my generation began mobilizing against the wholesale transformation of the university. A few years later, I found this same cohort on the streets of Seattle and Quebec City.

Situated in the global north and shaped by the sallow habits of a middle class in decline, the activists with whom I organized had what can only be understood as a particular experience of what was going on. As with Camille de Toledo (who captured the dynamics of these years with great acuity in *Coming of Age at the End of History*), I felt that "the initial motivation behind the new spirit of revolt" wasn't so much economic as it was "respiratory" (2008: 9). Growing up in the neo-liberal heartland, the dynamics of late capitalism became real to me first and foremost through their symptomatic expression as claustrophobia. As was the case with so many others, respiratory distress was enough. I threw myself into struggle knowing that my life depended on it.

Still, many in my cohort harbored anxieties that their Zapatismo was fraudulent. After all, when compared to the plight of those locked in sweatshops or starving on the streets of glistening cosmopolitan wonderlands, our claustrophobia seemed like a poor little rich girl story. What was the connection between the pain in our chests and the far less sublime injuries endured by those who were unconditionally identified as enemies by neo-liberalism's playbook for overcoming the crisis of the 1970s? We didn't know. As was the case for many New Left activists a generation earlier, many of us ended up in the contradictory position of denouncing poverty while seeking to emulate the poor.[9] Rarely did we

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[9] For an account of this dynamic in the New Left, consult Martin Duberman (2002: 182).

consider that our own experience of neo-liberalism was both a sufficient cause for revolt and a sufficient point from which to devise a coherent analysis of the problem.

According to Harvey, the experience of neo-liberalism "varied considerably ... depending upon what part of the world one inhabited, the class relations prevailing there, the political and cultural traditions and how the political balance of political-economic power was shifting." From this account, we can see how, even though an overarching material process was reorganizing capitalist social relations all over the globe, people's *understanding* of that process arose first and foremost through their partial, situated, and phenomenal experience of it. The challenge for radicals, then, is to determine how situated experience (the stuff of "daily life," the only thing to which we have access in the first instance) might become the basis not only for developing a comprehensive understanding of the overarching process but also for forging a "we" from different but converging experiences of a common enemy.

Although he does not state it directly, Harvey's assessment of the opportunities opened up by the current crisis suggests that he recognizes that the discrete spheres of subject and object begin to coincide when people perceive a problem. It's on this basis that he can claim (perhaps a little too optimistically) that, "at times of crisis, the irrationality of capitalism becomes plain for all to see." On face value, this statement hardly seems contentious. What remains to be determined, however, is *how* people will come to recognize that the crisis is, in fact, a crisis. Indeed, this problem leads back to the paradox at the heart of Harvey's analysis: why *are* objective conditions in and of themselves insufficient for constituting a "resolute and sufficiently unified anti-capitalist movement?"

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As it turns out, recognizing the crisis is more challenging than it sounds. Whether it takes the form of "fetishistic disavowal" (as described by Slavoj Zizek) or "passive nihilism" (as described by Simon Critchley), people's capacity to live through a crisis without confronting it directly appears to be an enduring feature of experience in the capitalist present. And this should not surprise us. It suffices to recall that capitalism has, from its inception, been marked by dramatic bouts of self-destruction and dramatic reorganization. In other words, from the standpoint of quotidian capitalist social relations, "crisis" is not a crisis at all.[10] And though the current crisis has intensified the system's contradictions and has made its irrationality increasingly visible, Harvey's assertion that the quantitative accumulation of tension will — at its threshold — produce a qualitative transformation needs to be qualified in one important respect. Specifically, we

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[10] And here it suffices to recall Marx's assessment from *The Communist Manifesto*: "Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones" (1967:83).

need to recognize that the "quality" of this qualitative transformation rests (in the final instance) on the success of our efforts to make the thought of reconciliation with the present unbearable.

When left to its own devices, capitalism's "qualitative" transformations have always ended by being rehearsals of the eternal return. As Bertolt Brecht rightly observed, these "transformations" usually involved the Old parading around dressed up as the New. In this way, capitalism developed the means to enact a seemingly endless substitution and deferral. This process has infused the system with longevity. However, as Walter Benjamin has noted, "that things are 'status quo' *is* the catastrophe" (2006: 161). The trick for radicals, then, is to analytically seize upon the unbearable stuff of everyday life so as to strategically constitute a "we" on the most universal grounds imaginable.

Although those who have been most affected by the current crisis may seem like obvious candidates to place at the forefront of struggle, the qualitative transformation hinted at by Harvey can only arise from the recognition that — even in its moments of relative stability — capitalism is not good for anyone. This recognition played a key role in the May '68 uprising and in its rapid diffusion to all parts of society. From the demand that struggle focus not on acquiring more for alienated labor but rather on abolishing alienated labor itself to the universalist impulse underlying the proclamation that "*nous sommes tous indésirables*," the movement's recognition of social co-implication via the politicization of daily life was the precondition to all that came. It enabled the struggle to quickly overcome sectoral divisions and take on the dynamics of a general insurrection.

In light of this emphasis on politicizing daily life, and since Harvey's text stops just short of citing Lenin directly, it's useful to make the reference explicit. Here, then, is Lenin's account of how revolutionary consciousness must seize upon every moment of disquiet, regardless of where it emerges or who is affected: "Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected..."

> The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn ... to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata, and groups of the population. (1983:69)

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Applying Lenin's insight to the challenge raised by Harvey's analysis, our task becomes one of determining how people's situated experiences of complex trans-local social relations like neo-liberalism (or the current crisis) can provide them with a starting point from which to analytically materialize those relations in order to make them "plain for all to see." As already mentioned, Harvey perceives

"daily life" to be one of the seven key "moments" that constitute capitalist social relations. However, once this "moment" is considered alongside the others, it becomes clear that the distinction between them is formal-conceptual and not socio-ontological. Nevertheless, as a schematic account of capitalist social relations, Harvey's formal distinction remains useful since it highlights how people's finite and situated experiences are often organized in such a way as to call attention to one aspect of the puzzle at a time.

But as soon as this is recognized, it becomes clear that "daily life" – since it's the ground upon which these situated experiences transpire – does not and cannot bear any isomorphic relation to a category like "institutional, legal, and governmental arrangements." Indeed, the latter finds its precondition in the former. By transposing lived experience into a lexical frame enabling trans-local social coordination and regulation, the "institutional, legal, and governmental" is best understood as what feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990) has described as textually mediated relations of ruling.

Smith's approach allows us to recognize how relations of ruling are put together through concrete practices in local settings and how – despite their trans-local conceits and effects – these practices can be investigated from starting points within these settings. This is significant since it suggests that social actors located at different points can find a material basis for convergence through a common process of mapping and analyzing the trans-local social relations that affect them. Although these processes are only partially observable from any given point and in the first instance, Smith's method proposes a concrete means of making them knowable. And so, while it has rarely been an explicit consideration in her own work, Smith's institutional ethnography seems especially suited to the challenges of finding a stable ground for the development of meaningful coalitions.

Applied to our current investigation, Smith's method makes clear that "daily life" is both the analytic starting point for understanding "institutional, legal, and governmental arrangements" and the strategic basis upon which we can constitute a broad-based anti-capitalist "we" capable of challenging them. This may not seem contentious. However, as a manner of proceeding, it stands in sharp contrast to Harvey's strategy of constituting a "we" by advancing normative ideals to which he feels people might gravitate. To be clear, I think "respect for nature, radical egalitarianism in social relations, institutional arrangements based in some sense of common interests and common property, democratic administrative procedures," and "labor processes organized by the direct producers" all sound like good things. However, normative ideals will never constitute stable ground for anti-capitalist convergence. When considered alongside the concrete universality that can be derived from people's analytic reckoning with their experience of daily life, such ideals become superfluous.

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Although I've only provided its most general outlines, Smith's feminist sociology provides a useful starting point for considering how daily life can be engaged analytically and strategically as a terrain of struggle. Applying her method to our current problem, it becomes clear that the everyday is an important point of engagement for radicals interested in constituting a "we" capable of changing the world. Like Harvey, Smith acknowledges her debt to Marx. How, then, are we to make sense of their significantly different understandings of daily life? In order to answer this question, it's useful at this point to revisit some of Marx's own comments on the importance of the everyday.

Outlining his materialist conception of history in *The German Ideology*, Marx highlights how analysis must begin with "men, not in any fantastic isolation or rigidity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions." He goes on to note how, "as soon as this active life process is described, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts as it is with the empiricists (themselves still abstract), or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealists" (1947: 47-48). According to this perspective, understanding the world requires that we start with actual relations (and the people that animate them) rather than with conceptual abstractions.

Marx's emphasis on the "active life process" unfolding under "definite conditions" should not be confused with the idea that recounting experience is the whole of the investigation or that it somehow conveys "the truth" of the matter. Indeed, throughout his work, Marx highlights the distance between the immediate experience of social relations and their actual organization. For instance, in his account of "Rate and Mass of Surplus Value" in *Capital*, he notes that, "if we consider the process of production from the point of view of the simple labour-process, the labourers stand in relation to the means of production, not in their quality as capital, but as the mere means of and material of his own intelligent productive activity. In tanning, *e.g.*, he deals with the skins as his simple object of labour. It is not the capitalist's skin he tans…" (1977: 293).

Quipping aside, Marx's point is that understanding trans-local relations of domination and exploitation requires more than describing immediate experience. This is not because the situated account is "wrong" but rather because, in and of itself, it remains incomplete. Marx's challenge, then, is to devise a method by which (in this case) the means of production might become visible in its quality as capital. Doing this does not involve supplanting lived experience with correct concepts. Instead, it involves deriving concepts from experience itself. In short, seeing beyond surface appearances requires a particular relationship to concepts. Here, concepts are mobilized not to "explain" the world bur rather to provoke and organize investigations of those aspects of the world that aren't immediately perceptible.

This way of thinking about everyday experience is at odds with contemporary radical orthodoxies (where the emphasis is often placed on valorizing truths derived from immediate engagement). But these orthodoxies need to be

contested – not least because, by limiting our consideration to the immediacy of the everyday, we dissolve its revolutionary potential into subjective particularism. In contrast, when everyday experience is taken as the starting point for social research, it becomes possible to map trans-local social relations from different but converging points. In the final instance, this process yields a concrete universality in which everyone can see the expression of their own situated experience.

For the time being, however, the social relations that make up neo-liberalism and the current crisis are perceived as being outside of and prior to our experience of them. Consequently, our experience of these relations can often appear impressionistic and wholly contingent on our location or our normative ideals. Amidst this fragmentation, the Left has found it difficult to constitute a "we" capable of fighting for communism. Under these conditions, it's important to begin considering how what unites (or *could* unite) every one of us is the ultimate incommensurability of our experience under capitalism.

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Although I have great respect for his Marxism (and was, like many students of my generation, deeply moved by *The Condition of Postmodernity*), it's hard to ignore the fact that, in trying to assess our current situation, Harvey's account oscillates between the two epistemological habits critiqued by Marx in *The German Ideology*. In his analysis, one can detect traces of the abstract empiricism of bourgeois economics (an explicative category that, as Marx noted, itself needs explaining) and the equally abstract idealism of professed revolutionary norms. In order to get off this seesaw, it's necessary to begin instead from a dialectical analysis of the relationship between part and whole, between daily life and the trans-local processes that organize it.

As I've noted already, conceiving of the world in this way has been a central attribute of Marxist thinking. But despite Marx's insistence that research be conducted in this fashion, and despite the compelling extensions of this insight by Western Marxists through the course of the 20th century, "actually existing Marxism" (whether in the academy or in the various micro-party sects that Harvey rightly dismisses) has often been characterized by economist distortions. These distortions undermine our ability to see how people – in our actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions – might take history itself as the object of our labor.

It's useful to recall that, in *Capital*, Marx's analysis begins not with an overview of bourgeois economic theory and its inevitable blind spots (although he does get around to talking about these) but rather with a phenomenal description of the twofold character of the commodity. In other words, the ordinary experience of encountering something on the market becomes the starting point for an analysis that ends up extending to cover not only the whole stretch of the globe but also the whole of human history. The analysis of the economic logic of capital is thus

extracted from an experience that, despite being quotidian, nevertheless encapsulates the whole in metonymic form.

As mentioned above, this mode of proceeding has not always been recognized as being properly "Marxist." For his part, Louis Althusser went so far as to propose that *Capital* ought to begin not with the phenomenal encounter with the commodity (As Marx's own Table of Contents proposes) but rather with the "The General Formula for Capital" outlined at the beginning of Part II (2001: 52). But despite the pervasiveness of these distortions, the problem of the everyday cannot be ignored. It resurfaces with the intensity and resoluteness of a repressed phenomenon whenever a conceptual abstraction is probed to uncover its historical specificity.

In his *Critique of Everyday Life*, Henri Lefebvre provides what remains one of the most beautiful expressions of this premise. According to Lefebvre, "the simplest event — a woman buying a pound of sugar, for example — must be analyzed."

> To understand this simple event, it is not enough to merely describe it; research will disclose a tangle of reasons and causes, of essences and 'spheres': the woman's life, her biography, her job, her family, her class, her budget, her eating habits, how she uses money, her opinions and her ideas, the state of the markets, etc. Finally I will have grasped the sum total of capitalist society, the nation and its history. And although what I grasp becomes more and more profound, it is contained from the start in the original little event. So now I see the humble events of everyday life as having two sides: a little, individual, chance event — and at the same time an infinitely complex social event, richer than the many 'essences' it contains within itself. The social phenomenon may be defined as the unity of the two sides. It remains for us to explain why the infinite complexity of these events is hidden, and discover why — and this too is a part of their reality — they appear to be so humble. (2000: 57)

To this assessment, I need only add that our objective in the present must not only be to analyze but also to strategize. Strategy, however, should not be viewed as a discrete function; it arises from and is made possible by the interconnections forged and made visible through analysis. Considered together, these two processes allow us to begin imagining how we might constitute a "we" not on the basis of abstract ideals but rather on the solid foundation of lived experience.

Today, the political forces closest to actualizing this method are gathered amidst those that Harvey identifies as anarchists and autonomists. Although their conception of the political significance of daily life can sometimes appear to be dramatically at odds with what has been outlined above, they remain the most likely among actually existing Left forces to be moved by these arguments. As such, it's necessary for us to open up dialogues about the political importance of daily life in the context of the contemporary capitalist crisis within anarchist and autonomist spaces. The emphasis in these discussions should be placed primarily on the underlying continuity of experience under capitalism. Once this is established analytically, the discussion must be directed toward consideration of

how it can be leveraged strategically in the process of constituting a "we" broader than our presently pitiful numbers.

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Responding to Harvey:
It's all about organizing

Benjamin Shepard

It is hard not to concur with a great deal David Harvey's "Organizing for the Anti-Capitalist Transition," the notes for his new book *The Enigma of Capital*, especially the essay's implicit critique of neoliberalism. His basic point, of course, is given the current financial crisis capitalism as we know it appears headed down a one way superhighway toward oblivion. Yet what this unsustainable future looks like - no one is quite sure.   In the absence of a clear movement leading the charge, Harvey identifies a few of the obstacles, impediments, and limitations of current economic and organizational models. Of course, most of these are born of capitalist social arrangements, which increasingly separate the masses and classes. While effective theories of change tend to take shape as an interplay between any number of practices and theoretical assumptions, such programs only gain validity when they take shape on the ground, as living and breathing modes of lived theory and engagement (Duncombe 2003; Schram 2002). Some of the essay does this more than others. This short response to Harvey considers some of the essay's core arguments and assumptions in terms of current activist practices taking shape here in New York.

Obstacles

Probably the most compelling aspect of this essay is Harvey's succinct analysis of what has happened to capitalism since the 1970s. Much of this argument builds on his work over the last 15 years, particularly his 2005 *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* as well as his recent writings on 'the right to the city.' Through these works, the writer describes what has gone wrong and ways to addressing these conditions from the perspective of social movement activity. For the last decade, global justice activists around the world have declared 'another world is possible' the essay beings. "The current crisis offers a window of opportunity to reflect on what might be involved" Harvey suggests, sounding very much like a leader of the vanguard. Such movements could be well served by, "defining how another socialism or communism is possible and how the transition to these alternatives is to be accomplished."

Much of the current crisis was born of the steps used to address the economic crisis of the 1970s.   These include: a) a well choreographed assault of the labor movement and the business labor accord of the previous four decades, b) a global concentration of corporate power, with resources moving from the middle to the top tier of income distribution, c) an attack on the environment and on environmental protections born out of the movements from the early 1970s, "thus sparking de-industrialization in traditional core regions and new

forms of (ultra-oppressive) industrialization and natural resource and agricultural raw material extractions in emergent markets."

d) This environmental exploitation is followed by new forms of primitive accumulation, or "primitive globalization." This includes heightened reliance on "accumulation by dispossession" as a means to augment capitalist class power. Here, the poor are increasingly displaced from homes and communities, from New Orleans to Chicago to Brazil. The new rounds of primitive accumulation are augmented by asset losses of the lower classes. The sub-prime housing market in the US which meant huge losses of assets for African American populations was only the latest expression of this long term trend, born of red-lining and predatory capitalist practices dating back decades. (For a detailed review of the impact of red-lining on one community, see Wilder 2001).

e) The final ingredients include the growth of debt levels which were a disincentive to creating viable government-supported, safety net provisions to keep poor people from falling through the cracks. Reagan's first budget director famously noted that the long term budget deficit would be their administration's gift to future administrations which would have to govern within an environment of debt rather than in an environment in which there was cash to create programs that would limit the damage of the administration's assault on the gains of social movements from Civil Rights to the Environment. This phenomenon extends around the world. f) Given current circumstances, Harvey suggests that sustained 3% economic growth is no longer viable without a little creative accounting, or in his words "the construction of whole series of asset market bubbles, all of which had a Ponzi character, culminating in the property bubble that burst... These asset bubbles drew upon finance capital and were facilitated by extensive financial innovations such as derivatives and collateralized debt obligations." One needs to look no further than the current circumstances in Greece to find evidence in support of this claim (see Story et al. 2010).

Since the 1970s, these innovations have helped usher in a set of transitions which "had a distinctive class character and clothed themselves in the vestments of a distinctive ideology called neoliberal." This political philosophy, "rested upon the idea that free markets, free trade, personal initiative and entrepreneurialism were the best guarantors of individual liberty and freedom and that the 'nanny state' should be dismantled for the benefit of all." And the role of the state shifted into a subservient role in the support a better business climate. This impulse superseded human needs. "The interests of the people were secondary to the interests of capital and in the event of a conflict between them, the interests of the people had to be sacrificed...The system that has been created amounts to a veritable form of communism for the capitalist class." Here, the private ingests the public — be it hospitals, water, schools, and services — as the public sphere contracts and dwindles.

There are obvious limitations to this model. Capital can only accumulate so much. There are only so many trees which can be chopped down, bluefin tuna fished to extinction, or taxes to be cut. The polar ice caps are already melting

and 'weather events' related to global warming are only becoming more and more frequent. The last two "recoveries" failed to produce the jobs or wage based products to actually drive economic activity. "At times of crisis, the irrationality of capitalism becomes plain for all to see." As neoliberalism accelerates, it takes on increasingly an carcinogenic dynamic. The social body of cities, people, and the environment feel these effects in immediate ways. After-all, for this system to prevail, "the people will have to surrender the fruits of their labor to those in power, to surrender many of their rights and their hard-won asset values, and to suffer environmental degradations galore." Under this system working people are forced to cope with, "serial reductions in their living standards which means starvation for many of those already struggling to survive at rock bottom."

"All of that may require more than a little political repression, police violence and militarized state control to stifle unrest", Harvey notes, acknowledging the need for police forces maintain social order in an environment of exponential income stratification. After all, since fiscal crisis of the 1970s, governments have become increasingly tone deaf when it comes to responding to the sounds of social movements. Instead, we have witnessed "the creation of consent." "The mix of authoritarianism, monetary corruption of representative democracy, surveillance, policing and militarization, media control and spin suggests a world in which the control of discontent through disinformation, fragmentations of oppositions and the shaping of oppositional cultures." Here, "the promotion of NGOs tends to prevail with plenty of coercive force to back it up if necessary." Subsequently, "[m]ost of the governmental moves to contain the crisis in North America and Europe amount to the perpetuation of business as usual which translates into support for the capitalist class."

What to Do

So, what is to be done, muses Harvey? What are movements for social change to do? Writers, thinkers, and activists all seem to have different solutions. It is hard to imagine a more coherent articulation of what is wrong than what Harvey has spelled out. Yet for Harvey, the prescription for a solution becomes messier. "The uneven development of capitalist practices throughout the world has produced, moreover, anti-capitalist movements all over the place," Harvey writes acknowledging the "[h]orizontally networked as opposed to hierarchically commanded systems of coordination between autonomously organized and self-governing collectives" organized to respond and create do-it-yourself solutions to a myriad of these challenges. "But a global anti-capitalist movement is unlikely to emerge without some animating vision of what is to be done and why," argues Harvey.

Here in New York, he has linked a lifetime of writing, scholarship, and participation in social movements with Henri Lefebvre's call for a "The Right to the City" helping organize the Right to the City Alliance (www.righttothecity.org). Yet, the tension remains about how to connect such

analysis with movement action, especially when the writings of Henri Lefebvre seem miles away from the lived experiences of many activists on the ground. Just as Harvey diagnoses the problems with neoliberalism, he highlights the limitations with movement organizing, suggesting current movements have failed to advance effective alternative visions or solutions which in turn could ignite movements for change. His critique of current movements is searing. Here he suggests that current movements lack theoretical understanding or incoherent message or program; they fail to respect technical or administrative skills, instead relying on a compromised psychic prison like non-profit organizations (although much of the critique of non-governmental organizations is that they are over bureacratized, favoring administrative rather than direct action based solutions).

These are all generally legitimate (if somewhat contradictory) claims, yet they bring up the larger question of intellectuals and movements (see Duncombe 2003). Do movements need intellectual leaders or engaged practices, which effect everyday life? I would argue the former. Foucault long ago said movements do not need intellectuals to lead them. They do just fine by themselves (Foucault and Deleuze 1977). It is hard to disagree. This is not to suggest these are diametrically opposed points. They are not. You cannot swing a dead cat without hitting a graduate student or sociologist at many of the current global justice protests. "Grassroots leadership collectively requires many skills sets, and then more importantly the ability of participants to share their skill sets with each other," argues San Francisco organizer James Tracey (2010). "So yes intellectuals need to be PART of the leadership of movements-- but only one of many parts." Tracey describes leadership based on the group as a brain with multiple forms of intelligence and knowledge to be shared, not monopolized.

While Harvey honors the work of organizers as 'organic intellectuals', he still sees feels compelled to critique the collective intelligence of movement practices. Herein lies the tension. "The effectiveness of all these movements (leaving aside their more violent fringes) is limited by their reluctance and inability to scale up their activism into large-scale organizational forms capable of confronting global problems," observes Harvey after dismissing the current anti-corporate globalization movement's near allergic aversion to "negotiation with state power." Again, it is certainly hard to disagree with this sentiment. While the global justice movement has often been overly criticized for failing to effectively paint a picture of what "another world" might look like, it has often treated efforts to create alternative structures to the social welfare safety net provisions or services as a lesser calling to street fighting, or Storming the Bastille (see Davis 2002). Government can, in fact, support certain efforts aimed at change. Conversely, it is less productive to condemn those who would rather confront cops or dance in the street, to negotiating with the state. Creating change is not a zero sum game. As Brooke Lehman, the founder of New York's Direct Action Network, explains:

> I think there is value in having progressives in government and there is value in having people doing street pageantry. What I'm most against is people throwing things out with the bath water constantly. When they find out something wasn't the be-all and end-all, they want to throw out whatever they have been involved in or the little others have been involved in. I'm looking for the ways for those different strategies to work together (Shepard, in press).

Many activists argue movements need as many tools as possible at our disposal; these include a wide range of approaches to direct action, community building, and even some play. Lehman explains:

> I mean, I don't think that this movement is sustainable unless people have a sense of humor. I think part of the strength of the playfulness has been to bring joy into people's experiences, but in countering the other extreme which is as alluring, but not a useful way to do mass organizing, which is to create a militant and even militaristic-seeming direct action organizing skills. I think when you are looking for energy, those are sort of the two poles that people get pulled into. And I'd much rather get pulled into the silly, creative side, even if it's regarded as cheesy and sort of less serious. I think the more serious tends to mimic what we are fighting against too much (Shepard, in press).

The point is, movements benefit from multiple approaches to social change. A little flexibility could certainly yield a richer image of a true diversity of tactics. Yet, if one wants to honor the work of organic intellectuals, such as Lehman, involved in actually organizing as Harvey suggests he does, then their organizing efforts must be respected and engaged. The day-to-day life of movement organizing is anything but simple or smooth. It is not helpful when intellectuals condemn or fail to acknowledge their complicated decisions or challenges to organizing. Still Harvey suggests: "The presumption that local action is the only meaningful level of change and that anything that smacks of hierarchy is anti-revolutionary is self-defeating when it comes to larger questions." Yet, in a world of complicated messy conundrums, some of the most vibrant organizing examples include the community gardens, syringe exchanges, community development corporations (CDCs), bike repair shops, free clinics, community banks, sustainable agriculture programs, land trusts, and other examples of globally informed, yet neighborhood based organizing efforts. "[T]hese movements are unquestionably providing a widespread base for experimentation with anti-capitalist politics," Harvey acknowledges.

A few words about the context of some of this organizing is instructive. In the years before a community organizer was elected president of the United States, countless observers suggested that community organizing was an obsolete method. Yet for many people, such organizing remains a vital tool. Two decades ago an organizer with the Chicago-based Developing Communities Project contrasted electoral campaigns with community economic development. "In my view, neither approach offers lasting hope of real change for the inner city unless undergirded by a systemic approach to community organization," explained Barack Obama (1990). "This is because the issues of the inner city are more complex and deeply rooted than ever before. "Blatant discrimination has been replaced by institutional racism; problems like teen pregnancy, gang

involvement, and drug abuse cannot be solved by money alone." To get to the bottom of such issues, Obama called for "grass-roots community organizing, which builds on indigenous leadership and direct action." Many agreed with this sentiment.

Throughout the last two decades, activists working on the ground have helped articulate a practice based approach to organizing strategies for creating power. Almost a decade ago, I interviewed Sara Schulman about her approach to organizing (Shepard 2002). "I've always been interested in political movements that have concrete political goals, that have issues for campaigns, that mobilize people, that create countercultures--that stuff has attracted me," she explained, describing her own activist praxis. "The theory is not complex. You have to have an idea that is winnable. You have to have a campaign that is viable. And you have to follow every step of it. It's quite easy." Yet, Schulman cautions, "If your goal is not winnable then you are in trouble. And if you don't have an idea of how to reach [your goal], you'll never reach it. It sounds simple, but it's very hard to get people to follow it." While many movements face a struggle to bridge a gap between political wanderlust and an effective program to create change, there are any number of current struggles from environmental organizing to queer/AIDS activism which work from the ethos Schulman describes. In doing so, such community organizing remains a vital resource for those with little other access to social and political power to create changes, both large and small.

Take Jean Montrevil, a Haitian immigrant who lives in New York City. Montrevil was detained for deportation to Haiti on the morning of December 30, 2009, at a routine check with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This occurred despite the detail that Montrevil has been a legal immigrant in the United States since 1986, the husband of a U.S. citizen, and the father to four U.S. citizen children. The government's actions stemmed from a 20-year old conviction, for which he had long since served his sentence. Such actions are typical of current immigration policy in the US in the post 9/11 context (Sen 2008). These actions became the public face of the latest flare up in a generations old controversy over the rightful role of immigrants and outsiders in US life.

What the ICE agents did not count on when the detained Montrevil was how connected Montrevil was. A long time community leader and activist, Montrevil is well known. Mr. Montrevil is a leader in a variety of immigrant rights groups including Families for Freedom and the NYC New Sanctuary Movement (NY NSC) and Detention Watch Network. In his fight for justice on behalf of all immigrants, Mr. Montrevil has gained the support of U.S. Reps. Jerrold Nadler and Nydia Velasquez, NY State Senator Thomas K. Duane and NY State Assemblywoman Deborah Glick.

On word of his detention, Montrevil's family and friends and immigration activists around the country busied themselves getting the word out about what had happened, writing letters, leading sermons, and mobilizing supporters. In other words, they started organizing. The NYC New Sanctuary Coalition

immediately called for an emergency vigil at 6 p.m. outside the Varick Street
ICE Detention Center at Varick and Houston Streets, which ended with a
procession to Judson Memorial Church for a service where they demanded that
Mr. Montrevil be released and that ICE stop separating families and
communities. Mr. Montrevil's wife and children as well as his many community
supporters were present at the service. Inside a detention center far from home,
Montrevil joined a hunger strike with other immigration detainees in York,
Pennsylvania in solidarity with the *Fast for Our Families,* a group of five
community members in South Florida who took their last meal on New Year's
Eve. "I am fasting side by side with nearly 60 other detainees to take a stand
against this horrific deportation and detention system that is tearing families
apart," Montrevil reported. The *Fast for Our Families* and Montrevil both
asked the Obama Administration to stop separating immigrants from their
American families. Churches around New York City helped get the word out
about the situation.   Clergy and politicians demanded Montrevil's immediate
release and called for reform to the immigration laws, organizing an action.

Throughout the week, the coalition speaking up about Montrevil expanded.
Prominent clergy and elected leaders called on the federal government to return
Montrevil to his wife Janay and their children. "Jean represents all that is right
about our nation and wrong with the deportation system," argued Rev. Bob
Coleman, of the historic Riverside Church and a leader of New York's New
Sanctuary Movement, a faith-based coalition for immigration reform that
Montrevil himself co-founded in 2007. "He made a mistake. He paid his time.
He represents a restored life. Who benefits by stripping him of his legal status?"

Montrevil entered the U.S. from Haiti in 1986 as a legal permanent resident.
Homeland Security, on the other hand, was trying to deport him because of a
1989 drug conviction, for which Montrevil served 11 years. He has had an
exemplary record ever since. He became a national spokesperson for the Child
Citizen Protection Act, a bill moving through the House of Representatives that
would bring due process into the deportation system by allowing immigration
judges to consider the best interests of American children before deporting a
parent. The proposal is part of Representative Luis Gutierrez's recently
introduced bill, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security
and Prosperity Act (H.R. 4321).

Following Montrevil's detention on December 30, 2009 hundreds of supporters
from across the country called David Venturella, Acting Director of ICE's Office
of Detention and Removal Operations, urging Montrevil's release and the
suspension of his deportation. "Contrary to the claims of ICE leadership that the
agency will be transparent and accountable in its implementation of
immigration laws, it has not responded to Montrevil or his attorney Joshua
Bardavid," said Andrea Black, director of the *Detention Watch Network.* "There
is no excuse for their silence."

"Jean has been nothing less than an inspiration. His work on behalf of
immigrants being torn from their families across the country has been
prophetic," explained the Reverand Donna Schaper of Judson Memorial

Church, where Montrevil worships. "On Tuesday at 12:30 pm, I will join other people of faith at 201 Varick Street, the detention center in New York, and demand that ICE respond to us. We will no longer accept silence as an answer." She was not alone.

January 5, 2010, at 12:30pm, clergy and parishioners from Jean's church converged outside of New York's Varick Street Detention Center. Singer Dan Zanes was on hand to add a little cultural resistance to the mix. Singing, 'We Shall Not Be Moved" as they blocked new detainees from entering the center, eight clergy were arrested. Before the arrests began, Rev. Schaper stated: "I am being arrested because it is a moral outrage that our government would do this to such a great man and father. These immigration laws that destroy families contradict the values we should uphold as a society. They need to change now." Throughout the day, local television showed a loop of the members of the congregation speaking up about Montrevil's situation (Edroso, 2010; NY1, 2010).

The following week the movement continued to escalate. "The Fasters in Miami are fighting to keep families together, my husband and me are fighting to keep families together, so we will fight together!" exclaimed Jani Montrevil, Jean's wife. "Our son keeps calling Jean's cell phone, hoping Daddy will pick up. He asks me, 'Why are they pretending Daddy is bad, so he will go back to Haiti?' ... Jean made mistakes before we started building a family together. Homeland Security wants to turn me into a single mother."

The movement to keep families together was spreading across the country, with solidarity actions taking place in Texas and New Hampshire. On January 14th, the coalition held another rally, attended by elected representatives as well as community leaders. Many carried signs declaring, "We Will Not Forsake You" and "Keep our Families Together." Rev. Michael Ellick, one of Mr. Montrevil's pastors at Judson Memorial Church, stated: "It is outrageous that ICE is trying to tear this good man from his children at this holiday season. We will not rest until Jean is released and returned to his family and until immigration agents stops tearing our families and communities apart." And that was just it, everyone at the event seemed most distraught that so many families and communities were being torn apart. *The New York Times* prominently covered the event (Semple 2010).

Within a week, they had succeeded in getting Jean Montrevil out of detention. Jean was back at Judson the following Sunday to sing and tell his story. When he stood, the church gave him standing ovation. He expressed gratitude to those who had spoken out for him; conversely, he voiced concern for earthquake survivors in Haiti and the other twenty-six immigrants still detained in the detention center in York Pennsylvania who lacked the support system he had. It is hard to imagine ICE was aware of how well connected he was when they sought to detain him.

Much of the work of Montrevil and his supporters highlights themes which help pull together the kind of coordinated campaign Schulman describes. These

include: 1) A clear demand — "Set Jean Free", "Keep Families Together", 2) Research on Jean's situation to frame the action, 3) A mobilization strategy which began at the Judson Church with the news of Jean's arrest, and included multiple meetings to bring together stakeholders from across the city, 4) Direct action, including the civil disobedience on January 5th, 2010, 5) A media strategy, which used the direct action mobilization story to propel Jean's story from local news coverage onto the national stage, 6) A short and long term legal strategy, linking Jean's release to a reform of the immigration laws, and 7) finally a little fun, play, and culture, including Dan Zane's lament, as well as the Freedom Songs such as 'We Shall Not Be Moved." Direct action does tend to get results, yet none of the fast work of the campaign would have been possible if Jean was not part of an expansive community.

Much of the challenge for today's organizers is about connecting individual experiences and stories with broader social forces and networks as Montrevil's supporters were able to do. And certainly organizing efforts must do more than manage poverty while leaving current oppressive structures in place. But, we cannot overlook everyday injustices either. While the social worker in me wants to address the bleeding, the organizer wants to support a paradigm shift toward a more systemic approach. Community psychologist Bill Oswald suggests one strategy for addressing the endemic inequalities Harvey describes. It involves imagining a three legged stool, in which each leg represents an approach with which to intervene: 1) remediation in which we fix what is immediately broken, 2) amelioration in which we address the root cause of what is going on, and finally 3) capacity building in which we help strengthen networks of people and communities. This is the shift from managing poverty to challenging the social conditions which create the harm (Totten 2008). After, all, between now and the anti-capitalist future Harvey anticipates, there is a great deal of work to be done.

For Harvey, social change takes shape "through the dialectical unfolding of relations between seven moments within the body politic of capitalism viewed as an ensemble or assemblage of activities and practices." These include: "a) technological and organizational forms of production", "b) relations to nature", "c) social relations between people", "d) mental conceptions of the world", "e) labor processes and production", "f) institutional, legal and governmental arrangements", and "g) the conduct of daily life that underpins social reproduction." Many of these dynamics can be found within current movements for change. "Change arises, of course, out of an existing state of affairs and it has to harness the possibilities immanent within an existing situation," Harvey argues. The organizing around the Montrevil's case is just one of many such current situations in which organizers have taken an issue and turned into this a broad campaign for change.

Like Marx before him, Harvey has done a striking job at describing what is wrong; what seems to be missing is a link between his critique with a feasible strategy toward action and a coherent approach toward capacity building. In this, every organizer could do more. And much of this begins with organizing

for power, to build networks which sustain those on fault lines such as Montrevil and many others, and finally to support alternative models of mutual aid and care. While Harvey concludes that "Another Communism is Possible" I would argue we would be better served by looking at what activists and organizers are building on the ground. What models have become outmoded? What best practices can be expanded? Through such questions and considerations, we get to where the real action is at – in between theory and activist practice.

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URL for this article

http://groups.google.com/group/interface-articles/web/3Shepard.pdf

"The interests of the movement as a whole": response to David Harvey

Laurence Cox

The communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties...

The communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole...

(Communist Manifesto *part II, "Proletarians and communists")*

"The trap baited by 'Political Economy' "

Structural analysis has many merits. It enables us to agitate effectively, to make the links between the immediate problems people experience and the broader power relations which cause them. It can give us intellectual — and, these days, academic — credibility. It can even, when linked as in David Harvey's work to uncovering elite strategies, convince readers or students that the current situation is not written in the stars, and so by implication that it can be changed. Yet I find myself wishing more and more — as an Irish activist and as one involved willy-nilly in global politics — that somewhat fewer of our comrades had invested *so much* of their time and energy in structural analysis, and (in particular) that fewer of them had invested their professional or political identity in it to the point where they believe it is possible to read off the movement situation from a "bird's eye" view of reality.

Structural analysis is rather like weather forecasting: it tells us whether a particular day is propitious or unpropitious for the task we have before us, and so — on occasion — that we should perhaps put more or less energy into it, or that we should perhaps see if we can delay it slightly. But that is about all it can tell us; rarely do we have the choice to ignore the task altogether. Structural analysis does not, and cannot, tell us where other people are suffering and about to enter into struggle, how we can make links with each other and what form those links might take, or how we can defeat our shared opponents.

As EP Thompson observed, political economy easily becomes a trap, and this is what I think has happened — not only with David Harvey's piece, but with many attempts by university Marxists to engage with contemporary movements which wind up reasserting the theorists' position of power by dint of missing what is specific about movement organising. If my comments on Harvey are sometimes

critical, this is because the intellectual quality of his (justly renowned) work is normally so high as to make it clear that its difficulties, when it comes to movement strategy, are those of a whole approach rather than individual failings. If Harvey cannot derive a strategy from a structural analysis, perhaps the attempt is misguided.

There is of course much of analytic value in "Organizing for the anti-capitalist transition", although there are elements that miss the mark. For example, the comment that neo-liberal governance seems "immune to legitimacy problems and unconcerned even with the creation of content" ignores important aspects of the "sturdy structure of civil society" which Gramsci noted as lying behind the visible state — and much of the work of opponents of racism, nationalism, fundamentalism and the organisation of right-wing popular culture. There are also some sectarian missteps, such as the attack on anarchists and autonomists for disregarding the importance of the national level — as though the struggle for power in national parliaments was a central, or even imaginable, goal for the left across much of the planet rather than (outside South America) further from our grasp than it has been within living memory.

Most importantly, though, and characteristically for structural and post-structural analyses whether of capitalism, patriarchy, industrialism, racism (or indeed of disciplines, rhizomes, class composition and so on) when the account moves from the confident terrain of structure to the discussion of movements it goes from the systematic to the anecdotal, and from high-level engagement with serious theoretical debate to the casually dismissive - at precisely the point in the text where the call comes for building alliances with those whose organising and strategic work has just been written off, ignored or trivialised.

Teaching grandmothers to suck eggs

For anyone who has read, for example, the debates collected by Jai Sen, Peter Waterman and others around the World Social Forum, or the suggestions of the Zapatistas as to how the struggle against neo-liberalism might proceed — or simply for anyone who has been involved in attempting to build alliances between movements, Harvey's comments on movements are disappointingly feeble, platitudes rather than strategies.

The essence — which could be summarised "there are a lot of us out there, we organise in different ways and have different perspectives, but we need to work together and we need to be serious about our goals" — has been said time and time again; indeed, it defines the "movement of movements" to a large extent. There are the familiar accents of a particular kind of Marxism — "we should tackle capitalism, not just neo-liberalism; we should not ignore the question of state power" — which are a routine part of the conversation. But none of this takes us past a position that movement conversations had reached in the late 1990s, or tells us *what we should do.* If anything, there is a tendency to substitute analysis for action:

> "The central problem is that in aggregate there is no resolute and
> sufficiently unified anti-capitalist movement that can adequately challenge
> the reproduction of the capitalist class and the perpetuation of its power on
> the world stage.... [A] global anti-capitalist movement is unlikely to emerge
> without some animating vision of what is to be done and why. A double
> blockage exists: the lack of an alternative vision prevents the formation of
> an oppositional movement, while the absence of such a movement
> precludes the articulation of an alternative."

All of which might have been fair enough, in 1993 or thereabouts, when the
production of "alternative visions" was at a somewhat low ebb and a "global
anti-capitalist movement" was a phrase without a referent. It is a very strange
thing to say at the World Social Forum, the locus *par excellence* of animating
visions and one of the most important locations of movement articulation over
the last decade — sometimes in opposition to capitalism per se, sometimes more
narrowly in opposition to neo-liberalism.

It is not always clear whether this and similar comments are intended as
indirectly supportive of existing movement processes, as the "ruthless critique
of all that exists", or as a call for the formation of a *party*[1]; there is little sense
here of engaging with what activists are actually trying to do:

> "the first rule for a global anti-capitalist movement must be: never rely on
> the unfolding dynamics of one moment without carefully calibrating how
> relations with all the others are adapting and reverberating".

Yes, we might say, and this is why we try to connect with people in other places
and other movements. In the process, some things have even been learnt. Thus
Harvey offers us some "general guiding norms" for a transitional movement:

> "respect for nature, radical egalitarianism in social relations, institutional
> arrangements based in some sense of common interests and common
> property, democratic administrative procedures..."

and so on, and so forth. I recall signing up to a similar set of points with
comrades in Ireland ten years ago[2]. Even then we were able to plagiarise such
ideas from existing movement debates internationally, and — far from being
utopian future possibilities - our own movement networks had no difficulty
operating on this basis for the best part of a decade.

When structural theorists offer us *dei ex machina*, they often turn out to be
poorly assimilated versions of what activists *have already been doing*, which
have become sufficiently common sense in the movement that even political

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[1] The distinction between party and movement, highlighted in Barker's piece elsewhere in this
issue, is one which could have been helpful here. It is easy to dismiss *movements* for not being
radical enough, when it is in their nature to be contradictory and contested. To demand of a
movement that it be uniformly anti-capitalist is simple sectarianism; to take part in an anti-
capitalist party (or faction, or network, or...) and argue for your position and strategies within
that movement is good political practice in diverse movements.

[2] Online at http://www.wsm.ie/story/2799.

economists have encountered them. Harvey comments, heroically, "Of course this is utopian! But so what! We cannot afford not to be." Indeed; but most of the points of his programme have been familiar on the anti-authoritarian left since some point in the 1970s[3], and have been part of our starting-points for organising for a decade or more.

As Harvey notes,

> "The current populations of academicians, intellectuals and experts in the social sciences and humanities are by and large ill-equipped to undertake the collective task of revolutionizing our knowledge structures."

The solution, however, does not seem to lie in listening to movements, and following the reflections of e.g. Boaventura de Sousa Santos or Hilary Wainwright, who have had useful comments to make on this point; instead, "[t]he only hope is that a new generation of perceptive students (in the broad sense of all those who seek to know the world) will clearly see it so and insist upon changing it". This is hardly likely to happen if prominent left intellectuals like Harvey systematically direct us away from listening to what has already been done in this direction, and instead insist on the foundational primacy of their own disciplines.

This tendency to ignore or trivialise existing work positions the theorist ahead of movements instead of, as would be more accurate, lagging somewhat behind. Thus, to pick out a few points in his five-minute overview of the last fifteen years of anti-capitalist organising, "attempts to forge a global justice movement... have been concentrated over the last ten years" in the WSF – apparently to the exclusion of locations like summit protests (essentially ignored), Indymedia (ditto) or come to that People's Global Action and other bottom-up alliances.

These last have to be ignored, because anarchists and autonomists are presented as believing "that local action is the only meaningful level of change" – which, whatever one's views about the politics of horizontalism, is sheer caricature. Similarly, movements against dispossession are reduced to a pre-theoretical space "not so much guided by any particular political philosophy or leanings" and hence, at a later point in the argument, in need of publicists and strategists: "the task of the educated alienated and discontented is to magnify the subaltern voice so that attention can be paid to the circumstances of exploitation and repression and the answers that can be shaped into an anti-capitalist program".

The point is not that such alliances are irrelevant; it is that they have *already happened*; in the Narmada, in Via Campesina (which Harvey name-checks) or in Abahlali. These movements don't need a *new* Theory to tell them to act on a world stage and ally with others; they have already done this work. Indeed northern anti-capitalism, in its current form, comes rather from the push given

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[3] In fact, other than the comment on nature, the rest can be found in left debates of the mid-1960s without difficulty.

by movements of Southern peasants, shanty-dwellers, indigenous populations and so on than the other way round.

Harvey ends, then, where movements started the current wave from, ten or fifteen years ago, but presents it as news:

> "there is a lot of work to be done to coalesce these various tendencies around the underlying question: can the world change materially, socially, mentally and politically in such a way as to confront not only the dire state of social and natural relations in so many parts of the world, but also the perpetuation of endless compound growth?"

The work starts, I would suggest, with taking each other seriously and finding out what work has *already* been done. Knowing Harvey's interest and involvement in processes like the WSF, perhaps the absence of a sense of this in "Organizing..." is a reflection of theory can lag behind movement practice.

Who are the communists?

Harvey, like many of us, finds the *Manifesto's* discussion of who the communists are inspirational; but there are many ways to read this. For Harvey, who the communists are is defined largely by superior *knowledge*:

> "They simply constitute themselves at all times and in all places as those who understand the limits, failings and destructive tendencies of the capitalist order..."

His communists, then, "are all those who work incessantly to produce a different future to that which capitalism portends".

This is not all that Marx and Engels say about communists, however. They say rather that within "the national struggles" of the proletarians communists bring the interests of the entire proletariat to the fore; "in the various stages of development" of class struggle, they represent "the interests of the movement as a whole"; they represent "the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of each country"; and they understand "the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement".

If we agree that the *Manifesto* perspective is a good starting-point - which of course leaves many questions unanswered - the "advanced and resolute" character of communists is only one point, and one which is stated in relation to their presence *within working-class parties*. The other three points similarly have to do with presence inside actual movements, parties and struggles, and with the attempt to represent the interests of "the entire proletariat", "the movement as a whole", and to draw on an understanding of how the movement works.

In this, alternative reading of the *Manifesto's* comments, the starting-point is engagement with actually-existing movement practice (and from a serious, historically-informed, analysis of movement development and decline). We do certainly need to go beyond that — to ask after the interests of the entire

proletariat, to understand the line of march of the movement, and so on, and also to ask after the "ultimate general results"; but we do that from a starting-point of engagement with other people's practice.

The characteristic failing of political economy comments on movements is to project its own one-sidedness (neatly analysed by Michael Lebowitz as lacking an analysis of "the side of labour") onto people who are in the process of becoming, or have become, active, collective and radical political subjects. Structural analysis is happiest speaking of what the objective situation demands from "us", or how it makes "others" act; but what marks moments of revolutionary fervour like the present is precisely that large numbers of ordinary people make the move from being primarily passive objects in relation to economic and political structures to becoming active, conscious and collective agents in their own right.

As people are pushed into movement, different questions, which political economy cannot answer, but which are fundamental to any post-capitalist, radical-democratic, diverse etc. society, come to the fore[4]. This is the terrain, of course, which Marx and his contemporaries sought to understand by exploring the history of "the social movement", in France and elsewhere; it is the terrain marked out by later Marxist discussions of class struggle and revolutionary politics; and, in different ways, by academic research on social movements. It is a central theme of movement learning and practice.

In other words, the question that is left untouched by political economy, but which is fundamental to revolutionary actors, is *what should they do?* Or, more particularly, *what should they do within, around and beyond existing movements of this kind?* These are the questions that most need answering, and I think an alternative approach to the *Manifesto's* comments on communists may be helpful here.

The ABC of activist practice

To start with movement practice: Marx and Engels' comments draw on a basic activist ABC, which they had learnt from the best activists of their day - in the first months of 1848, these people were about to challenge empires - and which defines good practice for radical activists. This ABC is largely the fruit of learning from practice and from each other. A contemporary statement of this ABC, with some notes on its dangers, might run something like this:

- Within movements, seek to push for a broader discussion of the issues raised by the movement, and a less naïve reliance on the powerful and the wealthy. The danger to be avoided here is sectarianism: this discussion has to start from real, felt needs and experiences rather than prior commitments which aren't shared by other activists.

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[4] One attempt at answering these questions for the Irish context can be found at http://eprints.nuim.ie/1530/1/LCGlobalisation_from_below.pdf.

- Connect different movements and different issues, and build a shared sense of "we", with suitable movement media, shared spaces, and so on. The danger to be avoided here is that "activism" becomes a lifestyle ghetto; the linkage has to be one of constantly opening up radical ways of being which do not set themselves up as a cultural hierarchy.

- Internationalism: getting practical and theoretical perspective on our local context by building links with similar movements abroad, and making links with people working on similar problems in different ethnic contexts at home. The danger to be avoided here is that of romanticism, of thinking that elsewhere is always a better, or at least more worthy, place to be.

- Engage with new popular mobilisations, which are often around unexpected issues, and offer solidarity and practical assistance with no strings attached. The danger to be avoided here is that of losing confidence in ourselves, and treating new movements as per se better and sweeping away the past.

- Think seriously about power and strategy *before* we are faced with the problem concretely, whether in the form of state repression or of a breach in power relations which makes a new government (or a new society) possible. The danger to be avoided here is that of letting the hardness of such thinking set our overall tone.

- Look for breach points: try to identify possible new alliances on our side, or possibilities of splitting ruling alliances, strategic fulcrum points where it is worth risking everything. The danger to be avoided here is that of being clever-clever and falling into wishful thinking.

I think most serious radical activists will recognise this kind of practice, although it may not always be their language. It is easier caught than taught, although of course movements do attempt to transmit it consciously. This kind of practice is what we do as we build campaigns - and as we try to win.

Unpopular language

Winning is currently out of favour at the moment for a range of reasons, some good and some bad. One good reason is that in the past "winning" has not always meant what we thought it would, whether in the form of Stalinist and social democratic states, of feminists and environmentalists in government, of the democratisation of fascist and state-socialist dictatorships. This is a major reason for doubting simple statist radicalisms of the old-fashioned kind, and for thinking seriously about what it looks like when movements win; it is not, of course, an argument that we should treat social movements as a kind of self-indulgent play rather than a serious struggle against a potentially brutal opponent.

The bad reason is a failure of the theoretical imagination. In the 1970s, under the impact of the events of 1968, it was possible to imagine a radically different world from many different positions: feminism, majority world liberation, East European dissidence, ecology, black activism, gay liberation, even peace movements, to say nothing of the traditional left. Now, apparently radical theorists push the curious position that it is possible to have radical social change without taking on the state, even to abolish it, while others ask "how can we redefine winning so that it doesn't involve overcoming a more powerful opponent?"

When *Interface* called a special issue on crisis, movements and revolutionary transformation, many people (activists as well as academics) metaphorically held up their hands as if to say "only Marxists know or are interested in that stuff; it doesn't affect the rest of us". Thankfully for everyone who lives in a country which was once a monarchy, or a colony, or a fascist dictatorship and is no longer so, this perspective is more of a historical aberration – in need of understanding, but hardly as self-evident or morally superior as its proponents feel[5].

One feature of this unusual situation (which is mostly that of the global North) is the power relations which were already visible in 1968, when in Prague and in Paris alike the ultimate military power of the opponent was never in doubt, and in both cases there was a tacit cooperation to limit the use of violence – by comparison, for example, with Hungary in 1956 or indeed the liberation of Paris in 1944. Subsequent to this experience, the celebration of "civil society" has often meant celebrating the avoidance of the big question of power (see *Interface* vol. 1 issue 2.) Thinking seriously about this question is key to actually doing anything about capitalism, however.

For this reason Harvey's piece, and its emphasis on taking the anti-capitalist transition seriously as a contemporary possibility, is a very welcome dose of seriousness.

Understanding the stalemate

This issue of power confronts us very powerfully if we look at the strangest feature of the current situation, which is the length of time the relative stalemate has endured. The Zapatistas have held their territory for some 16 years. The Northern anti-capitalist movement is now some 11 years old, and has not retreated in the face of the turn to warfare and criminalisation; rather, the "leaders of the free world" remain in hiding at their regular summits. On a larger scale, the "New World Order" has both lost control of large parts of South

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[5] Indeed some of the hardest struggles at present are being fought in explicitly moral languages: those of indigenous populations in the Americas, for example – which often marry a demand for sovereignty with the languages of indigenous religion – or those of Buddhists in Burma, Tibet or India, whose demands for a change in power structures are not intended as rhetoric. Perhaps the issue is more that in western countries we have come to naturalise much of the structures of state and capitalism.

America, traditionally the US' backyard, as well as facing severe problems with European and Muslim allies alike in its Middle Eastern wars. The past decade has seen warfare as a way of life, neo-liberal capitalism and ecologically destructive policies — all central movement targets — suffer massive losses in terms of popular consent.

Conversely, our movements have remained that much more contained than ever before. In the global North, there are sharp class and ethnic boundaries which we only occasionally manage to break out of, as well as long-standing political cleavages which limit our mobilisation. In India, China, Indonesia there are powerful popular movements, tendentially opposed to neo-liberalism, but essentially isolated. Indigenous people's struggles globally are often utterly disconnected from the perspective of the majority settler populations. Finally, the popular anguish of much of the Muslim world remains fragmented, self-lacerating and all too easily instrumentalised.

This stalemate — where we cannot build past what we have already achieved, other than in South America, and where they cannot crush us — will not last. Global elites cannot allow it to; and as new would-be leadership formations seek the support of states and large capital for new regimes of accumulation, tackling popular insurgency will be a tempting means to demonstrate their capability. If there is a genuinely urgent task for our movements, it is to lose the complacency that comes from a partial perspective and to see this bigger power struggle and our place in it — and to ask how we can push for a genuinely popular outcome to the crisis. This cannot come, however, from ignoring "actually existing" popular movements.

Thinking forward

One possible approach to understanding the question is in terms of the double movement of popular power — at once successful and incorporated. Here I am using a longer timescale than the familiar shift from Keynesianism and developmentalist nationalism to neo-liberalism: I am thinking rather of the shift in Western Europe from monarchies and limited-franchise parliaments to democracies, in most of the world from colony to independent statehood, in Latin America, Eastern Europe and much of Asia from dictatorships to democracies.

In saying this I am conscious of the limited nature of these gains, but I want to stress that they are real gains, as anyone familiar with the political map of the world c. 1980 can attest. Much has changed since then, and far more since 1940. Within living memory, most of the world has ceased to be colonies, has ceased to be monarchies and has ceased to be dictatorships. We cannot and should not take this for granted, or minimise a state of affairs which was achieved after such struggle and suffering. There is a slow, ambiguous but none the less real

increase in popular power over this period, which is in part a development of organising skills that are now embedded in many modern states[6].

There is also, and as part of this same process, an incorporation of movements. Thus anti-colonial movements have often become symbiotic with new nation states; trade union movements have become linked to welfare states, feminists have become part of cultural modernisation projects, community organising has become part of urban management, environmentalists have sought their place in the sun, and so on. These incorporations have at times marked real gains; they have also marked incorporations, and more crucially one-way dependencies (the movement once incorporated can only operate through a sympathetic state, but the state can do without the movement).

This situation marks the heritage of popular mobilisations in two ways. One is where the movement simply becomes – and seeks to turn itself into – state, and then becomes dependent on the logics of state (and hence capitalist) power relations for its ups and downs. The other, where movements retain independent organisations, has nonetheless seen a powerful institutionalisation and routinisation of movement activity made possible by these democratic gains, as well as a sectoral fragmentation and intellectual isolation from one another, as the boundaries between these different movements become in effect professional boundaries.

If the slow growth in popular power is one reason why states cannot simply drown out the anti-capitalist movement, the Zapatistas or (come to that) Chinese labour movements in blood, the institutionalisation of movements is one reason why (as in August 1914, when trade union and socialist leaders decided to support what was to become the bloodiest war in human history) movements are extremely wary of raising the question of power. What should radicals do in this situation?

Movement upsurges, such as the present one, can lead to a transformation of movements if they mean a remaking of organisations, a turnover of leadership (formal or informal) and a transformation of ideology, away from reliance on the state and a purely sectoral or national perspective, and towards the bigger picture. The most immediate job of radical activists – whether they call themselves communists, Zapatistas, or something else – is to help with this

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[6] Paradoxically, the first *sign* that popular power was growing in this sense was the development of Bonapartism in France, and later the development of fascism elsewhere. Earlier, monarchical and clerical forces sought above all to restore the traditional, routine operation of deference, custom and hierarchy – as late as the inter-war period, Catholics were discouraged from organising political parties, in part for this reason. What Bonapartism and fascism did was to recognise that the mass popular mobilisations of, first, the French revolution and its associated national, liberal and secular movements, and, second, the workers' movement, could not be reversed, and that elites which wished to remain in power had to find new forms of active popular support and mobilisation. We are now, arguably, several steps further down this path, as elites quickly borrow each new movement technique, from cultural revolt to co-designed websites, as tools to reinstate their power, and conjure up whole fake social movements – white-ribbon protests or "colour revolutions" to suit their needs. But they would not do so if they could achieve their goals without popular mobilisation.

remaking of movements, turning towards each other, towards others who are struggling and towards those who are suffering but not yet openly in struggle.

This conversation and alliance-building does not take place between those who possess Theory and those who do not; it takes place between activists who respect each other's organising skills and political achievements, recognise the specific situations which other movements are working within, and try to define shared directions together. David Harvey's work is immensely important within the academy in legitimating the return of Marxism and giving us a theoretical sense of objective possibility. But there is a gulf between political economy and the practice of popular movements which cannot be so easily overcome.

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Educating Resistance

Anna Selmeczi

Abstract

While deeply sympathetic to David Harvey's commitment to a politics that can move to a new and more just order this paper, based on the experience of a period of immersion in the shack dweller's movement Abahlali baseMjondolo, asks if Harvey's commitment to scaling up the level of political action, along side a project of political education, risks removing politics from the grasp of the people who are currently struggling, with a considerable degree of success, to restore their right to political speech and imagination.

In the doubtlessly inspiring text that we in this forum have been asked to react upon, David Harvey (2009b: 1), critical geographer and defining character of contemporary socialist thought, calls us to take advantage of the current crisis of capitalism: to look at it as the initial moment of the transition to "a new global order of governance". To make this transition happen, Harvey argues, the left has to invigorate itself and actively engage in debating the future of capitalism. What is more, as it is exactly in times of crisis that the irrationality of capitalism is revealed, the left now has to take up the task of thinking alternative ways to rationalize the currently ongoing "irrational rationalizing of an irrational system", that is, ways to reconfigure the relation of surplus capital and surplus labor so that it will be able to meet human needs (Harvey 2009a). For Harvey, such reconfiguration requires a revolutionary theory, a common vision that enables us to answer Lenin's all too relevant question: "What is to be done?", and thereby enables us to transcend the double blockage that impedes the emergence of a unified anti-capitalist movement that, in turn, could be the agent of this global transition to socialism or communism.

In a time not much less hunted by the perceived crisis of capitalism, Michel Foucault (1991) and the Italian Marxist thinker Duccio Trombadori engaged in a series of discussions, some points of which, at least in my reading, are very pertinent to reflections on the stakes of formulating a revolutionary theory as called for by Harvey. Pushed hard by Trombadori to admit that his practice of problematizing specific effects of power is essentially particularizing and therefore closed off from "the political dimension of the problem", Foucault (1991: 152) argues that "[l]ocalizing problems is indispensable for theoretical and political reasons. But that doesn't mean that they are not, however, general problems".

When I decide to take this argument as my point of departure, and to pose it against Harvey's (2009b: 9) statement that "broad adhesion to post-modern and post-structuralist ideas which celebrate the particular at the expense of big-picture thinking does not help", my aim is not to defend what is often thought of as a cottage industry of modest relevance – this would not only be futile but also unworthy of the motivation moving forward Harvey's argument: a motivation I

am most sympathetic to. I do so rather to underline that beyond revealing practices of resistance that might not be best understood as anti-capitalistic *per se*, focusing on the localized effects of economic or political power as reflected by the way they are challenged can, I believe, avoid certain risks of large-scale theorizing.[1] That is, problematizing power from the perspective of the point where it crystallizes and where it is challenged not only discloses the forms of life beyond the interpretive framework of relations of production entailed by globalized neoliberalism. It might also teach us about practicing equality and how politics can be thought today.

Harvey (2009b) argues that a revolutionary politics "requires a sophisticated understanding of how social change occurs" and, as the basis for such an understanding, he lists seven moments that he derives from Marx's *Capital* — seven moments in the mutually reinforcing dynamics that brought about the transition from feudalism to capitalism. According to Harvey, capitalism has survived because it continuously maintained the dialectical movement of these moments so securing its constant self-renewal, and this is exactly what the transition socialism or communism has to do if it is to provide a viable alternative.

Whereas a Foucauldian genealogy of the emergence of capitalism would certainly include analyzing the interaction of many of the seven moments Harvey defines — the relationship to nature or, better put, the reconstruction of certain processes as natural, for instance, would feature as a crucial factor — for Foucault (1990), the emergence of capitalism was conditioned upon a shift of much more major scope. For him, the development of capitalism "would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes" (Foucault 1990: 141). That is, the even vaster change occurring with modernity took shape in the emergence of two new modes of power: one (disciplinary power) concentrating on individual bodies, so as to make them economically more efficient, the other (biopower) calibrated to the massified level of the population to regulate its aggregate processes so as to provide for the best outcomes in its interaction with the natural dynamics of the economy. Crucially, Foucault (1990: 138; original emphasis) counterposes these modes of power to that of sovereign power characterizing the classic age: whereas the former practiced the right of the sword to "*take* life or *let* live", these new modes of power "*foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death". Although this shift is still very much relevant for understanding our present, what is important for us here are the ways these new forms of power are deployed. More exactly, it is the claim that the *government* these modes of power entail is diffused throughout all levels of the social body.

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[1] This point might seem unjust to Harvey who cannot be accused of ignoring local struggles: his engagement in the movement for the Right to the City proves the very opposite. Still, his contrast of the particularizing focus of poststructuralist theorizing and the global scope of a necessary revolutionary vision is doubtlessly analogous to Trombadori's position and thus maintains the relevance of Foucault's response.

But why exactly would such a conception of diffused power be relevant in the context of Harvey's call for building a revolutionary theory upon the dialectic of the seven moments of social change? It might be so because considering the extended sense of government that signifies the circular operation of these dispersed technologies of power – which Foucault (1991: 176) sketchily defines for Trombadori as "the set of institutions and practices by which people are 'led', from administration to education, etc..." – possibly implies a different perspective on what Harvey (2009b) refers to as mobilization around questions of daily life.

That is, once we think of government as tactically driven through networks woven into the various strata of society down to its very capillary ends so producing effects that can amount to "a kind of permanent oppression in daily life" might put "everyday" struggles into a different light (Foucault 1991: 144). It could do so because it implies an analytical focus directed to the points where tactics crystallize and where they are contested, and thus reconfigures our understanding of the relationship between the general and the local. By consequently being able to disclose ways of refusing "to be 'governed' in a certain way", it can also direct attention to experiences of the political, which, in turn, might feature in thinking resistance today as more than bases for experimentation for a revolutionary politics (Harvey 2009b).

Being aware that Harvey (2009b: 9) does not intend to play down the significance of what he calls the mobilization around questions of daily life, and also of his commitment to ongoing struggles for the right to the city I wish, through the following account of a particular struggle that I have had the chance to familiarize myself with, only to pose a question. The question that rests on my encounter and interpretation of the 'living politics' of Abahlali baseMjondolo, the largest South African shack-dwellers' movement, is this: can a unified anti-capitalist movement driven by an explicit revolutionary theory preserve the proximity to the revolting subjects' "existential commitment" to resist being governed, and so to the practice of the political that they put forward? Or, by working to "scale up their activism", would not such a movement put in place dynamics of power that would be incommensurate with the kind of subject such resistance produces? While this question is arguably akin to the way Harvey writes about fears of large-scale organization, the following interpretation of Abahlali's living politics will hopefully save it from being judged similarly self-defeating.

Symptomatic of a rather general effect of global neoliberal governance that Harvey (2009b) mentions - of competing localities' drive for creating a good business climate - the struggles of Abahlali baseMjondolo reflect the particular ways this rationality abandons masses of people and at the same time demonstrates a unique practice of democratic politics. Abahlali counterpose a politics that is built on their manifold insistence on proximity to the spatiotemporal ordering that is entailed by the ways an aspiring "global city" reconstructs itself through neoliberal urban governance and thus radically reconfigures access to infrastructure. The movement that emerged in 2005 out

of a spontaneous road blockade reacting to the decision of the Greater Durban municipality to sell a piece of land that was previously promised to the shack dwellers as a site of housing development challenges the superfluity imposed upon them by technologies of neoliberal governance.

On the one hand, by demanding land and housing in the city, and insisting on the *in situ* upgrading of shack settlements, Abahlali contest the forced mobility of superfluous lives. By insisting on having a place in the city they bring into light and challenge policies that push them beyond the reach of the city and so deny them access to urban forms of life. On the other hand, against the notion of life that originally produces this superfluity through regulating the massified processes of the population, Abahlali pose the singularity of every human being. By conceiving of their politics as a space where everyone can narrate their own suffering that is inevitably part of life in shack settlements, it insistently preserves a close-up perspective on the sensible effects of the abandonment inscribed into neoliberal governmentality. In turn, these narratives provide the content of living politics and, through articulating perceptions of injustice, trigger the shack-dwellers' appearance as political subjects. So by giving voice to its subjects, constructed as a space for speaking suffering, the practice of Abahlali's living politics is furthermore disruptive of the order of biopower because it removes shack settlements from their audiovisual enclosure. By claiming that to let them live and die the way that shack-dwellers do is unjust their political practices reject the construction of the shantytowns as mute and apolitical spaces of despair.

Thirdly, complementing the role that narrations of singular experiences have in their living politics, and keeping this politics close to the poor largely rests on Abahlali's practice of 'living learning'. As opposed to the assumption that shack dwellers cannot think, the practice of living learning aims to provide an egalitarian space for knowledge production that insists on maintaining a constant and direct relation between intellectual work and the suffering of the shack dwellers (Gibson, Harley, and Pithouse 2009).

For example when they were offered scholarships for a degree in Participatory Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal members of Abahlali baseMjondolo and the allied movement, the Rural Network, created a biweekly forum where they reflected on how they could utilize in their struggle what they have learnt in the university, and prepared for sharing this knowledge with their communities so as to avoid the forgetful distancing of those who leave behind the world of the shanty towns when integrated into official education. Although living learning thus aims to realize one of the central requirements of living politics, which is that everyone must be able to understand it, it does not become patronizing. Instead, by rejecting the pretentious superiority of academic knowledge, living learning reinforces the presumption of equality crucial for the disruptive politics of the shack dwellers. It does so because – in line with Jacques Rancière's (1991) reading of Joseph Jacotot's egalitarian pedagogy that the present interpretation intentionally evokes – it works toward eliminating the hierarchy of teacher and student; that is, it opposes the

proximity of equal minds to the distance of explanation. Driven by this opposition one of the participants of the living learning sessions formulates a crucial question:

> So many people see things in this way – that how the world is, is how God meant it to be, that we are meant to suffer. How can we enlighten others – not to think *like* us, but to think, to see the world? (Abahlali and Rural Network 2009: 60)

It may well be that I am mistaken (perhaps I even hope to be) but it seems to me that a call for the revolutionary politics of a global anti-capitalist movement begs the same question. At the very least such inquiries cannot be completely avoided if we agree that "the right to speech and political imagination must be returned to [the people]" (Foucault 1991: 158-159). Or is it absolutely wrong to see the above questions about the risks of scaling up political activism reemerging when Harvey (2009a) states that "we have a huge educational task here [as] the mental conceptions of the world with which people are approaching these questions are absolutely erroneous"? Can such a huge educational task be carried out without redistributing the inequality of explanation and thus reinforcing invisibility and silence?

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Which right to *which* city?
In defence of political-strategic clarity

Marcelo Lopes de Souza

Abstract

Coined at the end of the 1960s by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, the expression "(the) right to the city" has become fashionable these days. The price of this has often been the trivialisation and corruption of Lefebvre's concept: In many cases it seems to mean just the right to a more "human" life in the context of the capitalist city and on the basis of a ("reformed") representative "democracy". In contrast to this, David Harvey, an eminent Marxist urban researcher who has paid attention to Lefebvre's ideas since the beginning of the 1970s, retains a non-reformist understanding of the "right to the city". What is more, he reaches beyond the usual academic level of critical analysis in order make political-strategic evaluations and recommendations. However, from a libertarian point of view, his words sound very much like an attempt to see (partially) new phenomena (such as many contemporary, autonomy-oriented und radical-democratically based social movements as well as the conditions under which they act) through old lenses: namely through the lenses of statism, centralism, and hierarchy. The result of this is often a misrepresentation of today's social actors, their agency, potentialities, and strategies. The aim of this paper is to show the limits of such an interpretation, as well as to discuss what a "right to the city" (and the strategy to achieve this goal) could be from a libertarian point of view – not as a purely speculative enterprise, but under inspiration of the experiences of different, concrete social movements from Latin America to Europe to Africa.

The right to the city as the right to *another* city in *another* world: back to Henri Lefebvre – and beyond Lefebvre

We can observe an increasing debate (and to a certain degree a mobilisation too) around the slogan "right to the city" – which, at the first glance, directly or indirectly has the theses and analyses formulated by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre at the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s as a source of inspiration.

But why "*at the first glance*"?... Because in spite of a renaissance of interest in Lefebvre's works in academic circles (and to some extent also elsewhere, from NGOs to international and national [urban] "development" agencies and the like), it does not seem that Lefebvre's *approach* and *radicality* are always seriously taken into consideration and preserved. *On the contrary*.

From Brazil's *Ministério das Cidades* (= Ministry of Cities) to Hamburg's *Recht auf Stadt-Netzwerk* (= Right to the City Network), from small NGOs to *UN-Habitat*, we can find a legion of people who use "the right to the city" as a sort of umbrella-phrase. Many behave as if it should be clear to everybody what the "right to the city" means (more or less like "sustainability" and other umbrella-expressions and phrases). However, "the right to the city" should be regarded (at least by emancipatory social movements and radical intellectuals) as a kind of "*contested territory*", since the danger of a *vulgarisation* and *domestication* of Lefebvre's phrase by status-quo-conform institutions and forces is a real one.

Let us ask: What is understood as "the right to the city", and what are the premises or certain types of interpretation?

For many (surely most) NGOs and (urban) "development" agencies, the "right to the city" seems to imply the following ideal scenario: *"human and affordable housing"* (from "good" housing in a strict sense to "good" infrastructure at the neighbourhood level to "environmentally friendly" means of transport) + *"participation"* (and in this context it seems to be that for most of those observers and actors mere consultation is already something to be celebrated). The political-philosophical and social-theoretical (latent or manifest) premises could be resumed as follows: "As much social justice and environmental protection as possible, of course; but please let us be realistic, the time of utopia has passed".

Concretely, this means that: 1) neoliberalism obviously is refused, but not capitalism *as such* (i.e. there is a certain implicit presupposition that neoliberalism should, in the best of all cases, be replaced by a sort of "left-Keynesianism", which could in turn be supplemented by alternative, "solidarity"-oriented economic [micro]circuits); 2) protectionism (which intensely damages the so-called "poor countries" of the so-called "global South") must obviously be challenged and overcome, but the global (capitalist) market could be "tamed" (for instance, by means of a "Tobin-tax" and the like) and not necessarily eradicated and replaced in the course of an eradication of capitalism itself; 3) a much more efficient environmental protection in the cities and worldwide must be achieved, but this in the framework of an economic policy which "seriously" tries to "bring together" and "combine" the (capitalist) market with "ecological goals" (and this means concretely, that the warning and wisdom propagated by authors such as Murray Bookchin, Cornelius Castoriadis and others, according to whom capitalism as a mode of production is *intrinsically and essentially anti-ecological*, is either ignored or regarded as wrong and alarmist); 4) a "participative democracy" must be achieved, and this usually means the following: representative democracy must be *supplemented* and "*corrected*" by "participation" (that is, representative "democracy" and its premises – state apparatus, "free mandate" etc. – remain unquestioned).

These, in a nutshell, are the usual premises and the philosophical and theoretical background of contemporary NGOs and "development" agencies. For them, the future should not be the same as the present; but since they cannot (and in many cases do not want to) imagine a really different future, they

are content with "solutions" which, at the end of the day, represent and lead to a future which is more or less a mere extension of the present. Castoriadis once said (in the context of a critique of the capitalist ideology of economic development) that he refused to act in the name of "realism" as a kind of **"**consultant for development with minimum horror**"** (Castoriadis 1986). Well, it seems that many (or most, perhaps all) NGOs and "development" agencies feel comfortable in their role of "consultants for urban development with minimum horror". But is this the "right to the city"?...

In the midst of such a mediocre and conformist atmosphere, it is not an accident and it should not be a surprise that the "right to the city" often only means, even for many grassroots activists (particularly in the so-called "Global North"), opposition to gentrification with the result that alternative urban politics is reduced to a "politics of turf" – even if (micro)local groups and organisations build networks and sometimes act and fight at a common front. "We demand that our neighbourhood remains as it is (instead of our historically and culturally valuable and tasteful buildings being replaced by horrible shopping malls and similar things for the sake of capital accumulation); we demand lower rents (instead of increasing rents for the sake of speculators); we demand that artists and all creative people are not banished from our inner cities". OK. *But* is this all *enough*? In certain parts of the globe all this can be a legitimate *beginning* – while in most other parts we must face the challenge of the urgent satisfaction of much more basic needs from the very beginning. But the reduction of the "right to the city" to a "politics of turf" is clearly insufficient as a horizon for strategic goals and a general framework for thinking and action.

In other words, (micro)level demands and claims must be put into a broader context. For instance: 1) *gentrification and the "housing question" as "logical" results of contemporary capitalism* (and not simply or above all as a matter of [lack of] "political will"); 2) *"participation" usually as a tool for "crisis management" and systemic stabilisation* (the rare consistent cases of government-sponsored participation notwithstanding); 3) *"urban diversity" as a "location factor" for investors* (by the way, even "subversive" creativity can be commodified, provided it is properly "tamed" or even "domesticated"). If we do not consider questions like these, we see the "tree" but not the "forest", to remember an old metaphor.

In fact, in many cases the "right to the city" seems to mean the following: *The right to a better, more "human" life in the context of the capitalist city, the capitalist society and on the basis of a ("reformed" and "improved") representative "democracy"*. The fact that neoliberalism, gentrification and "disenchantment with politics" are more or less critically analysed does not necessarily imply that the fundamental premises of neoliberalism, gentrification and "disenchantment with politics" are consistently criticised (and refused). This requires some further and more decisive steps. Who is still interested in taking this radical path?...

Those who do not want to speak a "schizophrenic" or "doublespeak" language (more or less like *1984*'s "Newspeak") must be conscious that Henri Lefebvre's

path was a radical one. Maybe we could say – his (often misunderstood) heterodoxy notwithstanding – that his Marxism prevented him from being even more radical, and sometimes more precise or simply more just. A few examples should suffice:

1) Although as a very heterodox and non-Leninist Marxist he cultivated *autogestion* as a very important political concept,[1] he apparently did not have any interest in paying adequate tribute to the very complex and radical discussion on workers self-management which had been developed since the 1950s by members of the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group in France (especially by Cornelius Castoriadis), let alone to the ancient anarchistic roots of this political conception.[2]

2) Furthermore, it is also a little disappointing that although he demanded an *autogestion généralisée* (generalised self-management) and simultaneously criticised "l'experience de la planificacion autoritaire et centralisée" (the experience of authoritarian and bureaucratic planning") of bureaucratic "socialism" (Lefebvre 1998: 77), and in spite of his reservations regarding Yugoslavia's experience,[3] he nevertheless insisted on using the term *autogestion* to refer to the Yugoslavian case. (Was the Yugoslav reality under Marshall Josip Tito ultimately not similar to the bureaucratic "socialism" of the pro-Soviet countries, a little less centralisation and a little more "participation" notwithstanding?...).

Nevertheless, the "right to the city" for Lefebvre was not reducible to the right to better housing, lower rents etc. in the framework of the capitalist city (which was in fact in his eyes a "non-city", the opposite of a true human and enjoyable city), but the right to a very different life in the context of a very different, just society (see Lefebvre, 1991; see also Lefebvre 1976, 1981 and especially 1983). Symptomatically, he did not talk about "participation" (or "participative democracy" in present-day reformist sense), but about *autogestion*. Despite some shortcomings, Lefebvre was and remain a crucial source of inspiration for radical thinking – and above all, he was never a mere "consultant for (urban) development with minimum horror".

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[1] See, for instance, the essay published by him in 1966, in which he deals with *autogestion*'s theoretical problems (Lefebvre 2009), and his book *L'irruption: de Nanterre au sommet* (Lefebvre 1998), written after the events of May 1968 and republished thirty years later.

[2] He reduced the libertarian contribution to this debate to Proudhon's thought (whose ambiguities and ambivalences he accurately stressed: see Lefebvre 2009: 142-3), simply ignoring the contributions made by Bakunin, Kropotkin and others. As far as the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group is concerned, Lefebvre's reflections on *autogestion* lie far behind the level of deepness of the analyses carried out by them in the 1950s and 1960s (see Castoriadis 1983b and 1983c), not to mention Castoriadis' seminal discussions on the "*projet d'autonomie*" (= "autonomy project") in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (see Castoriadis 1975, 1983a, 1990b, 1996, 1999).

[3] Sometimes manifested only in an implicit way (see for instance Lefebvre 2009: 147-8).

Certainly, nobody has to agree with Lefebvre. And in times like these – an age of generalised conformism and lack of imagination (Castoriadis 1990a) – it is understandable that many people feel and think (even if they do not say it) that Lefebvre's approach sounds "too utopian". *But then they should at least be honest enough to leave Lefebvre alone, instead of using his words and even his name to decorate a reformist discourse and to legitimate a reformist, status-quo-conforming approach to our problems.*

The slogan "the right to the city" has become fashionable worldwide. Is this a good thing? Certainly not, if we have to pay a price as high as the *trivialisation* and *corruption* of Lefebvre's concept – with the result of this being that the expression possibly becomes useless for critical-radical purposes. Several expressions and concepts have already been more or less "colonised" in recent years and decades. It is high time to try and avoid a similar fate for the "right to the city".

One step forward and two steps back:
David Harvey and the long-lasting power of prejudice

Murray Bookchin, one of the most eminent libertarian thinkers of the second half of the 20th century, and himself author of important works about the city and citizenship (see for instance Bookchin 1974, 1992 and 1995), said, at the beginning of a text on Marx's and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, that:

> It is politically restorative to look with a fresh eye at *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (to use its original title), written before Marxism was overlaid by reformist, postmodernist, spiritual, and psychological commentaries. From an examination of this work on its own terms, what emerges is that it is not a "text" intended to be served up for academic deconstruction and convoluted exegesis but rather the manifesto of a party that challenged the existence of capitalist social relations and their underlying class base. The *Manifesto* directly faced the exploitative social order of its time and intended to move a class – the proletariat – to revolutionary action against it. (Bookchin 2010)

Bookchin, who used to be a Marxist in his youth, was still sympathetic enough to pay Marx a significant tribute, not only in this but also in other texts as well. He recognised that – Marx's contradictions, problems and ambiguities notwithstanding – there is a big difference between Marx's genius and the dogmatic mediocrity of many (or most) 20th century Marxists. In another text, he asked, after quoting some of Marx's and Engels' famous words from the *Manifesto* ("[i]n order to arrive at its content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead"):

> Is the problem any different today, as we approach the twenty-first century? Once again the dead are walking in our midst – ironically, draped in the name of Marx, the man who tried to bury the dead of the nineteenth century. So the revolution of our own day can do nothing better than parody, in turn, the October Revolution of 1917 and the civil war of 1918-

> 1920, with its "class line," its Bolshevik Party, its "proletarian dictatorship,"
> its puritanical morality, and even its slogan, "soviet power." The complete,
> all-sided revolution of our own day that can finally resolve the historic
> "social question," born of scarcity, domination and hierarchy, follows the
> tradition of the partial, the incomplete, the one-sided revolutions of the
> past, which merely changed the form of the "social question," replacing one
> system of domination and hierarchy by another. (...) At a time when all the
> political institutions of hierarchical society are entering a period of
> profound decay, we hear the hollow demands for a "political party" and a
> "worker's state." (...) At a time when centralization and the state have been
> brought to the most explosive point of historical negativity, we hear the
> hollow demands for a "centralized movement" and a "proletarian
> dictatorship." (Bookchin 2004b: 109)

"Listen, Marxist!", the text from which the afore quoted passage was extracted,
was originally published in 1969. Forty years later, David Harvey, one of the
most eminent Marxist thinkers of our time, writes a text intended to encourage
activists in relation to the task of "Organizing for the Anti-Capitalist Transition"
(Harvey 2009). In contrast to another recent text by him, basically analytic in its
nature and devoted to a reflection on the "right to the city" (Harvey 2008), the
essay published in 2009 is fundamentally intended to be a guide to action. What
did the author recommend?

He begins with an analysis of the present-day more-than-financial crisis and its
origins. Most of this analysis is undoubtedly lucid. There is no surprise in this,
for he has been, for almost forty years, one of the world's most brilliant and
consistent critical geographers and urban researchers. Even later in the text,
when he is examining the possibilities of creating alternatives to capitalist
society, he shows a sometimes a refreshing and surprising flexibility, as the
following quotation exemplifies:

> An anti-capitalist political movement can start anywhere (in labor
> processes, around mental conceptions, in the relation to nature, in social
> relations, in the design of revolutionary technologies and organizational
> forms, out of daily life, or through attempts to reform institutional and
> administrative structures including the reconfiguration of state powers).
> The trick is to keep the political movement moving from one moment to
> another in mutually reinforcing ways.

And what is more:

> The left has to look to build alliances between and across those working in
> the distinctive spheres. An anti-capitalist movement has to be far broader
> than groups mobilizing around social relations or over questions of daily
> life in themselves. Traditional hostilities between, for example, those with
> technical, scientific, and administrative expertise and those animating
> social movements on the ground have to be addressed and overcome.

Unfortunately, the above quoted remarks do not mean that Harvey departs from
the typically Marxist reductionisms and prejudices which have been pointed out
for many years, or even several decades, not only by European and US-
American thinkers such as Murray Bookchin (2004a, 2004b), and above all

Cornelius Castoriadis (1975, 1983a, 1985), but also by activists (and intellectuals who work close to them) from Latin America to Africa. When Harvey enters the domain of practical organising and strategy, he often shows the old prejudices and old-fashioned centralistic beliefs which have always characterised the Marxist mainstream. Curiously, he is almost more critical towards radical social movements than towards NGOs. His judgement about the latter sometimes even sounds too tolerant and diplomatic, though it is generally very critical and accurate:

> There are now vast numbers of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that play a political role that was scarcely visible before the mid-1970s. Funded by both state and private interests, populated often by idealist thinkers and organizers (they constitute a vast employment program), and for the most part dedicated to single-issue questions (environment, poverty, women's rights, anti-slavery and trafficking work, etc), they refrain from straight anti-capitalist politics even as they espouse progressive ideas and causes. In some instances, however, they are actively neoliberal, engaging in privatization of state welfare functions or fostering institutional reforms to facilitate market integration of marginalized populations (microcredit and microfinance schemes for low-income populations are a classic example of this).

> While there are many radical and dedicated practitioners in this NGO world, their work is at best ameliorative. Collectively, they have a spotty record of progressive achievements, although in certain arenas, such as women's rights, health care, and environmental preservation, they can reasonably claim to have made major contributions to human betterment. But revolutionary change by NGO is impossible. They are too constrained by the political and policy stances of their donors. So even though, in supporting local empowerment, they help open up spaces where anti-capitalist alternatives become possible and even support experimentation with such alternatives, they do nothing to prevent the re-absorption of these alternatives into the dominant capitalist practice: they even encourage it.

In contrast to this lucidity, he shows himself as rather ignorant of the real complexity of contemporary social movements, to the point of partly misrepresenting them:

> The second broad wing of opposition arises out of anarchist, autonomist, and grassroots organizations (GRO's) which refuse outside funding even as some of them do rely upon some alternative institutional base (such as the Catholic Church with its "base community" initiatives in Latin America or broader church sponsorship of political mobilization in the inner cities of the United States). This group is far from homogeneous (...). There is, however, a common antipathy to negotiation with state power and an emphasis upon civil society as the sphere where change can be accomplished. The self-organizing powers of people in the daily situations in which they live have to be the basis for any anti-capitalist alternative. Horizontal networking is their preferred organizing model. So-called "solidarity economies" based on bartering, collectives, and local production systems is their preferred political economic form. They typically oppose the idea that any central direction might be necessary and reject

hierarchical social relations or hierarchical political power structures along
with conventional political parties. Organizations of this sort can be found
everywhere and in some places have achieved a high degree of political
prominence. Some of them are radically anti-capitalist in their stance and
espouse revolutionary objectives and in some instances are prepared to
advocate sabotage and other forms of disruption (shades of the Red
Brigades in Italy, the Baader Meinhof in Germany, and the Weather
Underground in the United States in the 1970s).

Let us take a break now to pose a simple question: What do centralised, *Marxist
and Leninist* inspired organisations such as German Baader-Meinhof group
(better: *Rote Armee Fraktion* [RAF]) from the past have in common with
contemporary, autonomy-oriented and radical-democratically organised social
movements such as the Mexican Zapatistas?!... To consider non-"pacifism" as a
kind of common ground is a misrepresentation of facts, since the RAF's terrorist
disruption strategy is fundamentally different from the politically more
productive and ethically more legitimate use of weapons – and most frequently
just stones and Molotov cocktails – by Zapatistas, *piqueteros*, alter-globalisation
movements (or even the German *Autonomen* in the 1980s and 1990s), and so
on.

The next sentences in that paragraph are lapidary:

> But the effectiveness of all these movements (leaving aside their more
> violent fringes) is limited by *their reluctance and inability to scale up their
> activism into large-scale organizational forms capable of confronting
> global problems. The presumption that local action is the only meaningful
> level of change* [emphasis added] and that anything that smacks of
> hierarchy is anti-revolutionary is self-defeating when it comes to larger
> questions.

Who shares the presumption that "local action is the only meaningful level of
change"? "Think globally, act locally" is a slogan propagated in the wake of the
increasing popularity of the "sustainable development"-ideology and a certain
sort of environmental activism, but it does not have very much to do with
Mexican Zapatistas or Argentinian *piqueteros*. Harvey apparently ignores how
the Zapatistas' use of Internet as early as in the middle of the 1990s enhanced
their ability to achieve a "diffusion" of their solidarity network, not to mention
the peculiar way of "global framing" (to use two of Sidney Tarrow's (2005)
expressions) which has always been one of their characteristics, their regional
roots and "rootedness" in Chiapas notwithstanding. And a *politics of scale* can
also been observed in relation to several other movements, such as the shack
dweller's movement *Abahlali baseMjondolo* in South Africa which has
developed a number of settlements into communes but has also, for instance,
organised in solidarity with *Fanmi Lavalas* in Haiti. Harvey is simply mistaking
local and regional "rootedness" for a narrow "politics of turf" and parochialism,

and in so doing he grossly misrepresents many of today's most important social movements.[4]

It is true that many radical movements regard organising at the local level as a clear priority – and yes, they do it partly as a result of their approach to social (spatial) change, such as valuating and exploring the connections between all spheres of life (production, consumption, politics, culture) inside concrete "lived spaces" and *dissident territories* (Souza 2006a). But this priority is also simply a matter of necessity: Poor activists from "(semi)peripheral" countries cannot afford to travel around the world as campaigners and "rooted cosmopolitans" from Europe and the USA can; very often they do not even have easy access to the Internet; and they do not speak foreign languages.[5] However, this priority does not necessarily mean that parochialism is cultivated as a value. Sure, *territorial corporatism* (Souza 2006a) has been a characteristic of many urban activisms for decades, under the influence of clientelism and *caciquismo*, or (as far as middle-class activists are concerned) as an expression of the defence of some privileges. However, this does not have anything to do with the really emancipatory movements such as the Zapatistas, South Africa's Abahlali baseMjondolo (shack dwellers' movement), the most radical parts of the Argentinian *piqueteros* and the Brazilian *sem-teto*, and so on – which are very often open to "transnational activism" (in the form of dialogue, networking and co-operation) as far is possible given the material constraints that they face.

After criticising social movements in a rather vague and generalising way, David Harvey then offers what can be seen as a logical conclusion – a discreet apology for Leninist parties and of centralism in general:

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[4] Of course the Zapatistas are not an urban social movement and so their relevance in terms of a "right to the city" is obviously only an indirect one. However, it is important to mention them here (along with some other movements such as Brazil's *sem-terra* [landless land workers] movement), for they also help to demonstrate Harvey's oversimplifications. Moreover, Lefebvre differentiated between the *city* in itself and the *urban* ("*l'urbaine*"), which represents a type of society, and in this sense it is possible to argue that the "urban problematic" concerns *all* social-political agents, even in countries such as Mexico or Brazil. It is not an accident that MST (Brazil's internationally known *sem-terra* organization) tried to stimulate activism in the cities by means of supporting and inspiring the creation of the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto (MTST) (literally, Movement of Roofless Workers), which is the best known organisation of the *sem-teto* movement, urban counterpart to the *sem-terra*.

[5] Sidney Tarrow wrote that "[i]n recent decades, rapid electronic communication, cheaper international travel, diffusion of the English language, and the spread of the "script" of modernity (...) have facilitated transnational activism." (Tarrow 2005: 5) But facilitated for *whom*?... Tarrow defines "rooted cosmopolitans" as "*individuals and groups who mobilize domestic and international resources and opportunities to advance claims on behalf of external actors, against external opponents, or in favor of goals they hold in common with transnational allies.*" (Tarrow 2005: 29, emphasis in the original) But it is irritating obvious that young, educated European and US-American "rooted cosmopolitans" and activists can exercise transnationalism much more easily than activists from "(semi)peripheral" countries. Tarrow did not completely ignore the differences in resources between activists in "North" and "South", but he did not emphasize them adequately.

> The third broad trend is given by the transformation that has been
> occurring in traditional labor organizing and left political parties, varying
> from social democratic traditions to more radical Trotskyist and
> Communist forms of political party organization. This trend is not hostile to
> the conquest of state power or hierarchical forms of organization. Indeed, it
> regards the latter as necessary to the integration of political organization
> across a variety of political scales. In the years when social democracy was
> hegemonic in Europe and even influential in the United States, state control
> over the distribution of the surplus became a crucial tool to diminish
> inequalities. The failure to take social control over the production of
> surpluses and thereby really challenge the power of the capitalist class was
> the Achilles heel of this political system, but we should not forget the
> advances that it made even if it is now clearly insufficient to go back to such
> a political model with its social welfarism and Keynesian economics. The
> Bolivarian movement in Latin America and the ascent to state power of
> progressive social democratic governments is one of the most hopeful signs
> of a resuscitation of a new form of left statism.

At this point Harvey's view becomes clearer and clearer. Stressing that left
political parties are "not hostile to the conquest of state power or hierarchical
forms of organization" (of course not, that is their *raison d'être*!), he also
assumes that these parties are experiencing some remarkable "transformation"
(how he interprets it, it will become clear soon). The experience of social
democracy and "eurocommunism" was apparently a very positive one in his
eyes ("[i]n the years when social democracy was hegemonic in Europe and even
influential in the United States, state control over the distribution of the surplus
became a crucial tool to diminish inequalities"), albeit at the same time an
incomplete and partly unsuccessful one ("[t]he failure to take social control over
the production of surpluses and thereby really challenge the power of the
capitalist class was the Achilles heel of this political system"). Anyway, the new
forms of "left statism" are being built elsewhere – for instance in "Bolivarian"
Venezuela, which is a remarkably ambivalent and contradictory experiment, to
say the least –, and they seem to be a great hope for Harvey.

His reasoning reaches its "climax" when he gives us more examples which
didactically illustrate his way to evaluate concrete situations:

> While there are some signs of recovery of both labor organizing and left
> politics (as opposed to the "third way" celebrated by New Labor in Britain
> under Tony Blair and disastrously copied by many social democratic parties
> in Europe) along with signs of the emergence of more radical political
> parties in different parts of the world, the exclusive reliance upon a
> vanguard of workers is now in question as is the ability of those leftist
> parties that gain some access to political power to have a substantive impact
> upon the development of capitalism and to cope with the troubled dynamics
> of crisis-prone accumulation. (...) But left political parties and labor unions
> are significant still, and their takeover of aspects of state power, as with the
> Workers' Party in Brazil or the Bolivarian movement in Venezuela, has had
> a clear impact on left thinking, not only in Latin America. The complicated
> problem of how to interpret the role of the Communist Party in China, with

its exclusive control over political power, and what its future policies might
be about is not easily resolved either.

Mistaking appearances for substance, he assumes that Brazil's government
under Lula is a left-wing one (while it is in truth a populist government, based
on a coalition of parties which ranges from centre-left to centre-right and which
is led by a former left-wing party[6]). But what is particularly astonishing is that
for him the problem of how to interpret the role of the Communist Party in
China" is a "complicated" one...

It is no wonder that he later stresses that the "(...) co-revolutionary theory
earlier laid out would suggest that *there is no way that an anti-capitalist social
order can be constructed without seizing state power* [emphasis by MLS]." It is
really amusing to read all this, because he had written a couple of pages before
that "[t]he failings of past endeavors to build a lasting socialism and
communism have to be avoided and lessons from that immensely complicated
history must be learned". It seems he has not learned very much.

When Harvey writes that "a global anti-capitalist movement is unlikely to
emerge without some animating vision of what is to be done and why", this is a
sentence which sounds like a foretaste and the meaning of which becomes clear
later: He dreams (as orthodox Marxists do) of a "privileged revolutionary
subject" and of a unifying theory (or "vision") which clarifies what this "subject"
has to do ("and why"). He knows that the working class (*Proletariat* in a strict
sense) with its trade-unions and political parties (social democracy and the like)
is no longer a "privileged revolutionary subject" in history. As a Marxist, he
must be a little confused (and there are so many phenomena which can confuse
Marxists nowadays, such as the role of peasants as much more relevant critical
protagonists than factory workers or the critical-transformative role of large
portions of the *Lumpenproletariat*[7]); but as a coherent and more or less

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[6] Brazil's economic and social policy under Lula has been a mixture of statism and neoliberal
elements, in which features such as "fiscal responsibility", the priority given to agribusiness and
the absence of a true land reform are "tempered" by compensatory social policies. By the way,
when Harvey (surely not very well informed, but actually reproducing a statist interpretative
bias as well) writes in his earlier paper on the "right to the city" that a new legal framework,
conquered "after pressure from social movements", was introduced as a tool "to recognize the
collective right to the city" in Brazil (Harvey 2008, 39), he is both exaggerating the reach of this
legal framework (and even the role of the social movements in the process) and contributing to a
trivialisation of the "right to the city"-slogan.

[7] As everybody knows, Marx and Engels (see *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Eighteenth
Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *The Peasant War in Germany* etc.) were very suspicious towards
both peasants and the so-called "*Lumpenproletariat*": Both were regarded as intrinsically
conservative and potentially reactionary. Of course, the peasantry could and should be "guided"
by the industrial workers (the only way to escape conservatism); but even in this case typical
Marxism considered peasants as, in the best of all cases, secondary partners, never as true
protagonists. As far as the "*Lumpenproletariat*" is concerned, the prejudice is even bigger,
sometimes expressed even in moralistic terms ("the social scum, that passively rotting mass
thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society"; "this scum of depraved elements from all
classes"; "this scum, offal, refuse of all classes"...). Interestingly, in Brazil (a country whose
population predominantly lives in cities) the by far most important and combative organisations
of social movements are animated by peasants (*sem-terra*), and in countries like Brazil,

orthodox Marxist he cannot prevent himself from dreaming of unifying "visions", "transformed" left-parties, centralistic and statist solutions, "seizing state power", and so on. Nothing new in the west... It is against this ideological background that we have to interpret his words from his earlier paper on the "right to the city", when he regrets that social movements have not "yet converged on the singular aim of gaining greater control over the uses of the surplus – let alone over the conditions of its production". (Harvey 2008: 39)

We can agree with Harvey when he says that "Lenin's question ['what is to be done?'] demands an answer" (Harvey 2009). But it is difficult to see how he (or Lenin) can help us to find a convincing answer. And not only libertarians would agree on this point, but also probably Henri Lefebvre himself.

"Another world [and another city] is possible"?
Some radical remarks about the circumstances under which this slogan can really make sense

What could be the alternative solutions?... We can reflect theoretically on them, but we cannot design them as a "blueprint for the future", as rationalists always (try to) do. Fortunately, alternative solutions (at least partial ones) have been implemented by different social movements for a long time, although some intellectuals apparently cannot see them.

When Harvey writes that "to ignore the state and the dynamics of the inter-state system is therefore a ridiculous idea for any anti-capitalist revolutionary movement to accept", we can ask who is "ignoring" the state. The *piqueteros*, who won the right to manage government welfare subsidies themselves (the so-called *planes*)? The Zapatistas, who have fought against the Mexican state, but were and are also prepared to negotiate with it? The Brazilian *sem-terra* and *sem-teto*, who try to influence public policies by means of putting the state under pressure? Certainly not. South Africa's *Abahlali baseMjondolo* proclaimed the slogan "No land! No house! No vote!", and has actively boycotted elections in protest at the government's and developed some of their own dual power institutions. However, boycotting elections is a tactical manoeuvre which does not prevent *Abahlali* from trying to talk to the state apparatus as far as it is possible in order to present demands; unfortunately, response of the ruling party to progress in negotiations with government officials has been brutal repression.

In fact, even Spanish anarchists already knew that a radical opposition to the state (by the way, much more radical than the Marxist critique of the *capitalist* state) is not the same as "ignoring" the state apparatus; from 1936 to 1938 they built a *parallel* system of libertarian structures and networks (from the local-

Argentina and South Africa a not insignificant part of the "hyperprecariat" (a term which I introduced precisely to avoid the expression "*Lumpenproletariat*") has been responsible for some of the most important contemporary urban social movements (*sem-teto*, *piqueteros*, *Abahlali baseMjondolo*....

level *colectividades* and *pueblos* to the *federaciones comarcales* to the *federaciones provinciales* to the *federaciones regionales*) which co-existed with some tension with the institutions of republican Spain (*Consejo* of Aragon, *Generalitat* in Catalonia etc.) – and the Achilles heel of many of them (the anarcho-syndicalists) was precisely that they compromised *too much* with the state, as Murray Bookchin argued (Bookchin 1994a, 1994b).

When libertarians[8] say (as they have always said) a decisive *no* to goals such as "seizing state power", a "socialist state" and "democratic centralism" (Leninist party structures), they are not just reproducing a tradition, but – in contrast to Harvey – also considering the lessons from the past. For libertarians free association, horizontality and mutual aid, communes, networks and confederations are seen as tools and strategies to overcome not only class and class exploitation, but oppression as a whole (including racism, patriarchy, and so on). When libertarians as different as Cornelius Castoriadis and Murray Bookchin are critical towards "historical materialism" because of it's epistemologically and theoretically reductionist approach to society and history (and space, I may add), they also have good reasons. It is not that they "ignore" political economy as a part of a critique of capitalism; they just refuse economism and teleology.

Nevertheless, it would be unjust to demonise Marx and Marxism as a whole. In truth, besides well-known 19th and 20th century libertarian thinkers such as Kropotkin, Castoriadis or Bookchin (as well as other European and non-European thinkers who stand close to the libertarian tradition, like Michel Foucault, Felix Guattari and Ivan Illich), and besides the contemporary Latin American and African intellectuals who are themselves activists or co-operate closely with social movements (from *Subcomandante Insurgente* Marcos to Raúl Zibechi), it is fair to recognise that heterodox, non-Leninist Marxists such as Anton Pannekoek, Edward P. Thompson, Herbert Marcuse and Henri Lefebvre are valid sources of inspiration as well.

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[8] According to the *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, the adjective 'libertarian' comes from the noun 'libertarian,' which means both "an advocate of the doctrine of free will" and "a person who upholds the principles of absolute and unrestricted liberty, especially of thought and action". In fact, the original French word was introduced by anarchist Joseph Déjacques in the middle of the 19th century, as an alternative to *libéral* (liberal). However, in contrast to the Latin languages, in which *libertaire* (French), *libertario* (Spanish and Italian) and *libertário* (Portuguese) are related above all to anarchism and radical democracy, in anglophone countries (and especially in the United States) 'libertarian' is often interpreted as a kind of *ultra-liberalism*, that is a strict defence of the 'minimal state' and individualism at its peak. In this text, the adjective *libertarian* covers the heterogeneous set of approaches to society which historically evolved in the context of a two-war-front, in which theoretical and political fighting has taken place simultaneously against capitalism and against 'authoritarian' approaches to socialism: from classical anarchism (19th century and early 20th century) to European and US-forms of neoanarchism (from the second half of the 20th century onwards) to European autonomism (idem) to the renewed forms of libertarian thinking and praxis which have massively emerged in Latin American countries in recent years (Mexican Zapatistas, a part of the Argentinian *piqueteros*, and so on).

David Harvey gives the impression that movements such as the Zapatistas, *piqueteros* and *Abahlali baseMjondolo* are committed to narrow-minded localism as a goal, while they actually represent a critical and original form of "militant particularism", more or less in Raymond William's sense:

> Of course almost all labour struggles begin as particularist. People recognize some condition and problem they have in common, and make the effort to work together to change or solve it. But then this is nothing special in the working class. You have only to look at the militancy of stockbrokers or of country landowners or of public-school headmasters. The unique and extraordinary character of working-class self-organization has been that it has tried to connect particular struggles to a general struggle in one quite special way. It has set out, as a movement, to make real what is at first sight the extraordinary claim that the defense and advancement of certain particular interests, properly brought together, are in fact in the general interest." (Williams 1989:249)

However, there is no need to restrict the possibility of transcending "particularism" in a "parochial" sense by means of "politics of scale" ("global framing", "diffusion", "scale shift", "coalition forming" etc.) to the workers' movement; other social movements have also achieved supralocal relevance (and even networking).

Libertarians have always refused verticality and demanded horizontality. This may sound sectarian or even naïve for most Marxists; but for libertarians, it is not enough to criticise Stalinism or even Leninism – it is necessary to criticise all forms of rigid hierarchy and verticality which are, more often than not, unfortunately reproduced inside organisations of social movements themselves, partly under influence or inspiration of political parties... For libertarians this is the best antidote to prejudices such as those which lead a brilliant scholar like Harvey to consider Brazil's PT government as very progressive, or to, pathetically, regard the role of China's Communist Party as a sort of enigma.

Nowadays, many libertarians (surely not all of them) would agree that "*institutional struggle*" in a broader sense should not be regarded as a taboo. ("Institutional struggle" in a broader sense does not mean that activists and movements enter political parties, but that they try to influence public policies, plans and legislation.) Under certain circumstances, this is not only useful but also *necessary* (to avoid isolation, for instance).[9] However, it is crucial to

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[9] Murray Bookchin developed some innovation in this regard with his "libertarian municipalism" (or "Communalism") approach, which was an attempt to make libertarians fit for present-day challenges (see Bookchin 1995, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d, 2007c). He was non-dogmatic – perhaps "*too* non-dogmatic"... – to the point of defending that libertarians could take part in *municipal* (not at higher levels) elections, in order to facilitate the tasks of influencing legislation and of building a kind of duality of power: "(...) Communalists try to build lasting organizations and institutions that can play a socially transformative role in the real world. Significantly, Communalists do not hesitate to run candidates in *municipal* elections who, if elected, would use what real power their offices confer to legislate popular assemblies into existence. These assemblies, in turn, would have the power ultimately to create effective forms of town-meeting government." (Bookchin 2007c:115) However, Bookchin's approach must be considered with very much caution. It can sometimes make a sense, but only under very

understand and admit that the *state* apparatus *as such* is an intrinsically and essentially *heteronomous structure*, reforms and *conjuncturally* "progressive" *governments* notwithstanding.

Therefore, institutional struggle can, in the best of all cases, play a supplementary role in relation to *direct action*; it cannot replace it, and it should never eclipse it. The state is not a "partner" (as it very much is for NGOs); the state apparatus *as such* is an *enemy*, even if it is sometimes (dialectically) more or less genuinely open to pressures from below as a *government*. To which extent this openness can be used by social movements (instead of the movements being instrumentalised by the state), is something which has to be decided on a case-by-case basis. Social movements must learn to deal with the state with pragmatism, but also without illusions.

Hence, as far as the role of institutional struggle *vis a vis* direct action is concerned, we should avoid both dogmatism and naivety. I would like to use two phrases, the first one steaming from Nietzsche and the second one from Spinoza, as "political-philosophical metaphorical epigraphs" to such a discussion:

> 1) "And he who would not languish amongst men, must learn to drink out of all glasses: and he who would keep clean amongst men, must know how to wash himself even with dirty water." (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*)

> 2) "A good which prevents our enjoyment of a greater good is in reality an evil." (Spinoza, *Ethics*)

Nietzsche's words can be used as a kind of metaphor for the following warning: *Do not be dogmatic!*; whilst Spinoza's words sound like a warning which can be applied to "participation" and other examples of institutional struggle: *Do not be pragmatic to the point of forgetting what is essential, of losing perspective, of becoming domesticated.* Social movements must optimise their ability in combining these two pieces of wisdom with each other, in order to achieve a balance which prevents both co-optation and sectarianism (and isolation).

Social movements must talk and articulate with each other, organise and mobilise in creative ways. Felix Guattari spoke already in the 1970s and 1980s of "molecular revolution" versus "molar structures" – "molar" referring to centralistic and hierarchically unified organisations such as political parties, "molecular" referring to the level of flexible "micropolitics" – and of "transversal organisation" – that is, an organisational form which does not separate the "how" and the "why" of collective activities from each other (in fact a very old libertarian principle) and which *articulate* without seeking for *uniformity* (Guattari 1987a and 1987b). It is not necessary to adopt all of Guattari's theoretical premises, or his approach as a whole, to admit that his insights still bring fresh air into the debate on organisation forms (from a

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special circumstances (for instance, in the cases in which it is not necessary to join a party in order to run for a local office or city council seat), and *never* as a general strategy. In fact, the risk of structural co-optation is probably always very high.

libertarian viewpoint) and that they can be at least partly used as sources of inspiration.

Be that as it may, social movements must continually reinvent themselves, their strategies and tactics, and finally their language, in order to avoid the colonisation of radical slogans and concepts (such as the "right to the city") and to cope with new and old challenges. Fortunately, this is more than a mere matter of pure theoretical speculation. Several important movements have already done and are doing precisely this, in different countries and under more or less different (and more or less similar) circumstances, from Britain's *Reclaim the Streets* to the Mexican Zapatistas, from the European social centres movement to a large part of Argentina's *piqueteros*, from Argentina's *fábricas recuperadas* (recovered factories) movement to the alter-globalisation movement worldwide, from Brazil's *sem-teto* to South Africa's *Abahlali baseMjondolo*.[10]

And they must do it sometimes "*together with* the state" (for tactical reasons, and always in a very cautious and limited way), but above all "*despite* the state" and essentially "*against* the state", as I pointed out elsewhere (Souza 2006a and 2006b). Of course there are still many open questions, and there are many unsolved problems; there are even contradictions inside many movements (after all, we shall not forget that these activists act inside a heteronomous society and that they are exposed to all sorts of material, political and ideological pressures and influences). But only these and other emancipatory movements (and *not* Marxist-Leninist parties) represent a key to overcome these problems in a truly *new* and *liberatory* way – that is to say, a key to the *right to the city*, a key to a *just and free society.*

Acknowledgements

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[10] It would surely exceed the scope of this text to mention more than a couple of references about these movements. For this reason, just a few sources about the Latin American and African movements above mentioned: see Zibechi (2003 and 2007) for *piqueteros* (and for Zapatistas too, as far as the second book is concerned), as well as Colectivo Situaciones (2002) and Svampa and Pereyra (2004); Rebón and Saavedra (2006) for the *fábricas recuperadas* movement; Souza (2006a) for the *sem-teto*; Pithouse (2008) for Abahlali baseMjondolo.

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URL for this article

En boca de todos: apuntes para divulgar historia

Producción colectiva

«Desde aquella vez no sabemos que hacer con las historias,
con los muertos que no aceptan su desdichada condición, no
sabemos que hacer con el miedo; no sabemos
encontrar nuestras manos, nuestra
tristeza. El mundo inconsistente»

Paco Urondo, Del otro lado

Sujetos, objetos, quiénes y qué

Situación 1: *Diciembre, mesa de examen de Sociología en una escuela media de Ing. Maschwitz.*

Profesor *(interrogando a la alumna): -¿Para quién investiga la sociología?*

Alumna *(dubitativa)**: -Mmm... Para la gente.*

Profesor: *-Mas que para la gente, para las instituciones...*

Situación 2: *Clase del profesorado de historia, se acerca el primer examen domiciliario y la docente recomienda a los nerviosos estudiantes recién iniciados.*

Profesora: *-Lo que escriban se lo tienen que dar para que lo lea algún familiar o amigo, no importa si no lo entiende, el tema es que suene bien.*

El pasado siempre nos ha sido contado y de alguna u otra manera esta tarea fue realizada por algún miembro del grupo involucrado en esa historia: desde un relato familiar, donde el tío, la madre o el abuelo cuentan anécdotas, aportan datos o reconstruyen parentescos olvidados, hasta una comunidad tribal en la que el chamán o anciano adquiere la habilidad, no sólo de relatar el pasado colectivo, sino de franquear las barreras del tiempo comunicándose directamente con sus ancestros, los muertos. La tarea del historiador se nos presenta de alguna forma como una continuidad de estas prácticas, de esa necesidad social indispensable del ser humano: conocer su historia.

Cada pueblo tiene su historia y cada época sus historiadores. El relato que ordenaba el pasado argentino hizo crisis en diciembre de 2001, abriendo una grieta en nuestro sentido de la historia y dejando en su lugar un espacio vacante. El momento reclama nuevos relatos y nuevos historiadores capaces de articularlos.

El objeto de esta intervención es plantear la *divulgación de historia* como una actividad urgente y necesaria. Se trata de recuperar el vínculo entre la práctica

del historiador y los modos en que la propia comunidad se relaciona con su pasado. Este desafío sólo puede ser afrontado organizándonos. Por eso este texto es también una convocatoria a un proyecto de autoformación y trabajo que piense cómo producimos historia, qué es lo que contamos y a quiénes buscamos interpelar al hacerlo.

Quienes escribimos esto formamos un grupo que viene cuestionando la producción de saberes tal como se da en ámbitos académicos y explorando modos de organización colectiva de la investigación y la escritura de historia[1]. El eje de este proyecto es volver a contar la historia argentina desde una perspectiva no centrada en el mundo de las élites o de la llamada "alta" política (aunque no puede olvidarlas), sino que busque expresarnos junto a aquellos que viven o han vivido resistiendo al dominio del estado capitalista, una narración del pasado que revele la incontenible creatividad de los hombres y mujeres que producen o han producido diariamente este mundo a través de la cooperación social. Los relatos históricos son una herramienta más en la construcción de discursos y prácticas de cambio social. Buscamos convocar a quienes quieran reconstruir el sentido político de la actividad de historiar, estén estudiando, investiguen o no, trabajen como docentes o estén involucrados con la historia de cualquier manera.

Lo que sigue a esta presentación no es una receta ni un método, sino un intento de pensar los principales problemas que involucra la actividad de la divulgación histórica.

Buenos Aires

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[1] Hace unos años ya, publicamos *Tiempo de Insurgencia. Experiencias comunistas en la Revolución Rusa*, que circuló en la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (donde nos conocimos).

Primera parte

La divulgación como problema

1. El fin de la historia...
O la hegemonía del capital

"Para nuestros propósitos, importan poco los oscuros pensamientos de la gente en Albania o Burkina Faso, porque estamos interesados en lo que podríamos llamar la herencia ideológica común de la humanidad"
Fukuyama

La crisis del relato que ordenaba la historia argentina es un fenómeno que podemos enmarcar en una "crisis de sentido" propia de esta época. En primer lugar, los proyectos revolucionarios del siglo XIX y del XX han sufrido una derrota estratégica luego de la década del '70, cuando eran realmente palpables. Hoy parecen viejos sueños tras la ofensiva capitalista que se coronó en los años '90 con la disolución de la URSS.[2] El post modernismo festejó entonces la caída de los grandes referentes, esto es, el abandono sistemático de los conceptos que permiten la comprensión global de una situación (por ejemplo clase, estado, trabajo, totalidad, sujeto). A la vez, a pesar de su vocación crítica, terminó abonando una cultura que profundizó los peores aspectos del liberalismo individualista.

En segundo lugar, la crisis de sentido se vincula con las redefiniciones que vienen experimentando las identidades centradas en la nación, por obra tanto de la expansión del poder de mando del capital a nivel global como del surgimiento de formas de resistencia que trascienden los marcos estatales. En los últimos tiempos, en América Latina, los símbolos de lo nacional vienen siendo utilizados tanto en intentos del capital por recomponer su dominio como por parte de movimientos que lo resisten. En cualquier caso, ya no resulta evidente para cualquiera qué es la nación y cuáles son las comunidades que se reconocen en ella.

En tercer lugar, en el marco de la Argentina, los grandes cambios producidos durante los últimos treinta años han generado falta de perspectiva y de proyecto en las clases populares y en la militancia revolucionaria. La crisis que se expresó tanto económica, como política y socialmente a fines del 2001, abrió una serie de sentidos insurgentes que no lograron permanecer en el tiempo como opciones organizativas que generaran un nuevo proyecto. En fin, la crisis de sentido, desde el punto de vista de las luchas de las clases populares, responde a un problema subjetivo profundo: la ausencia, por el momento, de caminos para

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[2] No se trata, con esta afirmación, de discutir el régimen soviético sino de reconocer la diferencia que representaba su existencia en la lucha de clases a nivel mundial.

la recomposición política que articule sus fragmentos, hoy dispersos, en un nuevo proletariado.

En este sentido es que nos paramos desde aquellas prácticas, pensamientos y posibilidades que vimos abrirse delante de nosotros a partir del verano que se inició en diciembre de 2001. Hacía mucho tiempo que no se veía algo así. Las ciudades estaban inquietas. El malestar afloraba en todos lados. La crisis se volvía virulenta. Y como no podía ser de otra manera, algo hizo estallar el barril de pólvora. El humor social se había vuelto denso y se respiraba un contagioso aire de indignación y rebeldía. Las políticas de ajuste permanente iban a encontrar en la vereda de enfrente a una fuerza social en movimiento. Al principio fueron saqueos a comercios, supermercados preferentemente pero no sólo. Las barriadas habían sentido el toque de campana y habían ido a reventar algunos negocios. Aquí lo inició un puntero duhaldista, allí la imitación, más acá la bronca y así cundió el ejemplo. Semanas de saqueos para engordar las heladeras y los arbolitos de Navidad. La situación se volvió inmanejable, cierto dejar hacer en algunos lados, represión en otros. Llegó el 19 de diciembre y el entonces presidente De la Rúa decidió proclamar el estado de sitio. Una pueblada de dimensiones nacionales comenzaba esa misma noche ni bien el presidente terminó su discurso. Miles y miles de personas se movilizaban hacia algún lugar. Barricadas en los barrios anunciaban el punto de encuentro para luego seguir el espíritu de caminata que comenzó a regir nuestros cuerpos. Duró todo el día, siguió toda la noche y se extendió todo el día siguiente. Enfrentamientos con la policía en varias ciudades incluyendo la Capital Federal. Las consignas de esa primer batalla fueron "que boludos, el estado de sitio se lo meten en el culo" y la más duradera y en algún sentido estratégica "que se vayan todos". Estas consignas fueron, como suele suceder en la tradición política argentina, coreadas por las multitudes que inundaban las calles. Y así fueron ganando en popularidad y masividad hasta convertirse en gritos unificadores de la protesta.

Se iniciaba una nueva etapa, nuestra etapa. Por fin se ponía fin, aunque fuera momentáneamente, a la figura del ciudadano solitario. Luego de 18 años se terminaba la dictadura que había dejado marcado a sangre y fuego el "retorno" a la democracia. Crisis institucional, falta de representación, organizaciones de base por todos lados, auge de movilización, creación de conciencia, aprendizaje acelerado, politización violenta. Duró un tiempo, se podrá discutir cuánto duró el auge de masas, pero no podemos dudar que dejó su huella, que la nueva época que vivimos está parida por el 19 y 20 de diciembre. Estas imágenes ayudan a situar lo que para nosotros es a la vez una crisis de sentido y la aparición de una serie de potencias y posibilidades aún no articuladas, aún no experimentadas en su máximo poder, pero que ya lanzan sus propias preguntas al pasado.

2. El vacío es un espacio en perspectiva

"Treinta radios lleva el cubo de una rueda; lo útil para el carro es su nada (su
hueco). Con arcilla se fabrican las vasijas;
en ellas lo útil es la nada (su oquedad)"
Lao Tse

Una historia es aquello que intenta dar cuenta del devenir de un determinado
grupo de personas a la vez que ayuda a que esa sumatoria de individuos se
constituya como un grupo específico, al otorgarles una identidad común, una
memoria colectiva. Es un relato que se estructura a partir de una serie de
problemas o nudos significativos, que son los que ordenan la diversidad de los
acontecimientos. La historia intenta brindar a todos aquellos que abrevan en
ella un sentido colectivo, una suerte de batería de respuestas para ciertas
preguntas fundamentales de la sociedad. El intranquilo y preocupado "¿cómo
hemos llegado hasta aquí?" encuentra en las páginas de la historia una
tranquilizadora aunque no siempre agradable respuesta.[3]

En Argentina, luego de la vuelta de la democracia en 1983, los historiadores más
relevantes del campo académico aspiraron a construir una narrativa nacional
que dotara de sentido a la nueva experiencia. Contaron historias que apuntaban
a la construcción de un país normal, capitalista y democrático, contra el país
deforme de los años anteriores. La normalización del país tuvo su correlato en la
reconfiguración de la historia nacional: la lectura que se hacía entonces del
pasado estaba atravesada por la clave del desarrollo de la democracia. Los
relatos, despojados del sesgo dramático de la lucha de clases, se limitaban a
contarle a la sociedad el penoso y largo camino que había recorrido para llegar a
disfrutar de las mieles de la democracia: instituciones fuertes, elecciones
periódicas, libertades individuales y garantías constitucionales. Este discurso se
sostuvo sin grandes sobresaltos mientras la certidumbre y la confianza colectiva
en esa democracia fue alta. A medida que la normalidad del país se develó como
la tragedia de una sociedad desgarrada, dividida en clases sociales enfrentadas,
con ganadores y perdedores, esta narrativa fue perdiendo efectividad.
Finalmente, la crisis social del 2001 terminó de hundirla, dando lugar a una
situación de vacancia de historias.

Una vacancia de historias es el momento que se produce cuando los relatos
históricos que daban sentido a las prácticas de la sociedad dejan de tener
credibilidad y se vuelven vetustos, obsoletos. Supone una ausencia, un espacio
que hay que volver a llenar. Todas las certezas y creencias que se tenían sobre
ese pasado se desvanecen al ritmo vertiginoso que generan las dudas sobre el
presente. Dado el vínculo innegable que existe entre historia y sociedad, las

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[3] Lo que sigue está basado en el trabajo de Acha, Omar, "Las narrativas contemporáneas de la
historia nacional y sus vicisitudes", en *Nuevo Topo. Revista de historia y pensamiento crítico*,
N° 1, septiembre/octubre 2005, pp. 9-31.

grandes crisis sociales producen grandes crisis en las narrativas históricas. La explosión de nuevas formas de organizarse, de cooperar, de relacionarse que se experimentaron después del estallido popular, fue lo que disparó una demanda creciente de nuevos relatos históricos, haciendo evidente la presencia de esa vacancia.

3. La nueva divulgación

Situación 3: *Presentación de un libro de Jorge Lanata en la Feria del Libro.* Intervenciones del público: "Jorge, todo bien con la lista de defectos argentinos, pero ¿Ahora qué hacemos? ¿cómo cambiamos las cosas?"

Pero claro, una nueva divulgación pronto se propuso llenar ese vacío... Cuando hablamos de "nueva divulgación" nos estamos refiriendo a autores como Felipe Pigna —quizá el caso más paradigmático— o Jorge Lanata y a los nuevos relatos históricos que se multiplican en diversos formatos con difusión masiva. No alcanza atribuir su éxito al hecho de que sean productos comerciales de grandes editoriales o medios de comunicación. Es necesario explicar el porqué de la irrupción actual de estas narraciones sobre el pasado nacional y de su mayor receptividad por parte de amplios sectores sociales.[4]

La enorme cantidad de libros, revistas, páginas web, programas radiales o de televisión, cursos o conferencias sobre temas históricos que circulan actualmente son producidos en general por divulgadores que provienen de ámbitos no "eruditos". Una característica de estos relatos es que apelan a modos de comunicación y saberes ya conocidos por aquellos a los que se dirigen: la historia escolar, los recursos del periodismo, los héroes individuales y las fechas del calendario patrio.[5] Al dialogar con saberes previos intentan construir un determinado sentido del pasado y el presente de la Argentina, colaborando así en una nueva estrategia discursiva que apuesta por la recomposición de la autoridad y de las instituciones estatales.

Por ejemplo, Pigna adopta la dictadura 1976-1983 como clave interpretativa de todo el pasado nacional en un movimiento paralelo al de los gobiernos de

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[4] Distintos trabajos vienen aportando a pensar esta situación en los últimos años, tal los casos de Omar Acha, ob. cit., Pablo Semán, "Historia, best-sellers y política", en *El ajo continuo. Exploraciones descentradas sobre cultura popular y masiva*, Editorial Gorla, Buenos Aires, 2006; Hernán Apaza, "Divulgadores de la historia, público y sentido común", manuscrito facilitado por el autor, 2007. Otros análisis sobre la nueva divulgación se pueden encontrar en: Lucía Feijoo, "El nuevo interés por la historia. La visión light de Pigna y la crisis de la historiografía liberal", en *Lucha de clases*, N° 6, junio de 2006; Beatriz Sarlo, "Historia académica vs. Historia de divulgación, en *La Nación*, 22/01/2006 y Fabián Harari, "Acerca de la divulgación, los profesores universitarios y los manuales de historia", en *La contra. Los enemigos de la Revolución de Mayo, ayer y hoy*, Ediciones r y r, Buenos Aires, 2006.

[5] Así, la nueva divulgación difunde historia al modo del docente que explica *la verdadera historia* a sus alumnos, o utiliza grandes titulares de estilo periodístico para anunciar una investigación que *revelaría* datos hasta ahora desconocidos o trae los *chimentos* de los próceres, etc.

Kirchner y Cristina Fernández. La desaparición forzosa de personas aparece como tema central del recorrido histórico de la Nación, del asesinato de Moreno hasta los crímenes del Proceso, pasando por la Campaña del Desierto. Se propone así reconstruir una identidad argentina que contrarreste las exclusiones que operaron los militares y el neoliberalismo, de modo de ofrecer un marco para la reconstrucción de la autoridad estatal sobre una base nueva.

Sin duda existe tanto un designo político como un interés de mercado detrás del éxito de la nueva divulgación y de la sorpresiva vocación historiadora de los medios.[6] Ante la ausencia, por el momento, de un nuevo proyecto político antagonista, el estado/mercado capitalizó la demanda de sentido que se amplificó tras la crisis del 2001. Sin embargo, vale la pena indagar en la curiosidad, el interés y las preguntas propias de quienes se acercan a la nueva divulgación, porque la demanda social de sentido, despojada de la capitalización que de ella hacen el mercado y el estado, abre también posibilidades para la construcción de nuevos relatos históricos que conecten con ella. Por todo esto, más que rasgarnos las vestiduras por la "seriedad" o no de la nueva divulgación, nos interesa pensar por qué funciona, con qué funciona y cuáles son sus herramientas de intervención, de modo de poder demarcar y elaborar una propuesta de divulgación que busque implicar de otro modo a quien la reciba. Esta es la tarea que nos queda por delante.

4. Una vez más…
La crítica a la endogamia académica

"No nos convertimos en lo que somos sino mediante la negación íntima y radical de lo que han hecho de nosotros"
 Jean Paul Sartre

Teniendo en cuenta entonces el contexto planteado y con la nueva divulgación en las calles se nos presenta otra pregunta ¿qué está haciendo el campo académico mientras tanto? ¿Cómo se relacionan los "historiadores profesionales" con el resto de la sociedad?

Hace mucho tiempo que circula la caracterización del mundo académico como un espacio cerrado sobre sí mismo, donde lo que se produce es únicamente conocido por quienes pertenecen al mismo ámbito y donde el vínculo con la

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[6] Sólo para recordar algún que otro hecho, cuando las Madres de Plaza de Mayo, HIJOS y tantas otras organizaciones realizaban actos colectivos de historización —como los escraches a militares, marchas de la resistencia, marchas del 24 de marzo, marchas por la Noche de los Lápices— la prensa en general proponía dejar el pasado detrás y pensar en el futuro, a no seguir reabriendo heridas del pasado y tantas otras formas discursivas que evidenciaban su complicidad con la dictadura.

sociedad pareciera no ser un problema.[7] No señalamos este aspecto porque sea nuevo sino porque creemos que identificando cuáles son las diversas instancias que hacen de la academia un ámbito cerrado, podemos pensar también por dónde abrir una brecha. Desde lo que se prepara durante las cursadas de las materias, pasando por las ponencias en congresos, los trabajos de adscripción, los artículos para revistas especializadas, las reseñas de libros, las monografías para seminarios de posgrado, la escritura de tesis, la presentación de todo aquello que colabore a aprobar, a sumar puntos, quizá lograr reconocimiento y así seguir avanzando, todo ello tiene y busca como único interlocutor al propio ámbito académico. Sin embargo, no se trata de denostar la tarea de investigación, sino de cuestionarla en tanto se cierre sobre sí misma.

El problema se vuelve crucial cuando se considera que la universidad también forma a una porción de los docentes que trabajan en escuelas medias. En este sentido, podría pensarse que la universidad estaría contemplando la formación de divulgadores, capaces de transmitir o traducir lo que allí circula o se produce de un modo significativo para no especialistas. Pero difícilmente alguien haga lo que nunca aprendió, pasando por una carrera donde el aprendizaje tiene que ver principalmente con el conocimiento de posiciones historiográficas y no con una reflexión sobre los sentidos asociados a la historia. En la medida en que el problema de la divulgación permanezca ausente en la formación académica, la docencia en nivel medio seguirá estando cada vez más separada del ámbito universitario.

Cuando hablábamos de vacancia de historias, intentábamos mostrar una

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[7] A lo largo de la década del '90 se dieron debates e intervenciones que pusieron en juego distintas valoraciones respecto del significado del afianzamiento de la historia como disciplina, concepciones respecto de cómo se piensa un historiador, miradas sobre el vínculo entre ámbitos académicos y el resto de la sociedad. Se pueden ver al respecto: Reportaje a Roy Hora, Javier Trímboli y Fabio Wasserman, en *La Maga,* 11/11/1992; Luis Alberto Romero, "La historiografía argentina en la democracia: los problemas de la construcción de un campo profesional", V Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia – I Jornadas Rioplatenses de Historia, Montevideo, Septiembre de 1995 (con el mismo título se publicó en *Entrepasados. Revista de Historia*, Año V, N° 10, Principios de 1996); Eduardo Sartelli, "Tres expresiones de una crisis y una tesis olvidada", en *Razón y Revolución. Teoría, Historia, Política,* N° 1, otoño de 1995; "Manifiesto de Octubre", texto firmado por Ezequiel Adamovsky, Ana G. Alvarez, Karina Bermudez, Jorge Cernadas, Ignacio Lewkowicz, Juan Manuel Obarrio, Elsa Pereyra, Horacio Tarcus, Javier Trímboli, Julio Vezub y Fabio Wasserman que se distribuyó inicialmente y convocó a un debate público en la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la UBA en 1997 (más tarde fue publicado en las revistas *El Ojo Mocho* y *El Rodaballo*); Gustavo Prado, "El oficio del historiador a debate. Las impugnaciones de la profesionalización historiográfica en la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras (1993-98)", en II Jornadas de Historia a Debate, Santiago de Compostela, España, 1999; José Omar Acha y Paula Halperin, "Retorno a la democracia liberal y legitimación del saber: el imaginario dominante de la historiografía argentina (1983 – 1999)", en *Prohistoria*, Año III, N° 3, Primavera de 1999; Fernando Devoto, "Notas sobre los estudios históricos en los años noventa", en *Cuadernos CLAHE*, Montevideo, 1999; Roy Hora, "Dos décadas de historiografía argentina", en *Punto de Vista. Revista de cultura*, N° 69, Abril de 2001; Juan Manuel Palacio, "Una deriva necesaria. Notas sobre la historiografía argentina de las últimas décadas", en *Punto de vista*, N° 74, Diciembre de 2002; Daniel Campione, *Argentina. La Escritura de su historia,* Centro Cultural de la Cooperación, Buenos Aires, 2002.

coyuntura donde la divulgación se vuelve espacio de lucha por los sentidos de la experiencia pasada. Los nuevos divulgadores no dudaron en ocupar ese espacio. Frente a esto algunos académicos salieron con los tapones de punta a discutir en los diarios, en lo que fue y sigue siendo una clara defensa de la corporación historiadora. Así, la disputa se planteó sobre todo en términos "metodológicos", defendiendo el correcto uso de las reglas del oficio. Los principales ataques se dirigieron a lo que se consideró exceso de simplicidad, falta de rigurosidad, mal uso de las fuentes y abuso del anacronismo. Algunas también apuntaron al "contenido" de tales relatos.7[8]

En otras palabras, salieron a exigir, tardíamente, el derecho de ser la voz autorizada frente a una sociedad de la que antes se habían desentendido. Acostumbrados a basar su autoridad en la validación corporativa del saber tal como existe salieron a resguardar su posición sin advertir que ella sola difícilmente proporcione el reconocimiento social del que gozan algunos de los nuevos divulgadores. En ninguna parte del debate se aceptó abrir la discusión sobre otros modos de validar el conocimiento histórico que vayan más allá de las credenciales que otorga el estado o del prestigio dentro del círculo de los especialistas. Esta reacción sólo oculta la incapacidad de la práctica académica de adquirir relevancia social.

Aunque la lógica misma de la carrera académica, por las prácticas cotidianas que estructuran su funcionamiento, mantiene enredada a la mayor parte de sus habitantes, muchos de sus miembros comenzaron en los últimos años a dedicarse a la divulgación. Así, historiadores de distintas posturas políticas se dedicaron a la escritura de libros para el gran público, manuales escolares y hasta de documentales y programas para la televisión.[9] Sin embargo, esta

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[8] Las opiniones de historiadores académicos pueden verse en: Juana Libedinsky, "Entrevista con Tulio Halperín Donghi: A la gente ya nada la sorprende", en *La Nación*, 20/5/2002; Luis Alberto Romero, "Una brecha que debe ser cerrada", en *Clarín*, 24/5/2002; Mariana Canavese e Ivana Costa, "Entrevista: Tulio Halperín Donghi. La serena lucidez que devuelve la distancia", en *Clarín, Revista Ñ*, 28/5/2005; "Félix Luna: yo fui testigo", *La Nación Revista*, 21/8/2005; Hilda Sabato y Mirta Z. Lobato, "Falsos mitos y viejos héroes", en *Clarín, Revista Ñ*, 31/12/2005; Beatriz Sarlo, "Historia académica vs. Historia de divulgación", en *La Nación*, 22/01/2006; Raquel San Martín, "La historia académica, al contraataque", en *La Nación*, 11/10/2007.

[9] Algunos ejemplos son la colección "Nudos de la historia" dirigida por Jorge Gelman y publicada por la Editorial Sudamericana; la colección "Historia Argentina" dirigida por José Carlos Chiaramonte; el libro de Federico Lorenz *Los zapatos de Carlito. Una historia de los trabajadores navales de Tigre en la década del setenta*, Norma, 2007; el ciclo de documentales conducidos por Gabriel Di Meglio en Canal Encuentro; la intervención de Fabián Harari en "25 de mayo de 1810. La revolución que Billiken nos ocultó", *Veintitrés revista*, no. 516, 22/5/08, pp 22-27. Entre los manuales escolares, Juan Suriano, Marcela Ternavasio y otros, *Historia:El mundo contemporáneo desde comienzos del siglo XIX hasta nuestros días*. Buenos Aires, Santillana, 1995; Alejandro Cattaruzza y otros, *Ciencias Sociales 5 EGB Bonaerense*. Buenos Aires, Santillana, 1997; Fernando Rocchi y otros, *Ciencias Sociales 7*. Buenos Aires, Aique, 1997; Luciano de Privitellio, Mónica Ippolito y Sandra Minvielle, *Ciencias Sociales 9 Bonaerense*. Buenos Aires, Santillana, 2002; María E. Alonso, Roberto Elisalde y Enrique Vázquez, La historia de las sociedades: del origen del hombre a la Europa moderna. Buenos Aires, Aique, 2004; Luciano de Privitellio, Rogelio Paredes y otros, *Historia: La época moderna en Europa y*

relación con el "afuera" no está siendo contemplada como tarea, como perspectiva ni como problema estructural, del conjunto de quienes pasamos o habitamos espacios de formación académica. Ante esta realidad, el peligro es que los esfuerzos individuales de divulgación terminen organizados a partir de la lógica del mercado, produciendo imágenes fragmentarias del pasado que sean "vendibles" antes que narraciones que permiten su comprensión global.

Por todo esto, pensamos que no se trata de plantear una disyuntiva entre investigación y difusión, sino de problematizar la relación entre ambas prácticas, de cuestionar como único el camino que propone una especialización temática, que es a la vez una especialización en no saber o en ni siquiera pretender comunicar lo que se hace. Si nos reconocemos como habitantes incómodos de la academia es porque creemos que en sus márgenes existe la posibilidad del encuentro, de la producción de aquello que combata con la inutilidad de la acumulación enciclopedista de saberes. Queremos recuperar el sentido político de la actividad del historiador: contar(nos) historias que partan del mundo que habitamos y que otorguen un sentido insurgente a la experiencia colectiva. En palabras simples, no queremos dejarnos organizar por el mercado editorial sino intervenir en esta coyuntura buscando construir un proyecto político colectivo de divulgación.

5. La historia del país está por escribirse

"Tampoco olvido que, pegado a la persiana, oí morir a un conscripto y ese hombre no dijo: «Viva la patria» sino que dijo «no me dejen solo, hijos de puta»"

Rodolfo Walsh

A lo largo del siglo XIX las clases dominantes sudamericanas buscan y consiguen inventar un pasado e imponer un saber histórico que legitime su propia existencia. Así nace el gran relato por todos aprendido: el de las hazañas de los héroes libertadores de la patria, "próceres intocables que han nutrido el discurso histórico durante décadas al calor de la necesidad de configurar una identidad nacional".[10] El uso disciplinar de la historia suele ser un mecanismo más de la burguesía en la construcción de su hegemonía, al convertir al joven Estado capitalista en el actor principal de aquel relato. Así, la historia pasa a desempeñar el papel de ciencia patriótica y civilizadora, basada en la ideología eurocentrista del orden y el progreso. A través de la *Historia de la Nación Argentina* los capitalistas están en boca de todos, hablan en nuestro nombre,

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América. Buenos Aires, Santillana, 2005; José Burucúa y Carlos Reboratti (coordinadores), *Ciencias Sociales 7.* Buenos Aires, Tinta Fresca, 2006.

[10] Silvia Finocchio, "Cambios en la enseñanza de la historia: la transformación argentina", en Iber, *Didáctica de las Ciencias Sociales, Geografía e Historia*, Vol. 6, N° 22, Año 1999, p. 26.

dicen por nosotros, se constituyen en sujetos de enunciación legítimos, mientras los proletarizados somos reducidos a objeto de enunciado.

La nación puede, entonces, entenderse como una operación de subjetivación colectiva, mediante la que todos nosotros pasamos a identificarnos con el Estado, que se apropia así de nuestras historias y les impone su unidad. De esta manera, las masas laboriosas sólo son comprendidas a través de la representación que la clase dominante les impone. No sólo se nos ha expropiado de los frutos del trabajo y los productos del pensamiento; la historia nacional también nos quitó la posibilidad de hablar desde nosotros que estamos *en contra*[11]. Así, resulta imperioso construir un relato de otro tipo, capaz de otorgar a las masas proletarias un sentido colectivo antagónico al de la clase dominante y que, de esta manera, contribuya a acabar con ella.

Pero no es cuestión de escribir cientos de líneas sobre la clase obrera o de hablar acerca de sectores populares o subalternos. Nada de esto nos pone —o al menos no inmediatamente— del lado de los que luchan. Esto no depende del sujeto elegido como protagonista de una historia, ya que el sólo hecho de hablar o escribir sobre algo no nos ubica necesariamente de su lado.

Hay que abandonar la tranquilizadora idea de que alcanza con publicar libros sobre revoluciones, o al menos poner en claro los límites de esta tarea. El problema de muchos libros "clasistas" es que son inapropiables, que aunque relaten experiencias de lucha, éstas no permiten articular las experiencias vitales del pasado con las del presente: la cuantificación de los niveles de participación gremial no da cuenta de la intensidad de la politización de la vida; la mejor descripción científica de un estado de revuelta no transmite estado de revuelta.

Nos planteamos entonces narrar *la historia del país*, producir un contradiscurso insurgente que se constituya como un procedimiento de enunciación antagonista: un intento colectivo para recuperar las voces que nos son propias y, con ellas, relatar una historia propia de los dominados en oposición a la Historia de Nación.

No se trata de obviar la existencia del estado nacional, más bien todo lo contrario: queremos mostrar que hay algo más allá, que su misma construcción, su mera existencia, significan el sometimiento y la explotación de los muchos en beneficio de los pocos.

Partimos de que todo nace de la creación y el trabajo colectivos. Sometidos al capital, desposeídos y explotados, perseguidos, vejados, excluidos e ignorados, somos nosotros quienes producimos el mundo que narramos. El proyecto de historiar el país consiste en articular un relato que se componga de nuestras voces y nuestros ojos. Queremos mirar desde abajo para decir el país, reconstruir una trama subalterna que se imprime negro sobre blanco en la historia oficial y que entreteje la cooperación y el afecto, los boicots, huelgas y piquetes, la solidaridad, las revoluciones, sabotajes, malones y guerrillas, las

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[11] La frase está tomada de Mario Tronti, *Obreros y capital*, Madrid, Akal, 2001.

alegrías y tristezas de la vida cotidiana, articulándolas en un gran relato que de cuenta de los derroteros de los habitantes del territorio delimitado hoy por el estado argentino.

El desafío que plantea la actividad de historiar el país es construir un nuevo discurso histórico para nuevas condiciones históricas de militancia. Salir de la dinámica interna de la producción académica para desarrollar saberes históricos solidarios con los saberes que se producen en la praxis del movimiento social antagonista. Nuestra idea de divulgar responde a la necesidad de que puedan producirse lazos de discurso a discurso, de boca a boca, de saber a saber, de un punto de politización a otro. Y así andamos los anónimos que queremos saber quienes somos; mujeres y hombres anónimos resistimos a las identidades de recambio que el Estado-historiador nos propone, porque ese mismo estado y ese mismo historiador sólo dará cuenta de nosotros en tanto estado.

6. La divulgación en otras partes del mundo

Aunque la academia argentina prácticamente no ha manifestado interés por pensar la divulgación como problema, ni por explorar el sentido práctico de la actividad historiadora, existe en otros sitios una larga tradición de aportes y reflexiones sobre estas cuestiones. Lo que sigue es una breve muestra de algunas de estas experiencias.

Un antecedente inspirador es el de los "history workshops" (talleres de historia) que un grupo de historiadores marxistas británicos estableció junto con obreros en la década de 1960. Cuando, como parte de esta experiencia, se fundó la revista *History Workshop*, el colectivo editor describió sus insatisfacciones y propósitos de un modo que es perfectamente aplicable a nuestra situación más de treinta años después:

> Nos preocupa la disminución de la influencia de la historia en nuestra sociedad y su progresivo retiro de la batalla de las ideas. Esta reducción de su importancia no puede explicarse por un declive en el interés popular.

> A lo largo de la sociedad británica sigue existiendo el deseo de una comprensión histórica, que sólo en ocasiones es satisfecho por quienes fabrican series, popularizaciones, entretenimientos televisivos, etc. La "historia seria" ha quedado reservada para el especialista. Esta restricción es relativamente reciente: puede atribuirse a la consolidación de la profesión historiográfica, a la fragmentación creciente de los objetos de estudio (...) La mayor parte de los textos sobre historia no se producen con la intención de tener una llegada fuera de los rangos de la profesión y la mayoría están escritos para la atención exclusiva de grupos de especialistas dentro de ella. La enseñanza y la investigación están cada vez más separadas, y ambas divorciadas respecto de propósitos sociales más amplios. En la revista intentaremos restaurar un contexto más amplio para el estudio de la historia, para contrarrestar la fragmentación escolástica del objeto de estudio y con el fin de hacerla relevante para la gente común. La revista está dedicada a hacer de la historia una actividad más democrática y una preocupación más

urgente. (...) Creemos que la historia debe convertirse en propiedad del común y ser capaz de dar forma a la comprensión que tiene la gente de sí misma y de la sociedad en la que vive.[12]

Los talleres de la historia británicos dejaron un rico legado de investigaciones y experiencias que hizo sentir su influencia en varios países. El llamado a salirse del encorsetamiento profesional y académico en busca de un mutuo enriquecimiento de y con la sociedad –particularmente con las luchas de los grupos subalternos– se tradujo en la formación de "talleres" en muchos sitios. En los Estados Unidos, por ejemplo, el movimiento adquirió un desarrollo notable con el Massachusetts History Workshop y otras iniciativas similares de investigación y escritura en las que historiadores formados participaban codo a codo en comunidades locales con trabajadores o con minorías oprimidas.[13] Con el tiempo estas experiencias y otras fueron dejando sedimentado un importante cuerpo de pensamiento teórico y práctico acerca de la actividad historiográfica fuera del espacio académico o universitario.[14] Aunque no siempre interesadas en la crítica social o el compromiso de relacionar conocimiento histórico y activismo político, estos desarrollos abrieron áreas de reflexión que hoy ocupan un lugar prominente. En Estados Unidos y Canadá, por ejemplo, el campo de lo que allí se dio en llamar "Public History" (historia pública)[15] –es decir, la práctica de la investigación o la divulgación de la historia en contextos no académicos– tiene una extensión y una legitimidad notables. Ya hacia mediados de la década de 1970 la Universidad de California lanzaba su primer programa académico sobre la cuestión y una revista –*The Public Historian*– salía a difundir y defender los primeros resultados de las investigaciones.[16] En la

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[12] Editorial Collective: "History Workshop Journal", *History Workshop Journal*, no. 1, 1976, pp. 1-3.

[13] Véase James Green: *Taking History to Heart: The Power of the Past in Building Social Movements*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 2000; Jeremy Brecher et al. (eds.): *Brass Valley: The Story of Working People's Lives and Struggles in an American Industrial Region*, Philadelphia, Temple Univ. Press, 2002; Jeremy Brecher: *History from Below: How to Uncover and Tell the Story of Your Community, Association or Union*, West Cornwall, Commonwork/Advocate Press, 1995.

[14] Véase por ej. Raphael Samuel (ed.): *Historia popular y teoría socialista*, Barcelona, Crítica, 1984; Susan Porter Benson et al. (eds.): *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, Philadelphia, Temple Univ. Press, 1986; Jesse Lemisch: "2.5 Cheers for Bridging the Gap between Activism and the Academy; Or, Stay and Fight", *Radical History Review,* vol 85, 2003, pp. 239–248; Thomas Lindenberger y Michael Wildt: "Radical Plurality: History Workshops as a Practical Critique of Knowledge", *History Workshop Journal,* no. 33, 1992, pp. 73-99.

[15] La Universidad de New York así la define: "La historia pública es la historia que es vista, escuchada leída e interpretada por el público... es la historia que pertenece al público". Ver http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/history/publichistory/main.htm.

[16] Véase Debra DeRuyver: "The History of Public History", disp. en http://www.publichistory.org/what_is/history_of.html, 2000 [acc. 21/3/2008]. En el ámbito norteamericano se superponen dos impulsos de orientación ideológica opuesta. Por un lado, parte de la "public history" se entronca con los precedentes británicos y con los "radical historians" de la nueva izquierda de los años sesenta y setenta. Por el otro, buena parte de ese campo se vincula con un interés más de tipo "patriótico" o "cívico" por exaltar la historia nacional o local.

actualidad existen asociaciones especializadas y varias decenas de universidades que ofrecen cursos de grado y de posgrado en Public History.[17]

No es como argumento de autoridad que señalamos la importancia que tiene la divulgación como dimensión permitida (o incluso estimulada) de reflexión y producción académica en otras latitudes. Válida por su urgencia y por derecho propio, nuestra propuesta se limita a señalar que incluso en la meca de quienes en nuestro país esgrimen una estrecha visión "profesionalista" de la práctica historiográfica, la vocación de conectar la propia producción con las demandas de sentido del afuera social se ha hecho un lugar como preocupación legítima de historiadores que no son menos "profesionales" por dedicar su vida a ella.

7. Algunas experiencias argentinas

Volviendo a Argentina, podemos ubicar todo un campo que, lejos de la Academia, dedicó sus esfuerzos a conectar los relatos históricos con las necesidades sociales de sentido de su época, logrando en algunos casos una inserción masiva en las capas populares. Ya a fines del XIX, socialistas y anarquistas comenzaron a operar en tal sentido. Si los explotadores habían organizado el tiempo y la memoria colectiva en un calendario patriótico y cristiano, los anarquistas propusieron uno alternativo. En el *Almanaque Popular* publicado por la revista *La Questione Sociale*, cada día refería al protagonismo histórico de los explotados: ya sea una jornada de lucha, el natalicio o fallecimiento de algún mártir o pensador revolucionario o el ajusticiamiento de un rey o presidente. La disputa también se daba apropiándose, o mejor dicho, "expropiando" al enemigo de aquellos hechos significativos para su historia. Quizás, el mejor ejemplo para ilustrar esta lucha sea la Revolución francesa. Tal fue su importancia, que para el acto del 1° de mayo de 1902, los ácratas recrearon en Plaza Constitución la toma de la Bastilla "asaltando" una torre dispuesta para tal propósito, en cuya cima izaron la bandera roja. La construcción de un panteón de personas destacadas y la conmemoración de fechas significativas no era un simple recordatorio de un pasado lejano, sino la reactualización de un combate que se daba todos los días.[18]

Más recientemente, entre las décadas de 1950 y 1970, años de creciente politización y radicalización de la sociedad, existieron otras prácticas alternativas de divulgación que nos interesa mencionar. Ese contexto se volvió sobre escritores y cineastas generando una nueva relación entre movimientos de masas, prácticas políticas, ideologías y divulgación de historias. No traemos

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[17] Véase http://ncph.org/; www.publichistory.org; www.carleton.ca/ccph/index.html; www.ucpress.edu/ journals/tph/; etc.

[18] Ver Juan Suriano: Anarquistas, cultura y politica libertaria en Buenos Aires, 1890 -1910, Buenos Aires, Manantial, 2004.

estas experiencias para proponer imitarlas, sino para pensar el sentido en el que intervinieron públicamente.

En disputa al mismo tiempo con la historiografía liberal-mitrista y con los gobiernos militares que siguieron a la "Revolución fusiladora" del `55, la corriente revisionista encara la divulgación de historia, dirigiéndose y alcanzando un público mucho más amplio que el erudito. En ese sentido valen de ejemplo los numerosos trabajos de Eduardo Luis Duhalde y Rodolfo Ortega Peña.[19] Muchos otros libros de distintas tendencias circularon también, aunque no todos con el mismo alcance, buscando plantear la disputa en términos políticos a la vez que historiográficos. Por citar algunos nombres, podemos mencionar a Rodolfo Puiggrós[20], Jorge Abelardo Ramos[21] y Milcíades Peña[22]. También Rodolfo Walsh[23] y Osvaldo Bayer[23][24] intervinieron públicamente en la construcción de relatos sobre el presente y el pasado del país. En la misma tarea podemos ubicar a los grupos Cine de Liberación y Cine de la Base que filmaron películas, tanto documentales como de ficción, que se plantearon la reinterpretación de la historia como una tarea política.[25]

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[19] Algunos de los libros que escribieron juntos son: *El asesinato de Dorrego* (1965), *Felipe Varela contra el imperio británico* (1966), *Las guerras civiles argentinas y la historiografía* (1967), *Folklore argentino y revisionismo histórico* (1967), *Facundo y la montonera* (1968), *El manifiesto de Felipe Varela y la cuestión nacional* (1968), *Baring Brothers y la historia política argentina* (1968), *Reportaje a Felipe Varela* (1969), *Proceso a la montonera de Felipe Varela por la toma de Salta* (1969).

[20] Algunos de sus libros son: *De la colonia a la revolución* (1940), *Historia económica del Río de la Plata* (1945), *Historia crítica de los partidos políticos argentinos* (1956), *Pueblo y oligarquía* (1965), *El yrigoyenismo* (1965), *Las izquierdas y el problema nacional* (1967), *El peronismo: Sus causas* (1969).

[21] Algunos libros de Ramos son: *Revolución y contrarrevolución en Argentina* (1957), *El Partido Comunista en la política argentina* (1962), *Historia del stalinismo en la Argentina* (1969), *Historia política del ejército argentino* (1964), *Historia de la nación latinoamericana* (1968).

[22] Libros de Milcíades Peña que fueron editados póstumamente: *Antes de Mayo* (1970), *El paraíso terrateniente* (1969), *La era de Mitre* (1968), *De Mitre a Roca* (1968), *Alberdi, Sarmiento, el 90* (1970), *Masas, caudillos y élites* (1973), *El peronismo. Selección de documentos para su historia* (1972), *La clase dirigente argentina frente al imperialismo*(1973), *Industria, burguesía industrial y liberación nacional* (1974).

[23] Algunos libros de Walsh son: *Operación Masacre, un proceso que no ha sido clausurado* (1957), *Operación Masacre y el expediente Livraga. Con la prueba judicial que conmovió al país* (1964), *Caso Satanowsky* (1958), *¿Quién Mató a Rosendo?* (1969).

[24] Osvaldo Bayer: *Severino Di Giovanni, el idealista de la violencia* (1970), *Los vengadores de la Patagonia Trágica* (4 tomos entre 1972 y 1975), *Simón Radowitsky, ¿mártir o asesino?* (1974), *Los anarquistas expropiadores y otros ensayos* (1975).

[25] Algunas de las películas del Grupo Cine de Liberación son: "La hora de los hornos" (1968), "Perón: la Revolución Justicialista" (1971) y "Perón: actualización política y doctrinaria para la toma del poder" (1971). Algunos cortos y largometrajes de Raymundo Gleyzer (Cine de la Base) son: "Swift" (1971), "México, la revolución congelada" (1971), "Los Traidores" (1973), "Ni olvido ni perdón: 1972 la masacre de Trelew" (1973), "Me matan si no trabajo y si trabajo me matan. La huelga obrera en la fábrica INSUD" (1974).

Es claro que esas intervenciones buscaban aportar a la constitución política de determinados sujetos en un contexto dado. En el marco de la proscripción del peronismo, de las dictaduras, todas estas experiencias alternativas de divulgación buscaban lograr masividad, pugnar por los sentidos que tenían ciertas prácticas sociales: la resistencia obrera, el peronismo, el clasismo, la lucha armada. Pelear por los sentidos de esas prácticas era una tarea más de los militantes revolucionarios, y para ello intentaron reconstruir desde una perspectiva diferente la historia contada por la academia, las escuelas y el estado. El sentido de la intervención es lo que nos interesa, la construcción de historias desde un punto de vista antagonista al sistema capitalista, las de aquellos que *estamos en contra*. Creemos que aquellos proyectos al menos advertían la necesidad de intervenir ante el gran público, con estrategias diferenciadas a las de los aparatos de estado y con contenidos que intentaban potenciar prácticas de subversión de lo establecido. Buscamos hoy, como entonces, volver sobre un pasado que parece ya muerto pero que vive en tanto herramienta para la conformación de identidades que excedan los marcos de la dominación de clase. Queremos, en fin, recuperar la figura del historiador como un contador de historias que sume su voz a la tarea de construir un nuevo trovador colectivo.

Segunda parte

Los problemas de la divulgación

1. Conectar con los usos populares del pasado

Para que sea verdaderamente productiva, la actividad de la divulgación no puede plantearse desde una posición "iluminista", que es la que supone que existe, por un lado, un público que desconoce el pasado y carece de la habilidad de relacionarse con él y, por el otro, un grupo de historiadores con la capacidad de llenar esa carencia con conocimiento histórico. Nuestra perspectiva parte del supuesto contrario: consideramos un problema el que haya una escisión tan grande entre el gran relato que ofrecen los historiadores que cuentan la Historia (así con mayúsculas) y lo que se puede llamar los "usos populares" del pasado, las historias (en minúscula) que cuentan y se cuentan cotidianamente los no especialistas. Hablar de "usos populares" significa aceptar que el pasado es una dimensión presente en la vida de todas las personas y grupos sociales y que su utilización no es exclusiva de un grupo profesional. Existe una relación que es preciso visualizar entre pasado y cotidianeidad: la experiencia vivencial convoca al pasado y lo usa de maneras que no deben simplemente ignorarse o desvalorizarse por "poco rigurosas". En otras palabras, existen, en el modo en que todas las personas hacen uso del pasado, momentos de verdad capaces de redimensionar la tarea del historiador profesional.

La existencia de "usos populares" del pasado ha sido materia de discusión en otros países. Un grupo de historiadores de la corriente de la Historia Popular norteamericana, por ejemplo, se ocupó de registrar, mediante una amplia encuesta, la presencia del pasado en la vida cotidiana de cada quien. Aunque la mayoría de las personas manifestaba que "la Historia" —expresión que relacionaban con los relatos escolares— le resultaba algo bastante lejano y poco interesante, muchos de ellos tenían no obstante una relación muy cercana y activa respecto de "el pasado". Entre las actividades que los entrevistados reportaban realizar con entusiasmo estaban visitar museos, armar árboles genealógicos, mirar documentales en televisión, fotografiar y filmar videos para conservar recuerdos, leer libros sobre historia, o simplemente contarle a otro historias o escuchar relatos de familiares. En estos usos populares del pasado se observaban, como suele suceder entre las personas, diferencias de clase o étnicas. Por ejemplo, al pedírseles que refirieran "al pasado" los blancos tendían a contar historias centradas en su propia familia, mientras que entre los afroamericanos e indígenas se hallaba una presencia más prominente de relatos que involucraban colectivamente a toda la comunidad (por ejemplo, de episodios de represión o de lucha por derechos civiles). El recurso al pasado, en fin, resultaba fundamental a la hora de construir las identidades personales y colectivas en las que cada cual participaba o creía participar. En todos los casos, los relatos y referencias a la historia estaban notoriamente disociados, en su contenido, respecto de "la Historia" que difunde el Estado o la academia,

centrada en el relato del progreso nacional.[26] También para casos de países poscoloniales se ha señalado que la persistencia de esta dimensión cotidiana del pasado, disociada de los relatos de la historia Estatal/nacional, no puede ser interpretada como "carencia"; al contrario, exige que prestemos atención a la obstinada pervivencia de lo que el Estado colonial ha intentado suprimir.[27] Así, los "usos populares del pasado" pueden contener un momentode verdad que los propios relatos escolares o académicos desconocen u omiten por efecto de sus funcionesideológicas. Y, por supuesto, esto vale no sólo para situaciones poscoloniales. Algunos estudios para el caso argentino muestran una similar disociación entre los relatos estatales u oficiales "aprendidos" y el modo en que las personas narran la propia experiencia de ciertos sucesos.[28]

Uno de los problemas centrales de la divulgación es el de esta escisión. Partimos de la hipótesis de que, así como existe un momento de verdad en los usos populares del pasado que es capaz de iluminar la tarea del historiador, también la actividad más sistemática y reflexiva que se desarrolla como parte de una labor profesional tiene la posibilidad de enriquecer y expandir los alcances de la mirada que parte de la experiencia cotidiana. La historia profesional tiene la capacidad de aportar contextualizaciones y escalas de análisis que escapan al alcance y al registro de una vida concreta y particular. De nada vale imaginar que podría eliminarse la heterogeneidad de esas miradas. De lo que se trata, en cambio, es de explorar las maneras de trazar puentes *de doble circulación* entre ambas: introducir más vida en la Historia y dotar de más profundidad histórica a la vida. ¿Pero cómo hacer entrar el tiempo que dura una vida en una historia donde varias décadas ocupan un par de párrafos? ¿Cómo relacionar la experiencia personal de algunos años de trabajo en una fábrica con una etapa del proceso de acumulación capitalista?

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[26] Roy Rosenzweig y David Thelen: The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998. Fragmentos disp. en www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2000/0005/0005spl2.cfm

[27] Harry Harootunian: "Shadowing History: National Narratives and the Persistence of the Everyday", Cultural Studies, vol. 18, no. 2-3, 2004, pp. 181-200

[28] La experiencia de los talleres barriales de historia oral organizados por el Instituto Histórico de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires desde 1984 permite también pensar en la relación entre el pasado vivido y la historia aprendida. Los organizadores de estos talleres, en los que se buscaba que los vecinos de un barrio reconstruyeran su historia coordinados por un historiador, hablan de una clara diferencia entre los momentos en que los participantes narraban la historia aprendida (la de los historiadores), y los que pasaban a contar su propia experiencia. Al ser consultados por los días que siguieron a distintos golpes de Estado en los años 50, 60 y 70, por ejemplo, los entrevistados relataban la historia tal como se aprende en la escuela o en los medios de comunicación (contaban detalles de la conspiración y las medidas de gobierno). Pero al pasar del plano histórico a la pregunta por su vida particular en aquel mismo momento, aparece en escena la vivencia: el recuerdo de los tanques por la calle, el miedo, el aprovisionamiento de comida por las dudas... Liliana Barela, Mercedes Miguez y Laura Martino: "Un abordaje de la historia local a través de la historia oral", ponencia inédita, VI Encuentro Nacional de Historia Oral, Centro Cultural General San Martín (Buenos Aires), 15 al 17 de octubre de 2003.

La historia –ni la académica ni la de cada cual– jamás se narra en soledad. Por el contrario, se recuerda a un pariente, a la Revolución de mayo o a la hiperinflación de 1989 en conexión con otros recuerdos (propios o aprendidos) expresados o difundidos por otras personas o instituciones: la rememoración –tal como las identidades– se construye en diálogo con los otros (familiares, maestros de escuela, comerciantes del barrio, compañeros de trabajo), en vinculación con lo escuchado y leído, con convenciones establecidas culturalmente. Y además, siempre se recuerda *en situación*: lo narrado entra inevitablemente en relación con el momento en que se enuncia, como parte de un "clima de época", de una estrategia política o personal, de una corriente de opinión, etc., o afectado por un suceso personal o colectivo. Las historias se construyen de un modo si forman parte de los hitos escolares y de otro modo si sobreviven subterráneamente; se construyen distinto si participan de una subjetividad de clase o de grupo oprimido; se arman de modo diferente en momentos de aparente tranquilidad social y en otros de gran movilización. Si este es el substrato del que surge cualquier visión del pasado, entonces lo vivido y lo aprendido dejan de ser alternativas inconfundibles. Si el uso del pasado implica siempre un proceso de significación, al proponernos divulgar estamos pensando en intervenir en ese proceso, intervenir en la red social desde la cual se construyen los recuerdos. Y al explicitar esta parada estratégica, estamos repensando nuestro lugar de historiadores. La división social del trabajo, que produce por un lado intelectuales y por el otro "los que no saben", no se borra con sólo formar parte de un movimiento. Aunque el objetivo sea acabar con esta división, no podemos actuar como si no existiera. El uso de los saberes tiene que ser colectivizado aprovechando las diferencias en un sentido igualitario. El papel del divulgador en este contexto podría ser el de esta búsqueda de volver a hacer "apropiable" un pasado que ha sido descolectivizado y alienado. Y en esta tarea, el puente con el plano de los usos populares del pasado resulta imprescindible.

2. Construir un "dispositivo de intelección"

Tanto los recuerdos de una persona, una familia o una comunidad, como los restos del pasado a los que tiene acceso un historiador a través de las fuentes, resultan en principio un universo casi infinito, fragmentado y sin sentido aparente. ¿Cómo orientarnos en nuestro recorrido por el pasado? ¿Qué buscaremos allí y cómo construiremos una historia digna de ser contada y que se conecte con la experiencia vital de las personas?

Lo sepan conscientemente o no, lo que guía en su exploración del pasado a todos los que cuentan la historia es una misma pregunta: ¿Quiénes somos nosotros? Tal pregunta es lo que podríamos llamar el "principio" de toda historia. Contar historias es siempre trazar puentes con el pasado, construir genealogías y sugerir analogías que iluminen y den solidez a un sentido colectivo particular, es decir, un "nosotros". Si son contadas desde el punto de vista del

poder, el "nosotros" será siempre el que existe en el presente *tal como éste ha sido moldeado por la clase dominante*. Se tratará entonces de legitimar y "naturalizar" una situación existente, y de apuntalar las identidades y subjetividades que le sean apropiadas. Es lo que se propuso, por ejemplo, aquella historia del "país normal" difundida luego de 1983 de la que hablamos en la Primera parte.

Desde una perspectiva emancipatoria, por el contrario, el "nosotros" que orienta las búsquedas no se sitúa en el presente sino en el futuro. El "principio" de la historia funciona en este caso como una hipótesis acerca de cómo será el "nosotros" que componga la diversidad de nuestras luchas y resistencias presentes. Es este "nosotros" el que, en busca de constituirse, redirecciona las preguntas acerca del pasado y nos sirve como guía en la búsqueda de los elementos históricos que nuestra situación convoca.

Los grandes cambios en las narraciones del pasado han tenido que ver siempre con grandes cambios en la manera en que se concibieron los "nosotros". Cuando algún gran acontecimiento o cambio sacude y resquebraja las certezas de una época —como sostuvimos a propósito de la crisis de 2001—, se abre la posibilidad y la necesidad de cuestionar lo existente. Se intenta o bien restaurar los "nosotros" heridos, o bien construir otros nuevos. En cualquier caso, las preguntas sobre el pasado se multiplican y las dudas sobre la autenticidad de las historias heredadas se acumulan. La situación es fértil para arriesgar nuevos sentidos. Una narración del pasado es una especie de dispositivo que otorga solidez y consistencia a un "nosotros", articulándolo con un relato que propone un sentido del pasado y que apunta, o bien al presente que se busca consolidar, o bien al futuro al que quiere abrir paso.

El término foucaultiano de "dispositivo" refiere a la disposición de una serie de prácticas y de mecanismos cuyo objetivo es hacer frente a alguna situación generando determinados efectos sobre las conductas. Las prácticas y mecanismos pueden ser muy diversos: leyes, edificios, doctrinas, actos de policía, etc., pero también los aparatos tecnológicos, los discursos, las imágenes, en fin, cualquier cosa que pueda de alguna manera incidir en las conductas de los seres vivientes. Cada uno de estos mecanismos y prácticas tiene su propia función y su lógica independientes y, sin embargo, es evidente que en ocasiones puede percibirse claramente un sentido coincidente en sus efectos. La noción de "dispositivo" sirve, precisamente, para identificar la red que se establece entre todos ellos para hacer frente a una situación incidiendo sobre las conductas, es decir, transformando a un simple ser viviente en un sujeto con tal o cual característica. En este sentido un dispositivo tiene siempre una función estratégica que se inscribe en una relación de poder.[29]

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[29] Giorgio Agamben: Che cos'è un dispositivo?, Roma, Nottetempo, 2006. Fragmento en español disponible en http://libertaddepalabra.tripod.com/id11.html. Ver tb. Gilles Deleuze: "¿Qué es un dispositivo?" en Etienne Balbier, Gilles Deleuze, et al.: Michel Foucault, filósofo, Barcelona, Gedisa, 1990, pp. 155-63.

Retomando este concepto en un sentido más limitado, las historias pueden pensarse como "dispositivos de intelección del pasado", es decir, un mecanismo para comprender lo ya acontecido desde nuestro punto de vista actual. Su función es la de fijar y estabilizar una serie de conexiones entre personajes, sucesos, eventos, y realidades pretéritos, de modo de otorgarles un sentido que los conecta con el presente y que contribuye a moldear identidades y subjetividades en relación a los requerimientos de una situación concreta. No hay valoración política *a priori* de un dispositivo así definido: su inscripción en las relaciones sociales puede ser tanto contrainsurgente como insurgente (o, para decirlo con otras palabras, puede asegurar la dominación o contribuir a erosionarla).

Las narraciones *liberales* de la historia argentina, por ejemplo, conforman un vasto dispositivo contrainsurgente, cuya red se conecta además con las historias de otras partes del mundo (cuyos conceptos y periodizaciones comparte), los campos académicos, la institución escolar, los monumentos, las imágenes canónicas de próceres o de momentos relevantes del pasado, los rituales de conmemoración, etc., y las diversas fuentes desde las que se emiten en toda sociedad mensajes relativos a los tiempos que precedieron al presente. Todas estas prácticas y mecanismos colaboran en la producción de un "nosotros" a la medida del poder.

¿Cómo podría pensarse un dispositivo de intelección del pasado que apunte en un sentido *insurgente*? Podemos buscar inspiración en la forma en que el concepto de "dispositivo" es utilizado en la clínica psicoanalítica. Podría decirse, desde esta perspectiva, que cada persona construye su propio "dispositivo biográfico" para otorgar un sentido a su vida ("hacer de su vida una historia"), conectando y valorando diversos episodios: el nacimiento, la educación, las parejas, un viaje, un hecho de violencia, una enfermedad, etc. El dispositivo biográfico es también, inevitablemente, relacional, ya que siempre establece vínculos entre la vida propia y las de los otros (la relación con la madre, el temor hacia un tío violento, etc.) y con ciertos hitos e instituciones que van más allá del radio de los allegados más próximos (la crisis que dejó a su padre sin trabajo, la guerra luego de la cual el tío volvió más violento, etc.). Al generar cambios en los dispositivos biográficos, en ocasiones las personas logran disponer mejor de su propia vida, reencuadrándose de otro modo en la historia propia; por ejemplo, reconstruyen las "escenas perdidas" de sus vidas, se abren a otras referencias, otros lugares, otras pertenencias (tanto propias como nuevas).

Retomando libremente algunas de estas ideas, podríamos decir que puede pensarse una práctica historiadora *insurgente* como aquella que busca habilitar una lectura del pasado que funcione como una mediación que ayude a las personas a encuadrar y "poner en escena" sus propias experiencias individuales (inevitablemente fragmentarias) como parte de una red más amplia y más "antigua" de relaciones, de historias y de determinaciones. Un dispositivo *insurgente* de intelección del pasado supone un trabajo sobre la experiencia personal y colectiva mediante el cual se hace posible la implicación y la incorporación de cada cual a la vida social *de otra manera*, toda vez que es ese

dispositivo el que nos permite capturar *la totalidad* de las dimensiones que afectan nuestra propia experiencia vital.[30] Los vínculos y conexiones que establece entre un presente y los hitos de su pasado apuntan a la posibilidad de recuperar el control colectivo y autónomo de la vida social enajenado por el capitalismo. La divulgación histórica puede pensarse, en este sentido, como un trabajo de reconstrucción de la red de determinaciones que afecta una vida y una situación presentes, que se realiza a partir de una huella del pasado que queda impresa de alguna manera en un uso popular presente.

Hemos logrado establecer que un dispositivo de intelección es una experiencia de acceso al saber, una praxis a través de la cual conocemos. Hemos señalado que nuestro contacto con el mundo genera sin cesar dispositivos necesarios a tal o cual fin. Aplicada a la historia, la noción de dispositivo se convierte en un concepto que funciona a la vez como instrumento y objeto de investigación, ya que se nos presenta como una movimiento con inscripción histórica que sirve para conocer el pasado. Un hecho histórico que nos involucra se reconfigura en nosotros a modo de dispositivo de intelección del pasado, habilitando la conexión de nuestra praxis con otras series históricas; un evento del cual fuimos partícipes comienza a funcionar en nuestras vidas de modo de parada táctica desde la cual abordar la historia.

Por supuesto que existe toda una serie de sucesos que no tienen la misma importancia, ni la misma amplitud cronológica, ni la misma capacidad de producir efectos sobre las personas. Para nosotros el punto de partida es claro: nuestra situación es la que dejó abierta la rebelión del 19 y 20 de diciembre de 2001 y la de la vacancia de historias a la que referíamos más arriba. Esa experiencia de masas, de organización popular, de combate, fue también una praxis de pensamiento que nos proporciona una lente; nos ha marcado tanto que nos reenvía al pasado con otros ojos. Los entramados políticos constituidos al calor de ese verano de rebelión han configurado un dispositivo que permite ver y nombrar nuevas cosas, o viejas cosas de nuevas maneras. El "principio" de nuestra historia es el "nosotros" múltiple que vislumbramos en esas jornadas. Nuestro dispositivo de intelección apuntará entonces a afirmar una serie de operaciones analíticas y narrativas que permitan visualizar e interpretar la situación actual, y que nos ayuden a establecer los contornos que podría tener el sujeto político que ponga fin al capitalismo. Su contenido girará no en torno del Estado nacional y su historia, sino alrededor de una "historia del país" centrada en la experiencia de vida y de lucha de sus habitantes. Los usos populares del pasado, de los que hemos hablado antes, aparecen en nuestra estrategia reconocidos como el impulso central del que nace la actividad de historiar.

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[30] Esta comparación se inspira en la lectura de Anabelle Klein y Jean-Luc Brackelaire: "Le dispositif: une aide aux identité s en crise ?", disp. en ttp://www.comu.ucl.ac.be/RECO/GReMS/annaweb/dispositif.htm

3. Encontrar nuestros "ancestros"

Contar una historia supone trazar líneas de vinculación entre nosotros y quienes nos precedieron, a través de un ejercicio narrativo. Los relatos así construidos nos invitan a identificarnos con algunos de ellos, a reconocernos en algunos eventos y acciones, o, por el contrario, a rechazar o ignorar a ciertos antepasados y sus realizaciones. Por ejemplo, la historiografía liberal nos ha enseñado que somos herederos de los argentinos de la Revolución de Mayo (y éstos, a su vez, de los comerciantes porteños), de San Martín y Rivadavia, de Mitre y Alberdi, de Sarmiento y Roca. Lo que somos, nos dicen, es el fruto de la Organización Nacional, la educación pública, la inmigración europea, el desarrollo económico, la Ley Saenz Peña y la movilidad e integración social de las tres primeras décadas del siglo XX. La tensión dramática del relato liberal es la de la derrota de la barbarie y el atraso a manos de la civilización y el Progreso (o, en el liberalismo aggiornado de los historiadores post 1983, la formación de un "país normal"). El escenario, el de la nación Argentina.

Atacando este relato, los "revisionistas" propusieron hitos y protagonistas alternativos. Su drama no era el del Progreso, sino el de la grandeza nacional obstaculizada por las élites liberales. Sus protagonistas, los líderes con sentido patriótico malogrados por intereses del capitalismo foráneo: los argentinos de la Revolución de Mayo, San Martín y Rosas, los caudillos, Perón. Por detrás de ellos, el coro del Pueblo Argentino respondiendo al unísono, o resistiendo la antipatria. Los hitos elegidos son la Independencia incompleta (por culpa de una Organización nacional de tipo liberal), la industrialización bloqueada (a causa de un desarrollo económico deformado), las montoneras derrotadas (a manos de los porteños "civilizados"), las democracias populares interrumpidas (para evitar una verdadera integración social). A pesar de sus diferencias, y aunque encarnen en próceres rivales, liberales y revisionistas sostienen que las suyas son historias del pueblo/nación argentino de ayer y hoy.

Por su parte, los historiadores del marxismo tradicional, en su intento de situar el relato en un plano no tan identificado con la alta política y sus próceres, con las élites y el Estado nacional, aportaron su propia versión de los hechos. Su drama es el del desarrollo del capitalismo y el de los cambios socioeconómicos que podrán conducir al socialismo. La trama es lineal, aunque dialéctica: el capitalismo es "progresivo" cuando desplaza las formas sociales previas y despeja el terreno para la aparición de la clase obrera. Se vuelve "regresivo" una vez que esto sucede, en la espera de que el sujeto final de la historia por fin instaure una sociedad sin opresión. Los protagonistas son las clases sociales: burguesía contra realidades precapitalistas primero, proletariado contra burguesía después. En el relato, importan más los procesos que los eventos: para el primer período, los obstáculos que pudiera haber para la emergencia de un capitalismo hecho y derecho; para el segundo, las vicisitudes en la formación

de la clase obrera. Su historia no es la de una nación o "pueblo" todo, sino, propiamente hablando, la de la clase obrera antagonista de ayer y de hoy.

El ciclo histórico mundial y argentino de las últimas tres décadas ha socavado la credibilidad de estos tres "grandes relatos". Para decirlo en otras palabras, ya no nos reconocemos en los ancestros con los que esos relatos nos conectan. Si la globalización y la complejización creciente de las culturas erosionaron las narrativas protagonizadas por un Pueblo Nacional, la barbarie capitalista (del Proceso al menemismo) se encargó de disolver el atractivo de la fe en el Progreso. Por otro lado, el fin del experimento socialista, sumado a la explosión de radicalidad política protagonizada por una diversidad de sectores sociales que excede en mucho la clase obrera, nos lleva a poner en cuestión ciertas líneas del relato marxista tradicional.[31] En Argentina, el 2001 funcionó como vórtice, profundizando una crisis de sentido que reclama nuevas narrativas capaces de otorgar significado a la vida social. Esta situación de "vacancia de historias" nos invita a repensar quiénes son nuestros verdaderos ancestros y qué tipo de vinculación nos une a ellos.

Las grandes narrativas disponibles nos proponen identificarnos con ancestros que no podemos aceptar como propios. No podríamos reconocernos en los próceres que se ocuparon de construir un Estado para impulsar y organizar la profundización de las relaciones mercantiles que hoy nos someten, ni en las élites provinciales que buscaban mantener su poder o negociar un reparto mejor con sus pares porteños. Tampoco los obstáculos del desarrollo económico nacional y la industrialización se nos aparecen como asuntos nuestros, hoy que ambos deterioran nuestro planeta y precarizan nuestras vidas. ¿Y qué decir de la "civilización", con su larga estela de violencia mental y física? Políticos, militares, estancieros, comerciantes, industriales, ideólogos del poder: las narrativas hegemónicas nos han enseñado a identificarnos con quienes son, más claramente, *los ancestros de nuestros enemigos*. Al mismo tiempo, han subalternizado, demonizado o invisibilizado a los que pudieran sernos propios.

La historiografía del marxismo tradicional contribuyó a apartarnos de esta perversa operación. Lo hizo, sin embargo, sólo parcialmente. Aunque reconoce los padecimientos de sus víctimas, muchas veces aceptó el carácter "progresivo" de la instauración del capitalismo, por su caracterización de la clase obrera industrial como sujeto revolucionario. Admitió de ese modo como propios a los ancestros de nuestros enemigos.[32] Con el propio Marx, creemos que no hay una

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[31] Sobre este tema véase Ezequiel Adamovsky: "La historia como actividad vital", en idem (ed.): Historia y sentido: exploraciones en teoría historiográfica, Buenos Aires, El Cielo por Asalto, 2001, pp. 9-22.

[32] 7A título de ejemplo, el Esbozo de historia del Partido Comunista de la Argentina (Buenos Aires, Anteo, 1947), editado por el propio partido, incluye un "panteón" de retratos venerables en el que Marx, Engels, Lenin y Stalin se codean con San Martín, Moreno, Rivadavia, Belgrano, Sarmiento y Alberdi. La narrativa, por su parte, comienza cronológicamente con el surgimiento de "la clase obrera propiamente dicha" [sic] en la década de 1880, es decir, con la llegada de los trabajadores industriales de origen europeo (pp. 7, 150).

única situación objetiva que defina las posibilidades de la revolución, sino que se trata de hacerla a partir del momento concreto en que se vive. Y así como le decía a sus camaradas rusos que no debían "esperar" a que llegase el capitalismo a Rusia y que podían basarse en la comuna campesina como embrión del socialismo, nosotros decimos que no estamos dispuestos a rechazar de entre nuestros ancestros a los sujetos subalternos que vivieron antes de la efectiva aparición de la clase obrera. Nuestros ancestros nos convocan desde todas las épocas, mucho antes de que apareciera la clase obrera industrial y no permaneceremos impasibles ante el espectáculo de sus sufrimientos. Por lo demás, sabemos que hoy existe una multiplicidad de sujetos que, junto con los obreros pero de maneras diversas, luchan contra el capitalismo y por un mundo emancipado. Nuestros ancestros, entonces, incluyen pero exceden a la clase obrera: las historias que contemos, por ello, deben ser *ellas mismas* múltiples.

¿Qué historias del pasado resultará significativo que (nos) contemos hoy? ¿Las vidas y los hechos de quiénes, entre los que ya no están, nos siguen resultando actuales? ¿A qué muertos iremos a molestar con nuestras preguntas? En otras palabras: ¿Quiénes son nuestros verdaderos ancestros? Una respuesta posible sería identificar como ancestros a todos aquellos que, en cualquier época, estuvieran en una posición social de subalternidad (incluso si no fuera comparable con la nuestra hoy). Nos reconoceríamos, así, en "los oprimidos de siempre", por contraposición a quienes ocuparon lugares de dominio o privilegio —las élites— de todo tiempo y lugar. Y sin embargo, ¿no resulta innegable que, en nuestras historias de emancipación, frecuentemente nos identificamos con vidas de personas que no pertenecían ellas mismas a ningún grupo oprimido? ¿No veneramos como ancestros, por ejemplo, al *príncipe* Kropotkin, al *médico* Guevara, al *cura* Torres, o al *industrial* Federico Engels?

Sabemos, con el llamado "marxismo crítico", que las clases no existen como entidades sociales preconstituidas que entran en lucha, sino que es la propia lucha de clases la que las constituye. La dominación social supone un constante proceso de clasificación, es decir, de separación y ordenamiento de diferencias para constituir jerarquías de poder. Y sabemos que la lucha de clases es también una lucha constante por clasificar y contra ser clasificados, que se libra dentro de cada uno.[33] En las huellas que deja la resistencia contra ser clasificado todavía podemos visualizar al sujeto que existe *más allá* de su clasificación. Es esta brecha la que permite que, en ocasiones (especialmente en el curso de grandes movilizaciones sociales), la resistencia consiga arribar a un momento de desclasificación, y haga, de lo que era un príncipe, un teórico anarquista, o de lo que era un empresario, un comunista. Esto nos obliga a reconocer que *es imposible saber a priori quiénes podrían ser nuestros ancestros.* No hay lectura estructural abstracta que nos indique en cuál, de entre todos los muertos, podríamos encontrar una historia digna de ser(nos) contada porque alimenta

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[33] Ver John Holloway (ed.): Clase = Lucha: Antagonismo social y marxismo crítico, Buenos Aires, Herramienta, 2004, p. 79.

deseos emancipatorios presentes. Hay que conceder al pasado —como al presente— el beneficio de la complejidad.

¿Qué hacer entonces? ¿Buscar a nuestros ancestros entre "los luchadores", es decir, aquellos que han resistido una situación de injusticia o dominación *independientemente* de la posición de clase que ocuparan? Eso podría ser una solución. Pero caeríamos entonces en un nuevo riesgo: el de un cierto "vanguardismo historiográfico". Porque hemos dicho que buscamos contar historias que iluminen no sólo la resistencia, sino también el hecho de que el mundo en el que vivimos es el producto de la cooperación entre iguales, *protagonicen o no episodios políticos de lucha reconocibles como tales*. Por lo tanto, nuestras historias no pueden ser sólo épicas heroicas centradas en las grandes figuras de la resistencia, o en las gestas epopéyicas de la lucha de clase. Queremos, por el contrario, que puedan ser el hogar, *también*, de quienes labraron, tejieron, amaron y levantaron ciudades; de quienes inventaron la cultura que heredamos sin registrar el copyright; de quienes simplemente huyeron del alcance del poder (cuando todavía esto era posible) para vivir una vida sin amos; de quienes se esforzaron por conservar formas de cooperación ante el avance devastador del Estado y del mercado. Queremos que ellos también puedan ser nuestros ancestros, para que nos iluminen hoy un camino no vanguardista hacia la emancipación.

¿Cómo vincularse con cuáles muertos a la hora de construir un relato que otorgue sentido a nuestro presente? Llamaremos "filiación" a la operación narrativa que convierte a un simple muerto en un ancestro. No se trata de una operación unilateral, en la medida en que el mundo en el que vivimos *efectivamente* ha sido forjado por las luchas, las creaciones, los éxodos, las palabras, etc. de nuestros antepasados. Sin embargo, es desde el presente que trazamos, de todas las conexiones narrativas posibles, aquéllas que potencian nuestros deseos de emancipación. No iluminamos a todos los ancestros potenciales, sino que invocamos a los que hoy necesitamos. Todo historiador sabe que elegimos nuestros ancestros tanto como ellos nos eligen a nosotros. En la noche oscura del pasado, lanzan fulguraciones que nos conducen hacia ellos; los invocamos justo cuando nos convocan. El contacto que así establecemos es necesariamente situacional: es él mismo *histórico*.

Toda operación de filiación parte de un "nosotros" actual que busca constituirse como sujeto colectivo. Para ello, requiere construir genealogías y puentes con el pasado: todo "nosotros" se echa luz y se construye a sí mismo reclamando legados múltiples que sirvan para cohesionar y dar sentido a su propia multiplicidad. Es el dispositivo de intelección del pasado el que nos permite trazar las líneas de filiación con ancestros que ya no están, haciéndolos de ese modo presentes *para nosotros*.

4. Tomar la distancia necesaria:
la "memoria crítica" y el "olvido activo"

Narramos nuestra historia no situándonos en el pasado, ni siquiera en el presente, sino mirándola desde el futuro, desde el "nosotros" que apostamos a hacer presente, pero cuyos rasgos adivinamos, de alguna manera, ya en los ancestros con quienes nos filiamos. Contar historias es establecer esa conexión entre nuestro pasado y el futuro que anhelamos. Por ello, la operación de filiación conlleva un riesgo: el de retrotraernos simplemente al pasado, haciendo del presente y del futuro una pura repetición de lo que ya ha sido. El mundo del pasado avanza así por sobre el nuestro, privándonos de ese modo de un futuro distinto, propio.[34]

Para sortear este peligro, la narración de nuestra historia debe poder establecer una distancia crítica respecto de nuestros ancestros: el modo en que los recordamos debe reconocer que no somos ellos porque somos ya *otros*. Nuestras historias están contadas a partir de las vidas de quienes nos precedieron en las luchas sociales, de sus gestas y sus ideas, de sus métodos y sus creaciones, de sus victorias y sus derrotas. Pero si tal recuerdo asume la forma de una veneración acrítica, el pasado, más que fuente de inspiración y de sentido para la acción, se transforma en *una carga*. Por eso, para darnos la libertad de tener un futuro que nos sea propio, nuestras historias deben reconocer las vidas de nuestros ancestros a la vez como nuestras y ajenas, como actuales y como pasadas. Para la causa revolucionaria, como sabía el propio Marx, recordar las gestas del pasado puede ser tan importante como "desprenderse alegremente de ellas", toda vez que de lo que se trata no es de "repetir el pasado, sino de construir el futuro".

La construcción de este acercamiento al pasado que es también un distanciamiento —llamémosle una "memoria crítica"— requiere pensar operaciones narrativas específicas. Así como la orientación para el trazado de filiaciones surge de un dispositivo de intelección, es ese mismo dispositivo el que nos permite identificar los elementos del legado de nuestros ancestros que hoy resultan una *carga*. El legado que se transforma en una carga es aquél que ya no puede ser actualizable, o el que constituye un obstáculo para la práctica. Es desde nuestra apuesta *actual* por un "nosotros" que podemos visualizar aquellos aspectos del pasado que funcionan como un bloqueo para la acción en el sentido que nuestro presente requiere. La operación de la memoria crítica consiste entonces en relocalizar narrativamente un hito del pasado, para recordarlo de otra manera, es decir, para que deje de ser una carga que pesa sobre la acción.[35]

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[34] Lo que sigue está inspirado en las agudas observaciones del libro de Alejandra Oberti y Roberto Pittaluga, Memorias en montaje, Buenos Aires, El Cielo por Asalto, 2006.

[35] Algo así es lo que hicimos nosotros mismos en Tiempo de insurgencia. El recuerdo de la Revolución rusa, tal como nos llega contado desde la propia tradición de izquierda, a menudo

Por otro lado, cualquier historia implica la recuperación de aspectos del pasado y el "olvido" de otros. No es posible recordarlo todo: del universo infinito de lo sucedido, siempre seleccionamos al narrar aquellos hitos que tienen sentido *para nosotros*. Pero junto con esta forma de olvido existe otra que no es un mero efecto secundario (es decir, involuntario o no deseado) de la narración, sino que constituye su objeto mismo. Las historias de la clase dominante operan invisibilizando *activamente* la iniciativa histórica y la efectividad de la acción de las clases subalternas. O bien se ocupan sencillamente de no mencionar todo aquello que éstas han producido, o bien, cuando hay hitos imposibles de ocultar, los presentan privándolos de su propia racionalidad y sujetos a una narrativa que les quita su verdadero significado. Todo en las historias de la clase dominante, desde la forma en que se recolectan registros escritos de los eventos, hasta el modo en que se los conecta narrativamente, apunta precisamente a olvidar *activamente* la presencia y la efectividad de la acción subalterna.[36]

Estas formas del "olvido activo" son menos sencillas para una narrativa histórica como la que buscamos construir. Desde una perspectiva emancipatoria, no es posible "olvidar" la presencia de la clase dominante o privarla de racionalidad, porque para combatirla nos es preciso justamente hacerla bien visible y comprensible. Por otra parte, ya que la historia *ya ha sido escrita*, *registrada y difundida* desde su punto de vista, no podemos simplemente soslayarla. Por todo esto, la operación del "olvido activo" desde nuestro punto de vista sólo puede consistir en la crítica que ayude a "desaprender" las historias tal como nos han sido contadas por la clase dominante. Lo que en éstas es pura omisión, en las nuestras no puede sino ser un combate abierto.

5. Desarrollar habilidades literarias para una narración con tensión dramática

La historia académica construye un relato del pasado que se transmite en un estilo fácilmente reconocible, un lenguaje fundamentalmente abstracto y técnico, pretendidamente objetivo y desapasionado. Ese estilo de transmisión de los conocimientos históricos ha sido funcional al desarrollo de una actividad

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opera impulsando a la repetición de estrategias políticas, prácticas y discursos que hoy están caducos y que funcionan como un bloqueo para las luchas emancipatorias. Nuestro trabajo consistió en proponer una manera diferente de recordar ese evento: sin dejar de hacerlo propio, marcamos una distancia crítica respecto del legado bolchevique que nos permitió, al mismo tiempo, trazar líneas de filiación nuevas con otros ancestros y con otras prácticas. El recuerdo de 1917 se activa de este modo apuntando a un "nosotros" futuro diferente del "nosotros" que imaginan quienes recuerdan ese hito desde una perspectiva (aún) bolchevique. Véase Producción colectiva: Tiempo de Insurgencia: Experiencias comunistas en la Revolución rusa, Buenos Aires, 2006.

[36] Ver Ranajit Guha: "La prosa de la contra-insurgencia", en Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui y Rossana Barragán (eds.): Debates postcoloniales, La Paz, Historias/SEPHIS, 1997, pp. 33-72.

basada en el autoconsumo de sus producciones. Los libros, las revistas, los artículos académicos referidos al pasado escapan así de la posibilidad de ser apropiados por aquellos que no están dentro de la comunidad académica. Para salir de esta situación necesitamos ensayar nuevas formas de escritura de la historia. Debemos pensar el o los estilos que serían propios de la divulgación y explorar canales alternativos al del lenguaje escrito. Para ello, conviene rescatar algunos aportes que ha realizado la crítica literaria.

La historia académica, o al menos los efectos que se desprenden de su escritura, puede asimilarse a lo que György Lukács llama la actividad de *describir*. Analizando los métodos de exposición utilizados por algunos novelistas del siglo XIX, Lukács encuentra que aquellos escritores que hacen de la descripción su método de escritura crean personajes que "no son más que espectadores más o menos interesados de acontecimientos". De allí que éstos se conviertan para el lector "en un cuadro o, mejor dicho, en un serie de cuadros" para la contemplación. De este modo, lo producido por aquellos que describen no hace más que ubicarse en una vitrina para que pueda ser contemplado, pero no vivido por todos. Es en este sentido que la historia académica *describe*.

Para contar historias que sean apropiables por los demás, es preciso pasar de la *descripción* academicista a la *narración* divulgadora. Puesto que si lo que caracteriza a la descripción es ese alejamiento del lector de lo que sucede en el texto, la narración está atravesada por una acción dramática en la que los lectores "vivimos estos acontecimientos". La narración incorpora lo dramático en la composición del texto. Tal método de exposición supone, entre otras cosas, el interés por la riqueza y el colorido, por la variedad y la diversidad de la práctica humana. Lukács resalta que "las grandes novelas del pasado combinan la exposición de una humanidad significativa con la amenidad y la tensión, en tanto que en el arte moderno se van introduciendo cada vez más la monotonía y el aburrimiento". Si la descripción nivela, la narración articula una poesía de la vida —tal el término lukacsiano— que no es más que la poesía del individuo que lucha, la poesía de la relación recíproca entre los individuos en su práctica verdadera. Para Lukács, "sin esta poesía interior no puede darse épica alguna, no puede inventarse composición épica alguna que sea adecuada para despertar, intensificar y mantener vivo el interés de los individuos. El arte épico consiste en el descubrimiento de los rasgos humanamente significativos de la práctica social, oportunos y característicos de cada caso".[37]

El desarrollo de una práctica divulgadora que haga convivir y no meramente contemplar a los lectores debe introducir y desarrollar un estilo escritural narrativo y épico en sus textos, que incorpore el tenor dramático tan ausente de los textos académicos. Para desempeñar su función, la divulgación necesita valerse de herramientas estilísticas y estéticas diferentes de las que habitualmente emplea la historia académica. Presentamos a continuación

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[37] György Lukács: "Narrar o describir", en ídem, Problemas del realismo, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996, p. 177, 185-86.

algunas prácticas narrativas que estuvimos investigando. Son simplemente parte de la apuesta a construir un método de exposición que permita erosionar la división entre especialistas y resto de la sociedad.

5.1 La ficcionalización

La historia académica suele excluir completamente la ficción como recurso de escritura válido. La diferencia entre un libro de historia y una novela histórica, según se dice, reside en que el primero debe ceñirse estrictamente a la verdad conocida y fundada en documentos, mientras que la segunda puede dar rienda suelta a la invención, utilizando aspectos conocidos del pasado para dar mayor verosimilitud al relato. El problema es que los documentos históricos en general han registrado la presencia y productividad histórica de las élites y sus instituciones; son pocas o incluso nulas las fuentes directas de la vida del mundo plebeyo, del que en general sólo recibimos indicios indirectos. Por otro lado, como hemos señalado antes, los usos populares del pasado se interesan por una dimensión cotidiana y vivencial que rara vez es materia de los relatos históricos tal como los conocemos y de la que, de nuevo en este caso, quedan pocos registros documentales. Como argumentan los defensores de la novela histórica, es precisamente la capacidad de ese género de referir al universo de las personas ignotas y su vida diaria lo que lo hace una lectura popular y de interés masivo. Y es el recurso a la ficción lo que permite dotar al relato de una mirada más viva del pasado, al proponer una reconstrucción imaginativa acerca de cómo pudo haber sido la vida de aquellos que no conocemos simplemente porque han sido borrados de las fuentes y testimonios históricos. En este sentido, paradójicamente, la "ficción verosímil puede ofrecernos una interpretación más real y más viva de los sucesos que la de la historiografía, gracias a la mayor libertad del narrador para enfocar y colorear los sucesos y, en suma, para inventar o reinterpretar personajes".[38]

La ficcionalización permite agregar al relato una conexión con la experiencia vital de sus protagonistas que, a su vez, habilite los indispensables ejercicios de empatía por parte del lector o espectador. Obviamente no podemos "saber" si aquellos de quienes hablamos, protagonistas de nuestras historias, tenían dolor de cabeza, si estaban transpirando, si sentían nervios, si estaban contentos, si tenían frío o calor. Pero sí podemos "imaginarnos" que les pasaban cosas por el estilo a partir de lo que sabemos de su época y de las reacciones humanas en general. Por ello, para filiarnos con gente que vivió su presente como nosotros el nuestro, podemos tomarnos la libertad de suponer nerviosismo, frío, angustia o alegría según reconstruyamos el marco de una determinada situación, un momento histórico. Lo mismo vale para la reconstrucción de los escenarios de la acción: se puede contar cómo las fábricas tiraban sus desechos a un arroyo y suponer al mismo tiempo el olor nauseabundo de semejante lugar. Ficcionalizar

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[38] Carlos García Gual: Apología de la novela histórica y otros textos, Barcelona, Península, 2002, p. 12.

en este sentido, utilizar lo que serían descripciones propias de lo "literario", significa para nosotros recobrar una dimensión de la historia que suele descartarse de los relatos de procesos sociales o que sólo se permite si forman parte de un testimonio personal. El uso de la ficcionalización comporta sin embargo riesgos de los que hay que estar precavidos, porque el historiador-divulgador tiene que mantener un compromiso de fidelidad respecto de las vidas pasadas y actuales. La apelación a la ficción, allí cuando sea necesaria, tiene que estar contrastada lo más rigurosamente posible con los conocimientos que tenemos acerca de una época y el universo mental de sus habitantes.

Un ejemplo de ficcionalización: En su libro *La máquina cultural. Maestras, traductores y vanguardistas* (Buenos Aires, Ariel, 1998), Beatriz Sarlo reconstruye la historia de Rosa del Río, una maestra de escuela de los años veinte que intenta inculcar los valores de la nacionalidad a sus alumnos de barrios pobres, en su mayoría inmigrantes. El interés de Sarlo es el de comprender procesos de difusión de la cultura en Argentina (además de ocuparse de esa maestra, el libro trata sobre Victoria Ocampo y sobre un grupo de cineastas de vanguardia). Lo interesante de la parte dedicada a la maestra es que Sarlo se permite escribirla en primera persona, como si fuera la propia maestra la que relata su experiencia. Apegándose estrictamente a lo conocido, la autora sin embargo agrega toques ficcionales que permiten al lector relacionarse de un modo mucho más vívido con el personaje histórico en cuestión.

5.2 El recurso al héroe y las biografías individuales

Un dispositivo efectivo a la hora de conectar el plano más global y abstracto de las determinaciones de un momento histórico con el más íntimo y pequeño de la experiencia vital cotidiana de los actores, es el recurso a las narraciones biográficas. Contar una trayectoria individual a veces permite mostrar de la manera más patente el modo en que funciona la vida social o se experimenta un determinado proceso de cambio en un momento particular. Al mismo tiempo, iluminar una situación histórica desde la perspectiva de una vida concreta facilita la comunicación del pasado con el presente del lector o el espectador.

Como señaló León Rozitchner, allí donde hay síntesis colectivas en un proceso histórico estas "surgen como convergencia de síntesis parciales individuales que nacen de una acción común":

> Pero siempre hay alguien que las impulsa, algunos que las mueven, que las encarnan con mayor decisión. Esta síntesis vivida por todos debe verificarse como posibilidad humana: es la figura del héroe, del prototipo, que une en sí mismo lo racional con lo sensible y lo hace acceder, por su coraje, vívidamente para los otros. Hay uno que emerge haciendo visible, como forma humana de tránsito real de la burguesía a la revolución, el camino hacia la transformación que todos podrán recorrer. Así adquiere forma humana sintética lo que hasta entonces era disgregación colectiva, anuncio vago, existencia virtual. El conocimiento, a nivel

de la praxis social, siempre tiene "forma de hombre" para poder ser vehículo de transformación: siempre requiere formar cuerpo en alguien para unificarse.[39]

Pero el recurso a la biografía centrado únicamente en vidas heroicas corre el riesgo de apartarse de la experiencia de las mayorías (con no poca frecuencia el héroe ha sido la figura central de las narraciones elitistas o vanguardistas del pasado). La utilización del plano biográfico no debe por ello aplanar la complejidad del ser con idealizaciones y personajes que, a fuerza de mitificación, se vuelven unidimensionales, perfectos e inmaculados. Para conjurar este peligro, allí donde se elijan vidas heroicas para iluminar un momento del pasado, el relato puede apelar a su "humanización" situándolas *también* en su dimensión más corriente y cotidiana. Como apunta José Saramago,

> dicen los entendidos en bien contar cuentos que los encuentros decisivos, tal como sucede en la vida, deberán ir entremezclados y entrecruzarse con otros mil de poca o nula importancia, a fin de que el héroe de la historia no se vea transformado en un ser de excepción a quien todo le puede ocurrir en la vida salvo vulgaridades. Y también dicen que es este el proceso narrativo que mejor sirve al siempre deseado efecto de la verosimilitud, pues si el episodio imaginado y descrito no es ni podrá convertirse nunca en hecho, en dato de la realidad, y ocupar lugar en ella, al menos ha de procurarse que pueda parecerlo...[40]

Nuestra relación con la función del héroe es por esto necesariamente ambigua. Aunque podamos conducir el relato a través del prisma de una vida heroica, no enaltecemos panteones de héroes-individuos. Nuestra mirada está puesta prioritariamente en la acción de las mayorías anónimas y sus prácticas comunizantes. La utilización de historias de vida individual tiene sentido en la medida en que permitan comprender mejor procesos colectivos (justamente porque los corporizan) o en los casos en que una acción personal se conjuga de manera decisiva —aunque no coincidente— con la propia iniciativa histórica de los muchos.

Un ejemplo de recurso al héroe y a la biografía individual: En *La Revolución rusa* (Barcelona, Edhasa, 2000), Orlando Figes conduce todo el relato "mechándolo" con narraciones de vidas de personajes poco conocidos o ignotos que participaron en la revolución: un oscuro campesino, el jefe de una brigada insurrecta, un general zarista que decide colaborar con los bolcheviques. El seguimiento de esas vidas concretas, contadas en estilo literario, le permite reconstruir de un modo muy vívido las alternativas del proceso revolucionario y las diferentes formas en las que las personas concretas de entonces enfrentaron los dilemas políticos del momento.

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[39] León Rozitchner: "La izquierda sin sujeto", La Rosa Blindada, 1966, repr. en idem: Las desventuras del sujeto político, ensayos y errores, Buenos Aires, El cielo por asalto, 1996, p. 69.

[40] José Saramago: El Evangelio según Jesucristo, Madrid, Alfaguara, 2003, p. 219.

5.3 La persona en que se escribe y las "voces" del relato

La historiografía académica narra exclusivamente en tercera persona y en un estilo analítico o "realista" que muy ocasionalmente deja percibir la presencia del narrador. La historia de divulgación puede utilizar otras perspectivas y voces. Por ejemplo, un relato puede alternar la voz del historiador que narra en tercera persona con la de un "testigo" que pueda hacerlo en primera persona. De hecho, incluso los académicos recurren a este tipo de dispositivos, aunque confinándolos al texto de una cita. Apelando a ficcionalizaciones cuidadosas, la voz del testigo podría adquirir un lugar más protagónico como conductora de parte del relato allí donde fuera necesario. El ejemplo de la maestra de Beatriz Sarlo mencionado más arriba sirve también para ilustrar esta posibilidad. El uso de voces ajenas a la del propio historiador también podría servir para hacer patente de manera vivencial la "polifonía" que caracteriza a la mayoría de las situaciones históricas. Aquí el relato podría ser conducido por varias voces que, en primera o tercera persona, presenten cada una perspectiva diferente acerca de los sucesos narrados.

Por otro lado, en ocasiones puede ser de utilidad que el historiador incluya su propia perspectiva de un modo más explícito en el relato. Por ejemplo, a la manera de las tramas detectivescas, el historiador puede revelar los procedimientos metodológicos mediante los cuales llegó a recabar determinada información sobre un evento y luego le otorgó una interpretación precisa. Además de implicar más al lector o receptor de la historia, un procedimiento tal tiene la ventaja de "socializar" los saberes profesionales, ponerlos a disposición y someterlos al juicio de los demás. En ocasiones, el historiador puede hacerse presente de manera deliberada para situarse a sí mismo entre las historias de las personas de las que habla, como partícipe de los hechos, de modo de que se perciba que su propia voz no es sino un punto de vista. En ocasiones, lejos de debilitar la credibilidad del relato, la decisión de exponerse como persona ante los lectores puede reforzarla, toda vez que la vocación de honestidad del historiador queda en primer plano.

Un ejemplo de la incorporación de procedimientos metodológicos en el relato: Federico Lorenz en *Los zapatos de Carlito. Una historia de los trabajadores navales de Tigre en la década del setenta* (Buenos Aires, Norma, 2007) no detalla solamente las fuentes utilizadas a modo de apéndice sino que también incluye aspectos metodológicos en el cuerpo del texto. Por ejemplo, habla de su relación con Carlito —el protagonista a partir del que se estructura la historia— y con el resto de los navales, explicita las discusiones en torno del uso de entrevistas como principal fuente para construir un relato, incluso cuenta en el marco de qué diferentes trabajos fue dedicándose a la escritura de ese libro. La presencia de estos elementos permite al menos evitar una suerte de *efecto misterio* en relación con cómo el historiador construyó, reconstruyó y se posicionó respecto a la historia narrada.

Un ejemplo de la voz del historiador expuesta como punto de vista: En *El 45* (Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 1971), Félix Luna concluye cada capítulo con un breve texto autobiográfico impreso en una tipografía diferente. Los

textos relatan algunas escenas de su propia vida como joven militante radical en tiempos de la irrupción del peronismo. Las anécdotas reflejan la incomprensión que jóvenes como él tuvieron frente al nuevo fenómeno, su miopías y prejuicios sociales. Además de darle frescura y credibilidad al texto, estos breves pasajes autobiográficos, que sin embargo muestran las limitaciones del joven para comprender la realidad, fortalecen la pretensión del historiador adulto de estar comprendiéndola correctamente en el presente.

5.4 El hilo dramático de la narración y la valoración del pasado

Es frecuente escuchar, entre las críticas que la historiografía académica realiza a las obras de divulgación, que éstas se ocupan de señalar "buenos" y "malos" en el pasado. La historia "seria", según argumentan, se ocupa de comprender el pasado, mostrar la complejidad de los procesos, cuestionar las visiones naturalizadas, deconstruir mitos. Se trataría, precisamente, de cuestionar las visiones que se ocupan de distinguir simplisticamente "buenos" y "malos". El resultado frecuente de este punto de vista es el de una desdramatización general del pasado: en una historia reducida a fragmentos inconexos —demasiado "complejos" como para aceptar grandes síntesis–, se pierde de vista el lugar central que tiene la lucha entre el poder y las formas de solidaridad social, o entre el capital y el hacer libre en las sociedades contemporáneas.La prosa del historiador pierde así tensión dramática y, con ella, interés para al gran público.

Nosotros partimos del supuesto contrario: contar historias que otorguen sentido a la experiencia involucra no sólo comprender el pasado y someterlo a crítica, sino también *valorarlo*. En la historia *sí hay "buenos" y "malos"*: existen acciones, individuos, procesos, instituciones, ideas, etc. que contribuyen en un sentido positivo a la libertad, a la cooperación entre iguales, a la solidaridad, mientras que hay de los que empujan en sentido contrario, hacia la opresión, la explotación, la destrucción de la naturaleza o del lazo social. Las historias que queremos contar son precisamente historias de esta lucha constante entre poder y emancipación, opresión y libertad, explotación y cooperación, violencia y justicia. No nos interesa tan solo conocer el pasado, sino contarlo a través de narraciones que lo valoren, que muestren aquello que apunta en un sentido emancipador e inviten a apartarse de (y combatir a) aquello que nos daña. El hilo dramático de las historias que buscamos contar, entonces, se apoya en la distinción de dos campos en lucha y convoca a situarse "del lado de los buenos". Para decirlo en otras palabras, apela a un "nosotros" enfrentado a un campo enemigo. Sin pedido de disculpas. Porque, por otra parte, sabemos que incluso en las obras más académicas y con pretensiones de "neutralidad" se cuelan inevitablemente valoraciones de los hechos y los sucesos relatados.

Situar esta tensión dramática y esta voluntad valorativa del pasado en el centro de la actividad de contar historias conlleva, sin embargo, dos peligros que es preciso advertir. Por un lado, está el riesgo del "esencialismo", es decir, la identificación de sustancias ahistóricas del "bien" y del "mal" que permanecen siempre iguales a sí mismas. Nuestro ejercicio narrativo debe apartarse de ese

riesgo por cuanto es capaz de reconocer la distancia entre nosotros y nuestros ancestros. El segundo peligro es el de caer en el "maniqueismo", es decir, un ejercicio valorativo demasiado apurado en trazar la línea entre esos campos, que aplasta por ello la complejidad de la vida social bajo esquematizaciones simplonas. Este tipo de narraciones glorifican e idealizan aquellos sujetos, prácticas o períodos que buscan resaltar y demonizan las que perciben como contrarias. Nuestra responsabilidad ética, la fidelidad con las vidas pasadas de las que hablamos y con las personas presentes a las que nos dirigimos, nos previene en contra de tales simplificaciones.

Un ejemplo de narración que valora el pasado: Osvaldo Bayer en *La patagonia rebelde* (Buenos Aires, Hyspamerica, 1980) trata de "falacia, embuste y mentira" el informe del teniente coronel Varela que encubre el asesinato del líder huelguista "Facón Grande", aclarando que "hubiéramos podido decir solamente falta a la verdad y no elegir palabras tan duras pero, cuando de por medio está la vida de un hombre, hay que ser realmente objetivos y emplear los términos con que cuenta nuestra lengua y no tener temor". Si la historia de los 1500 huelguistas fusilados por el ejército argentino fue enterrada junto a sus cuerpos, para Bayer, esclarecer objetivamente los hechos no sólo implica relatarlos sino también valorarlos.

5.5 Los tiempos del relato

La buena historia evoca siempre, explícita o implícitamente, vinculaciones con el presente. Para la tarea de divulgación es preciso hacer un uso consciente y precavido de este poder de las historias. Los actos narrativos de filiación que produce el contar historias requieren y autorizan la puesta en contacto de temporalidades diferentes: la del pasado (incluso remoto) y la de nuestro presente. Esta puesta en contacto se puede realizar a través de diversos procedimientos. Desde el punto de vista puramente estilístico, la manipulación y "juego" con los tiempos verbales pasados, presentes y futuros puede ser una veta digna de explorar.

Pero hay también otros procedimientos disponibles. Uno de ellos es el de la analogía. Como figura, se trata simplemente de la comparación de algún elemento del pasado con otro más conocido (porque es actual o porque existe de él un conocimiento mayor). Como toda comparación, permite asociar aspectos compartidos de dos períodos sin por ello ignorar sus diferencias. Por dar un ejemplo, en nuestro texto Tiempo de Insurgencia exploramos una analogía entre los procesos de desclasificación que habilitó la Revolución rusa y otros similares (aunque de una escala infinitamente menor) en la rebelión abierta en diciembre de 2001 en Argentina. Se trata de dos momentos completamente distintos, pero la analogía permite conectar sus temporalidades y echar luz sobre ambos. Para quienes participaron del proceso de 2001, la analogía también permite un acercamiento más vívido a la situación que podrían haber experimentado los ancestros de 1917.

Otro procedimiento que vale la pena explorar es el del *anacronismo*. Como ejercicio, consiste en trasladar un concepto o una imagen del pasado al presente o en sentido inverso, del presente al pasado. El elemento trasladado claramente no forma parte legítimamente del momento histórico en el que es inserto. Y sin embargo, en algunas ocasiones, puede servir para iluminar líneas de continuidad que conviene tener presentes. Un ejemplo posible de este uso es el que Felipe Pigna empleó para explicar la crisis económica de 1890 y las medidas que Juárez Celman que la propiciaron. Para hacer más fácil de comprender la dinámica de especulación financiera, connivencia estatal, corrupción política y pago de los "platos rotos" de 1890, Pigna refirió a las limitaciones al retiro de depósitos de entonces como el "primer corralito". Por supuesto, esta operación también conlleva riesgos análogos a los ya señalados, cuando se utiliza de un modo que violenta la realidad histórica de cada momento. Valga como ejemplo otro tomado de Pigna, la metáfora de "el primer desaparecido" referida a la muerte de Mariano Moreno, que yuxtapone modos de acabar con disidentes que en verdad tienen poco en común.

Otros recursos estilísticos pueden resultar útiles en el mismo sentido. El "flashback" y "flashforward" –para tomar una terminología cinematográfica– también permiten trazar líneas de continuidad entre momentos diferentes, anticipando información de períodos posteriores a la época referida o retrotrayéndose a escenas del pasado que, a simple vista, no tienen mucho que ver. Este procedimiento altera la secuencia cronológica de la historia de un modo que genera una inteligibilidad nueva. Considérese por ejemplo la siguiente frase:

> Los elencos económicos del Proceso incluyeron personajes de curiosas trayectorias. El principal ministro de economía fue José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz, descendiente de una antigua familia de estancieros fundadores de la Sociedad Rural, de los que más tierra recibieron gracias a la "Campaña del Desierto". Ricardo Zinn, de sólidos vínculos con los bancos y las empresas transnacionales, se convirtió en su asesor (a los militares no les importó que hubiera sido funcionario de Isabelita, como tampoco a Carlos Menem le importó que hubiera colaborado con la dictadura cuando volvió a requerir sus servicios para las privatizaciones de la década de 1990).[41]

En el ejemplo, las referencias a momentos pasados y futuros a los del momento que se está narrando (el Proceso), contribuyen a trazar líneas de continuidad que iluminan los apoyos políticos de la empresa de los militares y la permanencia de un programa económico similar en tiempos venideros.

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[41] Este fragmento pertenece a un trabajo de próxima publicación de uno de nosotros.

6. Tener siempre presente la dimensión ética de la divulgación

Cualquier acción humana tiene una dimensión ética y esta dimensión es directamente política, pues implica realizar valoraciones sobre el pasado, el presente y el futuro. El quehacer historiográfico y la divulgación no son la excepción. Se trata entonces de preguntarse si pueden distinguirse acciones y prácticas "correctas" y "reprobables" relacionadas con la divulgación; en otras palabras, si debe haber consideraciones éticas que orienten el modo de realizar nuestra actividad.

Partimos de la base de que los juicios éticos no surgen de individuos aislados ni de supuestas leyes morales universales, sino de una realidad primordial y concreta: la vida colectiva. Aquello que somos como personas, nuestra propia identidad individual, las ideas que tenemos acerca del mundo en el que vivimos: todo surge en nuestra relación con el otro. Por eso una existencia ética, "sin coartadas", es aquella que no se cierra en el monólogo, que no hace de los demás meros objetos de su propia vida, sino que se mantiene *afectable* por los otros. La responsabilidad —o capacidad de *responder ante el otro*, ser *responsable*— surge de ese compromiso: una ética de la responsabilidad tiene que ver con colocar en un lugar central nuestras relaciones con el prójimo; fomentar la potencia de responder ante los demás por lo que hacemos o dejamos de hacer.[42]

Desde este punto de vista, inmediatamente surgen, al menos, tres preguntas. Al contar una historia hablamos acerca de gente que ya está muerta. ¿Tenemos algún tipo de responsabilidad ética por lo que decimos frente a esos muertos? Al mismo tiempo, una historia se le cuenta hoy a quienes habitan el mundo con nosotros ¿Cuál es nuestra responsabilidad frente a esos otros que nos escuchan? Y tercero ¿cómo habitamos éticamente el espacio universitario en el que nos formamos y trabajamos?

La primera pregunta es quizás la más complicada. ¿Por qué habríamos de responder ante los muertos? ¿Por qué no contar sus vidas de la manera que nos de la gana, para ejemplificar o demostrar aquello que necesitamos en el presente? ¿Por qué no manipularlas o adaptarlas para que sirvan mejor a nuestras intenciones políticas? Los límites temporales de nuestra vida no nos son dados a nuestra propia autoconciencia; también ellos surgen en nuestra relación con los demás. Sólo sabemos de los extremos de nuestra existencia —nuestro nacimiento y nuestra muerte— "desde afuera", es decir, a través del testimonio de los otros. Ni nuestro nacimiento ni nuestra muerte son acontecimientos que conozcamos por nosotros mismos: el "argumento" de nuestra vida nos viene dado "desde afuera". Nuestro principio y nuestro fin sólo se nos aparecen construyéndonos como personajes de una historia; y ello sólo es posible situándonos desde el punto de vista de un otro. Asimismo, tampoco la totalidad temporal del mundo nos es patente a través de nuestra propia

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[42] Estas ideas están inspiradas en Mijail Bajtin: "Autor y personaje en la actividad estética", en idem: Estética de la creación verbal, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2002, pp. 19-122.

experiencia individual. Recibimos la imagen "completa" del mundo a través de las vidas conclusas de quienes fueron sus personajes. Su valor como totalidad en la que vivimos se nos aparece cuando nos imaginamos habitando el mismo mundo de los otros, el mundo de Cristo, Sócrates y Napoleón, la tierra de esclavos fugitivos, campesinos insurrectos y trabajadores rebeldes, y también la que enmarcó la vida de nuestros seres queridos que ya no están.[43]

La valoración de las vidas de esos otros, la relación con ellos, afecta el modo en que valoramos hoy la propia. De allí, de nuestra dependencia de los demás –incluso de los otros que han muerto– para "completarnos" en nuestra existencia como criaturas temporales deriva el compromiso ético de permanecer abiertos a lo que aún tengan para decirnos, de seguir siendo *afectables* por esas vidas. Convertir a esos otros muertos en meros objetos inertes, caricaturas unidimensionales al servicio de nuestras narraciones, no es sino otra forma de cerrarnos en el monólogo. Nuestra práctica de divulgación debe poder responder por el modo en que trata las vidas que narra, reconocerlas como vidas plenas de sentido y no forzarlas a ser simplemente lo que nosotros quisiéramos que fueran. Rescatar esa complejidad significa para nosotros asumir una actividad historiográfica éticamente responsable. Porque lo contrario, trazar una dirección única al pasado, barrer con la complejidad de la existencia de quienes nos precedieron en nombre de la efectividad política de un relato, significaría convertir a esos otros en meros objetos de consumo (algo demasiado similar a la actividad que realiza la clase dominante).

La segunda pregunta es más sencilla. En la medida en que las historias que contamos hoy tienen la capacidad de afectar las vidas de quienes las escuchan, ya que el modo en que narramos nuestro pasado asigna implícitamente lugares y papeles a cada quien en el presente, y desde que son las historias narradas las que nos ayudan a construir nuestra identidad personal y colectiva, estamos obligados a responder ética y políticamente por lo que hagamos como divulgadores. Al contar historias, asumimos una responsabilidad para con aquellos otros que viven con nosotros en nuestro tiempo. Pero nuestra ética está histórica y políticamente situada: el otro ante quien vamos a responder no es universal ni absoluto, sino un ser real y concreto que se determina en el movimiento de una comunidad a través de su historia. Hoy, aquí y ahora, no vamos a responder ante aquellos que se esfuerzan por mantener un estado de cosas injusto y opresivo como el actual. No respondemos ante ese *individuo humano abstracto y general* que postulan los liberales, sino ante la comunidad de nuestros hermanos y hermanas de clase, nuestros compañeros de sufrimientos y alegrías. Nuestras opciones éticas están en relación con un planteo político de transformación social y de crítica al *modo de vida capitalista.* Como decía Marx, "la propiedad privada nos ha hecho tan estúpidos y unilaterales que un objeto sólo es *nuestro* cuando lo tenemos, cuando existe para nosotros como capital o cuando es inmediatamente poseído, comido, bebido, vestido, habitado, en resumen, *utilizado* por nosotros (…) En lugar de

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[43] Bajtin: "Autor y personaje…", pp. 95-102.

todos los sentidos físicos y espirituales, ha aparecido así la simple enajenación de *todos* estos sentidos, el sentido *tener*".[44] Ya que el capitalismo es *malo* para nosotros, ya que nos diezma la vida, nos fragmenta, nos aliena en nuestra relación con nosotros mismos y con los demás, las historias que contamos deben asumir la responsabilidad *ético-política* de su crítica. Pero como somos parte, junto con nuestros hermanos y hermanas, de la comunidad que padece los efectos del capitalismo, y como sólo *con* (y no *sobre*) ellos cambiaremos este modo de vida, tenemos la responsabilidad de no "venderles carne podrida" sobre el pasado (de la misma forma en que uno no vende carne podrida sobre el presente), de no endiosar héroes, no construir monumentos intocables, no ocultar contradicciones. Se trata, en cambio, de aportar herramientas práctico-conceptuales para la acción colectiva. Esto implica asumir los debates presentes como problemas políticos e intervenir desde una perspectiva manifiesta, respetuosa de los demás, no oculta ni manipulativa.

En tercer lugar, se trata de asumir una actitud ética en el territorio donde nos hemos formado. Esta responsabilidad parte de nuestra crítica política a la academia, a su forma de producir el saber histórico escindida del afuera social. Por un lado, esta crítica se dirige a la enajenación de la producción histórica que la academia produce al direccionar el trabajo de los historiadores primeramente al engrosamiento de sus propios *curriculum vitae* individuales y al destinar el fruto de su trabajo prioritariamente al consumo del mismo círculo cerrado de la comunidad de historiadores e intelectuales. Por otro lado, asumir una actitud ética implica preguntarse por el uso de los recursos que consumimos en nuestra labor. Porque son las clases dominadas las que producen la historia misma, la vida toda, incluyendo los fondos que la universidad utiliza. Como reconocía hace poco una agrupación estudiantil:

> Podemos regodearnos en nuestro chiquero y seguir creyendo que la sociedad civil mantiene sus instituciones con los impuestos de todos los ciudadanos. Pero la torre de marfil no tiene vida eterna y ya vendrá la turba iracunda a preguntarnos qué hicimos con el tiempo de trabajo social que destinó el Estado para reproducir nuestras condiciones de vida ascética en las aulas.[45]

Nuestra responsabilidad para con la turba iracunda es justamente volcar nuestra producción hacia fuera, divulgar nuestra formación, socializarla, hacerla del vulgo. Como apuesta ético-política, la divulgación trata de hacer porosos los límites del adentro y el afuera que muchas veces la universidad se esmera en reforzar.

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[44] Karl Marx, "Tercer Manuscrito", en idem, Manuscritos económico filosóficos de 1844, Madrid, Alianza, 1984, p. 148.

[45] "Vivir y Pensar como Puercos", Volante de la agrupación 400 Golpes, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la UBA, septiembre 2007.

Anexo

Principales canales de difusión de nociones del pasado que afectan la formación social de la conciencia histórica

La siguiente lista —que de ningún modo tiene pretensión de exhaustividad— se propone hacer visible la variedad de canales a través de los cuales se emiten mensajes e imágenes sobre el pasado que contribuyen a la formación de sentidos históricos. Los ejemplos y bibliografía comentada hacen foco en experiencias de Argentina.

1 FICCION

1.1 La novela histórica

Uno de los géneros preferidos de los lectores en todo el mundo, en Argentina tiene también una

extraordinaria difusión, en obras tanto de estilo tradicional (por ejemplo La trama del pasado, de Cristina Bajo) como en otra de veta satírica (por ejemplo 1810: La Revolución de Mayo vivida por los negros, de Washington Cucurto). El historiador Félix Luna incursionó en el género con Soy Roca, una autobiografía ficcionada de Julio A. Roca. Sobre la espinosa cuestión de la posibilidad de aceptar la novela histórica como canal legítimo de divulgación de saberes sobre el pasado puede leerse: Carlos García Gual: Apología de la novela histórica, Barcelona, Península, 2002; Casilda Madrazo Salinas et al.: Historia y Literatura: dos realidades en conjunción, México, Universidad Iberoamericana, 2006.

1.2 Ficciones históricas en cine o TV

Las temáticas históricas suelen estar muy presentes en el cine y la televisión, desde la miniserie Vientos de Agua (Canal 13, 2006) hasta la aparición de Perón y Evita en la tira Padre Coraje (Canal 13, 2004). El cine argentino ha sido rico en películas de temáticas históricas, como Evita, Asesinato en el Senado de la Nación, La guerra gaucha, La noche de los lápices, La Patagonia rebelde, etc.

1.3 Ficciones históricas en teatro

También el teatro argentino ha frecuentado las temáticas históricas. Existen exitosas obras que han puesto en escena verdaderas narraciones de la historia nacional, como Una historia tendenciosa, de Ricardo Monti, El Fulgor Argentino, del grupo Catalinas Sur o Salsa Criolla, de Enrique Pinti. Otra innumerable cantidad de piezas apela a referencias históricas más puntuales, como Venimos de muy lejos del mismo grupo Catalinas Sur, Cuestiones con Che Guevara, de José Pablo Feimann y Guayaquil, de Pacho O'Donnell.

1.4 Otras

La publicidad, los video-clips, etc. pueden también incluir mensajes sobre el pasado. Lo mismo vale para otros productos comerciales, como por ejemplo juegos electrónicos como "La era de los Imperios" (Age of Empires).

2 NO FICCION

2.1 Documentales e informes en cine, radio o TV

De gran difusión, especialmente en los últimos años, son los informes documentales históricos, que proliferan tanto en cine como en TV. En esta última se destacan el ciclo Algo Habrán Hecho por la Historia Argentina (2005) de Felipe Pigna y Mario Pergolini (que además se combina con elementos ficcionales) y los documentales de Canal Encuentro conducidos por el historiador Gabriel Di Meglio. Los noticieros de TV también emiten frecuentes "informes" sobre acontecimientos históricos y existen incluso programas enteros dedicados al pasado, como Noticias de la historia, conducido por Diego Valenzuela en canal TN. En cine hay una larga tradición de documentales, como los de Raymundo Gleyzer de los años sesenta y setenta, la película La República perdida o los más recientes dedicados a diversos aspectos de la década de 1970, como Trelew. La fuga que fue masacre de Mariana Arruti. En radio también existen numerosos ejemplos, como el programa "Soltando Pájaros" conducido por Atilio Bleta que emite radio Nacional (AM 870) semanalmente, en el que se invita historiadores a hablar sobre sus temas de investigación. Una experiencia colectiva y de contenidos antagonistas digna de destacar es el programa "La Hidra de mil cabezas: historia de los movimientos sociales", que se emite dos veces por semana por Radio Universidad de Mendoza.

2.2 Libros de historia (ensayos o monografías)

Además de los libros tradicionales de historia, existe una robusta tradición de ensayismo histórico que va desde una perspectiva crítica (por ejemplo en los clásicos de Arturo Jauretche o Jorge A. Ramos) hasta otra más liberal (como los más recientes de Marcos Aguinis). Es difícil exagerar la influencia que han tenido en Argentina libros como Las venas abiertas de América Latina, de Eduardo Galeano. En los últimos años ha florecido la literatura de divulgación histórica propiamente dicha. La delantera en este florecimiento la han tomado algunos autores ajenos al campo académico, como Felipe Pigna o Jorge Lanata, que reemplazaron a Félix Luna en el lugar de historiadores más conocidos para el público general. Frente a esto la academia ha respondido recientemente con colecciones como "Nudos de la Historia", que dirige Jorge Gelman para editorial Sudamericana entre otras iniciativas. Los medios de comunicación han zanjado ambos mundos con publicaciones propias, como los fascículos La fotografía en la historia argentina publicados por el diario Clarín con participación tanto de historiadores académicos como de los "nuevos divulgadores". También Página/12 viene publicando en forma de fascículos una Historia argentina,

Historia de los partidos políticos argentinos e Historia de la economía argentina del siglo XX. Sobre la recepción de las obras de "nueva divulgación" véase Pablo Semán, "Historia, best-sellers y política", en Bajo continuo. Exploraciones descentradas sobre cultura popular y masiva, Editorial Gorla, Buenos Aires, 2006.

2.3 Otros canales

La divulgación de historia en formatos no ficcionales se vale además de una serie de canales variados. Hay por ejemplo revistas especializadas bien instaladas entre el público como Todo es Historia, dirigida por Félix Luna. Felipe Pigna viene utilizando también el formato del comic con la serie La historieta argentina. Existe además una variedad de folletos y textos de lectura simple, desde los artículos de diarios, revistas y páginas web, hasta libros ilustrados "Para principiantes", como los de la editorial Era Naciente, etc.

3 CIRCUITO ESCOLAR

3.1 Docencia escolar

Tanto en el nivel primario como en el secundario, la labor educativa de los docentes es fundamental en la difusión de saberes históricos e imágenes del pasado. Además del discurso del educador frente a los estudiantes, estos contenidos se transmiten por otros canales asociados:

3.1.1 Manuales escolares

En Argentina, a diferencia de lo que sucede en otros países latinoamericanos, la producción y distribución de estos materiales está en manos del mercado, con una mínima participación del Estado como autoridad última con capacidad de desautorizar el uso de alguno. En los últimos años se ha evidenciado una tendencia por parte de algunas de las editoriales más importantes de convocar a historiadores profesionales para la escritura de los libros de texto, sin que las universidades hayan tenido en general una política activa en este sentido. Como resultado, se cuenta hoy con algunos cuyos contenidos escapan a las visiones más tradicionales o conservadoras del pasado, de rigor en los manuales hasta no hace mucho tiempo. Véase por ejemplo Gustavo Schujman, Laura Clérico y Vera Carnovale: Derechos humanos y ciudadanía, Buenos Aires, Aique, 2005.

3.1.2 Revistas escolares

También en manos de empresas comerciales, existe en Argentina una tradición de revistas escolares, como las clásicas Billiken y Anteojito (y más recientemente Genios) que suelen tener secciones de historia bastante prominentes.

3.1.3 Actos conmemorativos escolares

Los discursos, producciones especiales y puestas en escena de determinados acontecimientos históricos durante los actos escolares también constituyen un canal importante de difusión de contenidos sobre el pasado. El recurso típico de "disfrazar" a los niños para que personifiquen próceres o personajes de las gestas patrióticas sin duda tiene un efecto importante para lograr que determinados saberes se hagan carne en ellos.

En general los historiadores argentinos se han involucrado relativamente poco en el circuito de la docencia en niveles primario y secundario, una actividad que suele ser subvaluada. En ocasiones el Estado requirió sus servicios a la hora de plantear reformas educativas y excepcionalmente algunos han producido reflexiones al respecto. Por ejemplo, Luis Alberto Romero: Volver a la historia: su enseñanza en el tercer ciclo de la EGB, Buenos Aires, Aique, 2002; Raúl Fradkin: "Enseñanza de la Historia y Reforma Educativa. Algunas reflexiones sobre los Contenidos Básicos Comunes", Anuario IEHS N° 13, 1998; Dora Schwarzstein: Una introducción al uso de la historia oral en la escuela, Buenos Aires, FCE, 2001. Entre los especialistas en educación hay un cuerpo de reflexión ya importante, que no eludió pensar el problema de la escisión entre historia académica e historia escolar. Véase por ejemplo Gonzalo de Amézola: Esquizohistoria: La historia que se enseña en la escuela, la que preocupa a los historiadores y una renovación posible de la historia escolar, Buenos Aires, Libros del Zorzal, 2008. Por otro lado, la Universidad Nacional del Litoral publica desde 1996 una revista especializada, Clío y Asociados, La historia enseñada.

4 CIRCUITO de EDUCACION INFORMAL o VOLUNTARIA

4.1 Charlas públicas y cursos populares

Las constantes charlas y conferencias públicas sobre temas históricos tienen también su importancia a la hora de difundir saberes históricos. Recientemente ha suscitado un notable interés, por ejemplo, un ciclo de charlas de Norberto Galasso en la ciudad de Buenos Aires. Por otra parte, tradicionalmente los centros barriales, los partidos populares, los movimientos sociales y los sindicatos desarrollan intensas actividades de formación que suelen incluir cursos de historia.

4.2 Investigaciones participativas

Una mención aparte merecen los talleres y otras experiencias en las que se involucra a comunidades locales en actividades de investigación y escritura de su propia historia. Un ejemplo interesante es el de los "Talleres de Historia" organizados por el Plan Nacional de Lectura en 1987-1989; véase Delia

Maunás et al.: Los Talleres de Historia por dentro, Buenos Aires, Secretaría de Cultura de la Nación, 1989. El Instituto Histórico de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires

también desarrolló una experiencia interesante con los "Talleres de historia oral" en los barrios desde 1986. Más allá de las iniciativas estatales, estas son también actividades que se impulsan desde las organizaciones políticas.

4.3 Paseos históricos

Con o sin fines comerciales, los paseos en sitios de interés histórico suelen ser muy efectivos a la hora de aprehender el pasado de modo más tangible. Un buen ejemplo es Eternautas, una pequeña empresa formada por historiadores que ofrece tours históricos por la ciudad de Buenos Aires.

4.4 Museos

En el mismo sentido, los museos han sido tradicionalmente sitios en los que las personas pueden tener un contacto directo con artefactos, imágenes y documentos del pasado. La selección de objetos que realizan y los recorridos que proponen, suelen transmitir verdaderas "interpretaciones" acerca del pasado. También funcionan como sitio de producción o resguardo de la memoria colectiva. En Argentina hay un importante circuito de museos estatales, como el Museo Histórico Nacional, el Museo Roca, etc. También ha habido iniciativas de construcción de museos por parte de individuos o grupos sociales para preservar una memoria específica, descuidada por el Estado (aunque luego puedan haber recibido apoyo estatal), por ejemplo el Museo Ferroviario Ferrowhite de Bahía Blanca, el Museo Casa de Ernesto Che Guevara, etc. Otro ejemplo es la utilización de ex centros clandestinos de detención para el emplazamiento de museos. Para una reflexión sobre el valor de los museos en la formación de los saberes sobre el pasado, véase Silvia Alderoqui (ed.): Museos y escuelas: socios para educar, Buenos Aires, Paidos, 1996.

4.5 Exposiciones

En un sentido similar al de los museos pueden mencionarse las exposiciones más puntuales o limitadas en el tiempo. Un ejemplo entre muchos posibles: la exposición "Imágenes para la Memoria", organizada por Memoria Abierta, en conmemoración de los 30 años del Golpe de Estado de 1976 en el Teatro San Martín, que alcanzó bastante repercusión durante 2006.

4.6 Representaciones/Puestas en escena históricas

Tanto el Estado como grupos no estatales se valen en ocasiones de "narraciones vivientes" o escenificaciones de eventos del pasado como modo de transmitir mensajes históricos. Un ejemplo reciente es el de la recreación de las Invasiones Inglesas organizada por el Ejército en el Regimiento de Patricios de Palermo (ciudad de Buenos Aires) el 4 de mayo de 2006. Entre los movimientos sociales, se destacan en este sentido las "Místicas" que realiza frecuentemente el

Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero (MOCASE) para trasmitir entre sus miembros la historia de las luchas campesinas.

5 OTROS MEDIOS

5.1 Carteles, Graffitis, Murales

Este tipo de referencias a acontecimientos del pasado son parte de un repertorio de uso constante en

paredes, remeras, etc. Los afiches que realiza el grupo Iconoclasistas, laboratorio de comunicación y

recursos contrahegemónicos por ejemplo, trazan "mapas" que explican el funcionamiento de diversos modos de opresión en la vida cotidiana (www.iconoclasistas.com.ar).

5.2 Acción Directa

También como recurso habitual de la acción política, algunos grupos han realizado acciones directas para señalar la actualidad de cuestiones del pasado o interferir sobre el modo en que se las recuerda. Ejemplo de ello son los "escraches" realizados por la agrupación HIJOS para hacer visibles las marcas del pasado que continúan activas en el presente en cada barrio. Otro ejemplo son los ataques e intervenciones que ha realizado el pueblo mapuche sobre la estatua del gral. Roca emplazada en Bariloche.

5.3 Actos conmemorativos

En el mismo sentido se han utilizado los actos públicos, como los del 1ro. de Mayo que tradicionalmente organiza la clase obrera en todo el mundo para recordar a los que murieron en luchas pasadas y actualizar su legado.

5.4 Campañas

Con el fin de preservar la memoria o incidir en el modo en que se recuerda también se emplean campañas puntuales de esclarecimiento. Por ejemplo, la que organizó el historiador Pedro Navarro Floria en 2004, cuando recolectó firmas de otros historiadores en reacción a un intento del diario La Nación y del entonces director del Museo Histórico Nacional de negar el carácter de "genocidio" que tuvo la llamada Campaña al Desierto de 1879.

5.5 Monumentos y nominación de lugares públicos

El Estado se ha valido tradicionalmente de la construcción de monumentos y de la asignación de nombres a calles y sitios públicos como modo de construir una memoria del pasado que respondiera a sus intereses. Pero también se ha

utilizado un recurso análogo con un sentido antagonista. Buen ejemplo de son las placas recordatorias de los caídos en la represión del 20 de diciembre de 2001 que instaló el Grupo de Arte Callejero (GAC) en varias calles de Buenos Aires, varias veces retiradas clandestinamente por la policía y vueltas a instalar por el GAC. También son dignas de mención las intervenciones sobre nombres de sitios públicos, como los frecuentes ataques a los carteles de la calle Ramón Falcón, o la campaña para redenominar la estación de tren Avellaneda como "Darío y Maxi", en recuerdo de los dos piqueteros asesinados allí en 2002.

5.6 Canciones y poemas

No sólo en los cantos de las manifestaciones políticas se hace referencia al pasado. También existen artistas populares que utilizan sus letras para transmitir la memoria histórica o reconstruir eventos del pasado. En Argentina pueden mencionarse, por ejemplo, las canciones "La Memoria" (León Gieco), "Quien quiera oir, que oiga" (Lito Nebbia), "San Jauretche" (Los Piojos) o el éxito que tuvo "Papá cuéntame otra vez", del español Ismael Serrano.

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Book reviews: *Interface* volume 2 (1)

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Books reviewed this issue:

Maeckelbergh, Marianne (2009). *The Will of the Many: How the Alterglobalisation Movement is Changing the Face of Democracy (Anthropology, Culture and Society).* London: Pluto Press.

Reviewed by Emma Dowling, *Queen Mary University of London*

Maeda, Daryl J. (2009). *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America.* Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press.

Reviewed by Adrianne Showalter Matlock, *University of Kansas*

McVeigh, Rory (2009). *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-wing Movements and National Politics (Social Movements, Protest, and Contention).* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Reviewed by Allison L. Hurst, *Furman University*, South Carolina

Shah-Shuja, Mastaneh (2008) . *Zones of Proletarian Development.* London: Openmute.

Reviewed by Donagh Davis, *European University Institute*, Florence

Van der Walt, Lucien, & Schmidt, Michael (2009). *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism.* Edinburgh / Oakland: AK Press.

Reviewed by Deric Shannon, *University of Connecticut*

Woehrle, Lynne M., Coy, Patrick G., & Maney, Gregory M. (2008). *Contesting Patriotism: Culture, Power, and Strategy in the Peace Movement.* Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press

Reviewed by Janeske Botes, *University of the Witwatersrand*, South Africa.

Juris, Jeff (2008). *Networking futures: the movements against corporate globalization.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press

[ES + EN]: Israel Rodríguez-Giralt, *Universitat Oberta de Catalunya* (Open University of Catalonia)

Maeckelbergh, Marianne (2009). *The Will of the Many: How the Alterglobalisation Movement is Changing the Face of Democracy (Anthropology, Culture and Society).* **London: Pluto Press.**

Reviewed by **Emma Dowling**, *Queen Mary University of London,*UK.

'Seattle', 'Porto Alegre', 'Genoa', 'Cancun', 'Florence', 'Mumbai', 'Gleneagles', 'Heiligendamm'; these are some of the names of places that became signifiers for the cycle of alter-globalisation struggles of the last decade, all of them moments where anti-summit protests or social forums took place, where a 'movement of movements' against capitalism and for global justice constituted itself.

Much has been written about these moments as events. However, activist and researcher Marianne Maeckelbergh side-steps the event to remind us of the centrality of process. Thwarting the revolutionary moment in favour of 'prefigurative rebellion' as a way of refusing power as domination and creating alternatives to the exploitations and oppressions of neoliberalism, she zooms in on "global networks as spaces of movement activity" (p. 61), unpacking the movement's material practices of organisation and decision-making in order to demonstrate exactly how prefiguration works (and sometimes doesn't work) in real life. Concentrating primarily on social forums, anti-summit mobilisations and the virtual spaces of movement communication, using excerpts from her notes from meetings and email-list postings, this book provides a meticulous, lively ethnography and astute political analysis of the alterglobalisation movement's *modi operandae*, including the conflict between so-called 'horizontals' and 'verticals', 'autonomous spaces', the 'mobile social forum administration', 'buzzword bingo', the WSF Charter of Principles, 'affinity groups', 'rules of engagement' such as the 'Tools for White Men and Other People Socialised in a Society Based on Domination', not to forget the 'hand signals', 'Black Bloc' forms of protest and the concept of a 'diversity of tactics'.

In a productive exchange with democratic theory from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Iris Marion Young and more recent Complexity Theory of Graeme Chesters and Ian Walsh amongst others, Maeckelbergh explains how and why the agency — i.e. the transformative capacity — of the movement does not lie in a message, an effect on the state or multilateral institution, but in the way it is developing democratic forms of collectivity. Arguing that the alterglobalisation movement has shifted the question of democracy from '*who* rules?' to '*how* do we rule?', she unpacks six processes of social change: prefiguration, consensus/conflict, horizontality, diversity, democracy and connectivity.

Following the process

In contrast to previous social movements, it is the alterglobalisation movement's forms of organisation - as opposed to ideas or goals – that are its ideology. This is the reason why Maeckelbergh chooses to 'follow the process' (p. 21). Her reflexive research methodology entails a constant engagement with her own subject position, allowing her to take into account how, beyond hitherto notions of 'participant observation' or even 'observant participation', she is both interpreting the practices of the movement whilst – and this is crucial –being simultaneously involved in constituting these practices. She acknowledges the opportunities and the limits of participation for research, noting that access can be both enabled as well as restricted as a result of political alliances. Likewise, she draws on how different kinds of participation offer different insights for her research:

> "When I went to open meetings and participated like everyone else, I gained access to what was said during the meeting and perhaps in the pub afterwards, but when I facilitated the meeting myself, I gained insight into how the agenda was constructed, how movement actors perceived the ideal meeting and what kinds of compromises were made in the negotiation between real and ideal." (p. 25).

Maeckelbergh's 'political' and 'conflictive' ethnography is one of the most successful treatments of the 'researcher-activist' problematic I have read to date. She tackles the political and epistemological dilemmas of researching social movements as a movement actor and as a researcher based in a university institution head on and thereby takes the existing debate forward. However, whilst Maeckelbergh's political allegiances are unquestionably located with the autonomous-anarchist section of the movement, to whom she credits most of the movement's innovation, she chooses not to write from this particular political vantage point but reverts to traditional ethnographic language and the individualised thought process of the researcher, thus re-inscribing a distance between herself as a researcher and the 'movement actors' she is writing about. Whilst this jolts at times, what it communicates to the reader is the same kind of unease with representation on behalf of the author that is characteristic of the alterglobalisation movement. In other words, Maeckelbergh writes in a way that tries to resist – in form as well as in content – falling prey to undue claims to representation.

Consensus is oppressive – conflict is creative

Diversity lies at the heart of the movement and guards against oppressive and exclusionary impositions of unity. The basis of collective power is located in common practices, not singular utopias or a unity founded upon identity positions. Subjectivity becomes a site of transformation in and of itself and conflict becomes key in creating a common process. Maeckelbergh distinguishes adversarial conflict from productive conflict to argue that significantly, it is the space for conflict and the refusal of a necessary unified outcome that characterise these new forms of organisation, along with a

practical and pragmatic stance: "consensus is about the task at hand, not consensus about absolutely everything" (p. 103).

Maeckelbergh analyses the real conflicts she witnessed to show how movement actors hold very different idea(l)s about process and legitimate forms of power, designating this negotiation as the terrain of conflict. Importantly, her experience shows that consensus that is not based on diversity can be used to silence and exclude and thus is oppressive. Equality means allowing outcomes to be multiple and acknowledging the existence of inequality and difference.

This study is attentive to the shortcomings of these ideals. The preparatory process of the ESF 2004 in London, one of the case studies, was so marred by conflict that many groups are still unable to work together. Here, the limits of the movement's organisational practices come to the fore and it is evident that they can also lead to dead-ends and fragmentation. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons that the Gleneagles Summit mobilisation in 2005, Maeckelbergh's other case study, was so fraught, where different sections of the movement occupied parallel spaces. Yet here, the question arises as to why Maeckelbergh dismisses relations between the Make Poverty History Campaign and other movements during the G8 Summit protests in 2005 as out of bounds for her study. On the one hand Maeckelbergh argues that the criteria for delineating who is part of the movement involve a presence on the same space (she provides the example of the London-based anarchist collective 'WOMBLES' and the Socialist Workers Party who consider themselves to be part of very different movements yet occupy the same space and process, and so can be considered to be part of the same movement), yet she purposely excludes the Make Poverty History Campaign and Live 8 concerts from her analysis. She thus omits what are arguably important aspects of the Gleneagles mobilisation and new trends in the relationship between social movements, civil society and the state. This is also a significant ground upon which the production of new forms of democracy is taking place, one that requires critical attention as it has developed in opposition to and as a form of cooption of the more grassroots forms of democratic practice that Maeckelbergh describes.

The political economy of connectivity

What defines the constituency of the alterglobalisation movement are "networks across space and time" (p. 188). Precisely because the movement lacks a specific locality and determinable boundaries, its networked constituency changes the world link by link, connection by connection. Understanding connectivity as reciprocal contamination, as a form of communication, it is an anti-linear approach to social change that through horizontality – i.e. non-hierarchical forms of organisation – encompasses a challenge to the centralisation of power as domination. The movement lives through hubs, clusters and nodes; its power is the counter-power of diffuse

but connected alternative practices. How will the movement grow? Through practices that inspire people that another world is possible, through creating meaning together, not through preaching a meaningful message.

Nonetheless, Maeckelbergh identifies two tensions. Firstly, this form of organisation tends to privilege those with the time, energy and ability to connect. Consequently, the movement develops the 'hyper-connected': the more you connect, the more connected you become. This creates hierarchies and centres of power. Perhaps it is also the disembeddedness of these movement spaces from the social struggles of the every-day that fosters the development of a hyper-connected movement stratum? This is echoed in one of the stumbling blocks of the book: the Narmada Bachao Andolan in India. Their struggle is included as an example of more every-day locally rooted but globally interpellated social conflict that is considered part of the alterglobalisation movement. However, its inclusion in the book feels disjointed. This might not actually be the author's problem, but a more endemic expression of the alterglobalistion movement's tendential disconnect with social struggles located in the every-day, which may be one of the reasons that participation in the movement in many places remains limited.

The second tension is political economy. Decidedly anti-capitalist, Maeckelbergh draws attention to the persistence of access to resources and 'money equals power'. She invokes the Zapatistas to reject "the cultural practice of throwing money at problems, buying solutions" (p. 159). Yet, how to resolve this supposed 'reality of power' (p. 127), the reality of the social relations of capital no movement space can ever exist outside of? Intriguingly, for Maeckelbergh, it is precisely the organising and decision-making practices of the movement that are anti-capitalist, for they run counter to the kinds of value practices of neoliberalism - competition and individualisation - wherein the means justify the ends. In other words, in prefiguring ways of being – of how to live – that are different to the kinds of subjectivation processes neoliberalism foists upon us through the expansion of the market as the mechanism of social organisation, the practices of the movement become in and of themselves the bulwark against capitalism (pp. 142-143). Maeckelbergh neatly links this back to the concept of the self-contained individual of liberal democratic theory to draw attention to how the movement transgresses such regressive forms of democracy.

What have we learned so far?

It is fair to say that the height of the alterglobalisation movement lies in the past. Therefore, the present tense of the book appears a little idiosyncratic. However, for Maeckelbergh, the alterglobalisation movement is not a discrete entity but is part of a much longer historical process of struggles for social justice. So, the question becomes not, what is or even what was the alterglobalisation movement, but, what have we learned in the era of alterglobalisation struggles? What is it that we take with us as our struggles

for justice continue? Maeckelbergh argues that social movements of the alterglobalisation era have been engaged with resisting neoliberalism through globalising horizontality, radically changing democratic practices in an open-ended, non-absolute and contingent process. This book is an excellent contribution to the ongoing collective knowledge production on how to both understand and develop more effective strategies for a better world. Marianne Maeckelbergh's insightful *Acompañamiento*[1] of ten years of alterglobalisation activism will both resonate with the experiences and concerns of social movement activists and researchers alike and serve as a valuable resource for current social movements and future ones to come.

About the reviewer

Emma Dowling has participated in anti-summit mobilisations and in the organisation of social forums (official and autonomous). She has been active with the No Border movement for freedom of movement, particularly around anti-detention and anti-deportation campaigns. She currently works as a Lecturer in Ethics, Governance and Accountability at Queen Mary University of London. Recent works include, 'What is the world coming to? The World Social Forum beyond critique and deconstruction' (2008) (with Rebecca Shah), in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman (eds.): *The World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Black Rose Books), and 'Whatever happened to the Counter-globalization Movement? Some reflections on antagonism, vanguardism, and professionalization' (forthcoming, 2010) (with Kees Hudig), in Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor (eds.), *Learning from the ground up: Global perspectives on social movements and knowledge production* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan). She can be contacted at esd AT riseup.net.

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[1] This is a term used by the Zapatistas to differentiate common struggle from forms of support, found particularly in neoliberal development practices, that "considers the poor and the different [...] as helpless victims that can't solve their own problems" (Flores and Tanka, cited p. 175).

Maeda, Daryl J. (2009). *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America.* **Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press.**

Reviewed by **Adrianne Showalter Matlock**, *University of Kansas, USA*.

In his book, *Chains of Babylon*, Maeda aims to flesh out the influence of the Asian American activist and identity movement of the 60s and 70s on the formation of Asian American identity, noting that it remains absent in several otherwise extensive accounts of the 60s and 70s. He focuses his work on the years between 1968-1975, prefacing it with an informative historical introduction in order to situate the development of the Asian American movement in historical context. Though shaped by this history, the leaders and organizations which thrived during these years were largely distinct from their activist predecessors; the end of the Viet Nam war similarly created an historical break in Asian American identity development. Maeda writes from a personal connection with the movement and the key players within his text.

While an increasing amount of research and writing is being produced about the formation of Asian American identity, Maeda asserts that little has explicated the importance of the left and radical groups. These groups brought about a new level of coherence of Asian American identity in the 60s and 70s by positioning Asian Americans in opposition to American racist and imperialist social and governmental structures which negatively impact Asians in America and Asia as well as other Third World peoples. Simultaneously, Asian American identity became more crystallized through alignment with these groups, by framing Asian Americans as a Third World people.

This radical influence, though often overlooked, has historical roots stretching back to initial waves of migration of people from Asia into the United States. Various laws prohibited Asian immigrants from rights to citizenship; legislation and denial of appeals for citizenship upheld this discrimination based on race, ethnicity and/or appearance. Asian American activists in the prewar era organized around labor rights. Maeda notes that this did not always unify Asian American workers — rather he notes several instances of labor-related conflicts in which workers were organized in opposition to other Asian ethnic groups. This dearth of a cohesive, unified Asian American identity was also perpetuated by discrimination which targeted descendants from a specific country, such as the forced placement of Japanese Americans in internment camps during the Second World War.

Tides changed slightly postwar, as Asian Americans — formerly portrayed as inassimilable — began to be considered the 'model minority.' Methods of cultural identity formation differed among Asian Americans: some valued liberal assimilation — that minority groups should conform to mainstream white culture and maintain their cultural distinctness only in private. In the 1960s, Dr. S. I. Hayakawa led this group, using his studies in semantics to argue that racism is inherently irrational, and people need only be made aware of the inconsistencies

in claiming to value freedom for all while discriminating based on race. Others viewed the model minority label as justification for the American capitalist imperialist regime, by giving grounds by which other minorities could be blamed for their own poor conditions. In response to this, Asian American activists aligned themselves with other 'black and brown' 'Third World' people; this stance began to define Asian American identity as separate from the whites, and argued against the need for assimilation. In 1968, students of the Asian American Political Alliance at San Francisco State College (where Hayakawa was serving as acting president) and other Asian American student groups, in alliance with other ethnic student groups, formed the Third World Liberation Front and conducted a strike which led to the establishment of a school of ethnic studies.

On the heels of the civil rights movement, black identity formation paved the way for other ethnic groups to organize for self-determined cultural formation, including Asian Americans. In addition to allegiance to non-white Third World peoples, Asian American identity was developed through various acts of performing blackness. The hegemonic racial dichotomy present in America influenced the construction of the Asian American identity: not wanting to be conceptualized as white – the race of the oppressor – Asian Americans utilized cultural productions to root identity in affiliation with blackness. Maeda looks toward the Red Guard political rallies – modeled largely after those of the Black Panthers – as illustrative of this affiliation as well as Chin's play *Chickencoop Chinaman*, in which two Asian men seek to actualize masculinity as they connect with a black boxer and track down his father.

Asian American identity expanded beyond the national borders in part as a result of the Viet Nam war. Asian American activists critiqued the white-dominated anti-war movement for opposing the war on the basis of loss of lives of American soldiers while ignoring the plight of the Vietnamese people who suffered the most. Maeda recounts reflections from Asian American soldiers who fought in Viet Nam and came to identify themselves with the Vietnamese as sharing a common heritage or race. The influence of the Viet Nam war meant that to be Asian American was to also be connected to those who live in Asian countries, not only Asian immigrants and their descendents in the U.S.

Attentive to the cultural elements of Asian American identity, Maeda dedicates his final chapter to the examination of the ways in which folk musicians and writers – for example, the group *Grain of Sand* – represented and impacted the movement by sharing their musical creation with otherwise unconnected groups as they toured throughout the country. Here and throughout the book, Maeda employs powerful accounts of specific individuals and groups to illuminate the development of the nationwide rise of Asian American consciousness. This way of storytelling illustrates the importance of individuals within the larger movement and places value on the individuals' life experiences.

As with any work on a convergence of diverse ethnic groups, it is difficult to give equal attention to the unique history of groups from each country of origin. Though Maeda strives to include information about a variety of groups who comprise Asian America, certain portions of his account emphasize Japanese-,

Chinese- and/or Vietnamese American experience. Additionally, mention is made of Asian Indians but further work might be done to better demonstrate and elucidate the extent to which they have or have not been included in Asian American identity formation.

An area to which this research could be expanded would be an historical continuation: what happened between 1975 and now? The book's epilogue narrates a reference to the passing of the torch to the next generation. The stated purpose of the book was to focus on the 60s and 70s, but further account of what has happened since then would help to illustrate and legitimate the lasting significance these actors had in shaping Asian American identity. As Maeda mentions in the preface, divergent interests and political views have emerged between Asian Americans and those who have immigrated to the U.S. since the Viet Nam war. Maeda highlights the complexities of intergenerational differences within stated time frame of the book; it will be important, however, to analyze how these and the differences between established Asian Americans and new immigrants since the 1970s may challenge the cohesiveness of Asian American identity consciousness.

Maeda employs illustrations of individuals who he considers exemplars of the broader movement. This method adroitly provides a tangible manifestation of what occurred at a more widespread level. However, some connections to the nature and extent to which these individual illustrations represent the broader movement are lacking from the argument. Further details which specify more fully how indicative these individuals, groups, conflicts and cultural productions are of the broader movement would also strengthen the author's argument.

Overall, this book makes a valuable, needed contribution to the scholarship on both Asian American identity formation and the activism of the 60s and 70s. Maeda develops a strong argument which brings to the forefront the ways that opposition to imperialism, alignment with other oppressed racial and ethnic groups, and cultural production have played critical roles in the rise of Asian America.

About the reviewer

Adrianne Showalter Matlock is a master's student at the University of Kansas and is currently focusing her research on the intentional Christian community movement in the U.S. She spent 14 months volunteering in South Africa before returning to begin her graduate studies.

McVeigh, Rory (2009). *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-wing Movements and National Politics (Social Movements, Protest, and Contention).* **University of Minnesota Press.**

Reviewed by **Allison L. Hurst**, *Furman University*, South Carolina, USA.

What explains the phenomenal rise in Ku Klux Klan membership from 1915 to 1928, especially in ethnically homogeneous and rural places like the American Midwest? According to McVeigh, the organization's diagnoses of contemporary national problems was key. McVeigh pays close (if skeptical) attention to the ways the organization's leaders framed societal problems in an attempt to explain the Klan's phenomenal success in the early 20th century (and its rapid demise). In doing so, McVeigh also creates a new framework for understanding right-wing social movements, the "power-devaluation model."

According to the power-devaluation model, the rapid rise in Klan membership in the early decades of the 20th century was a response to the devaluation of native-born White Protestants' "purchasing" power in the arenas of politics, economics, and social status. As more immigrants, especially Catholic immigrants, settled in Northeastern cities, native-born White Protestants felt their power eroding — expansion of suffrage, for example, diluted their votes in national elections. The Klan capitalized on these feelings (almost haphazardly, according to McVeigh) by stressing the importance of creating a voting bloc of native-born White Protestants, by proposing the notion of "Klankraft" (a form of economic boycott in which members did business only with other members, and by supporting public education. Why support public education? During the early twentieth century, the value of a high school degree was being devalued as more people were able to graduate from high school, increasingly parochial ones. The Klan's support for public education was an attempt to retain the status of those who participated in this form of education as "many middle-class Protestants" worried "whether the education provided by the public schools would be sufficient to allow their children to maintain their position within the class structure" (123).

As can be seen from the brief description so far, this is not an analysis that relies much on the irrationality (i.e., racism) of Klan members to describe the rapid growth of the organization. McVeigh's focus on "macro-level changes" as the underlying cause for the growth of the Klan differs from more individualistic analyses. This may be the greatest strength of McVeigh's approach (although a strength that can turn into a weakness — more below). McVeigh argues, persuasively, that current social movement theories — Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) and Political Opportunity Theory (POT) — are inadequate to explain right-wing social movements, or social movements that originate with the (relatively) privileged. This is because both RMT and POT take as granted that the movement has legitimate collective grievances that need not be articulated. Right-wing social movements, on the contrary, are by definition

social movements whose grievances must be created, or framed. Native-born White Protestants may have felt their power being devalued in the early 20th century, but they were still relatively powerful people (and here McVeigh points us to the evidence of local Klansmen and women being part of the solid middle class, neither workers nor elites). McVeigh makes much of the fact that the Klan leaders stumbled around for years until they hit upon a way of talking about national politics that appealed to their would-be constituents, and in this I think he is correct. Right-wing social movements are constructed, and their appeal is based on finding ways of explaining social change that appeal to constituents. The first incarnation of the Klan (post-Civil War) fought Reconstruction. This second incarnation fought immigration (especially Catholic immigration) in the name of being "100% American." Different times, different frames.

Although McVeigh rejects the applicability of RMT or POT to explain right-wing social movements, he does incorporate these theories' elements into his own (along with the basic notion, taken from classical social movement theory, that grievances themselves matter). There are four steps in McVeigh's power-devaluation model. The first step is the existence of a structural change. In the case at hand, the structural change includes rapid industrialization and urbanization coupled with a massive influx of (Catholic) immigrants. In turn, this produces a devaluation of power for some. McVeigh's three "markets" (economics, politics, status) seem very similar to Weber's "class-status-party" model of social power (and also Bourdieu's notion of transferable capitals). A social movement is more likely to happen when "multiple" markets are affected, as was the case here for Klan constituents. The third step is a shift in interpretive process – i.e., how these devaluations are framed or understood. Here McVeigh draws on the work of Snow and other framing theorists. Finally, and here is where contemporary social movement theory becomes important, a social movement will be successful given activation of organizational resources and exploitation of political opportunities. Unlike members of left-wing social movements, members of right-wing social movements will already have organizational resources to draw from and political opportunities to exploit, but they will still have to do the work of activating these. In the case of the Klan, McVeigh demonstrates the importance of fraternal lodges, Protestant churches, and the splits between the political parties (more on this later).

This is a very stimulating book to read. For one, it is useful to see Ku Klux Klan members depicted as (basically) rational, as opposed to rabid racists. McVeigh manages to give the Klan a respectful hearing while still signifying his moral repugnance of their often-violent program. The content analysis of the Klan's national paper is highly instructive, as is the quantitative analysis of membership by region. The focus on framing becomes very important for an understanding of the movement's fairly rapid demise. According to McVeigh, this decline resulted from a tension between the general goals of mobilization (what needs to be said to people to draw them into the movement) and alliance formation (how to ignore what you said previously in order to gain allies). There are many interesting facts about this era of the Klan as well – its ties to

Progressive politics, for one. The Ku Klux Klan saw itself as strongly "liberal," showing us, one again, the variability of political appellations.

If there is a weakness here, it is in McVeigh's downplaying of race and racism. In an attempt to make the Klan more "rational," I believe McVeigh goes too far in ignoring why blaming Catholic immigrants was appealing in the first place as opposed to, say, blaming capitalists (and isn't this always the big question in explaining the appeal of right-wing social movements?). McVeigh tells us that "the Klan identified with progressive legislators in both the Republican and Democratic parties" (185), and that they strongly supported the progressive La Follette, that is, until he publicly condemned the Klan. Up until the election of 1924, the Ku Klux Klan leadership had played off the Republican and Democratic Parties, operating as a strong voting bloc to coerce support of such things as public education, the creation of a federal Department of Education, prohibition, and the restriction of child labor.

But after Coolidge's victory, Klan leaders announced their "mission accomplished," even though Coolidge supported none of their progressive legislation. In 1928, when the Klan threw all of its weight behind the pro-business Hoover rather than a Catholic (Al Smith), the die had been fatally cast – the Klan was now a firm ally of the Republican Party. The bankruptcy of the Republican Party during the Great Depression was also the downfall of the Klan's appeal. There is something here that is not being explained by McVeigh's model, and it is why *this* (anti-Catholic, pro-business) course of action was taken to (unsuccessfully) remedy the devaluation of native-born White Protestants' power rather than, say, keeping the fight against child labor or a strong minimum wage (which would have successfully maintained constituents' power, simply not at the expense of low-wage immigrant workers). McVeigh's focus on national politics and the public discourse of Klan leaders is a useful corrective to more individualist-focused explanations for Klan activity, but I wish he had incorporated more of the insights of these researchers. An analysis of this particular organization that doesn't discuss racism as a motivating factor in membership is both refreshing and a little disturbing. If native-born White Protestants were so concerned with public education and ending child labor, why didn't they join the Socialists instead? And is the answer to this something McVeigh only hints at – the connection between "class" language itself and immigrants (especially Jewish immigrants) in the minds of those who saw themselves as "100% American"?

Despite these unanswered questions, or perhaps because of them, McVeigh's work is a refreshing addition to both the literature on the Ku Klux Klan and social movement theory. Anyone who teaches a course on social movements would find the chapter in which McVeigh draws upon the insights of social movement theory while differentiating his own very useful and readable for students. Even though one may not agree with every point he makes, or some of his interpretations of the Klan's appeal, there's much here to discuss. Furthermore, the importance of understanding right-wing movements, especially those that construct racist and nationalist frames to explain massive

social changes, has perhaps never been more urgent than it is today. McVeigh tells us that, in the minds of its members, "those who opposed the Klan were by definition opposed to America" (197). How different is this from countless other right-wing movements operative today in both the US and Europe? McVeigh has shown us that we need new models and new questions when it comes to understanding right-wing social movements. This is a good place to start.

About the reviewer

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Shah-Shuja, Mastaneh (2008) . *Zones of Proletarian Development*. London: Openmute.

Reviewed by **Donagh Davis**, *European University Institute*, Florence, Italy.

In *Zones of Proletarian Development*, Mastaneh Shah-Shuja — a London-based writer of Afghani-Iraqi extraction — attempts to draw out a number of ambitious theses on the new forms of proletarian consciousness she sees emerging in the struggle against capitalism.

The book is clear its aim to help point the way forward in this struggle, enlisting in the process the theories of Soviet writers Bakhtin, Vigotsky and Volosinov, a number of social protest case studies, and — most centrally — the concept of the 'Zone of Proletarian Development' (ZPD) that gives the book its title.

This is a novel approach to such subject matter. Also novel — and useful — is the book's final chapter, ambitiously entitled "Towards a new kind of revolutionary organising". Setting aside the main arguments surrounding the book's case studies, this presents an interesting literature review of a wide range of writings by activists and "revolutionaries" on organisation and its perils. Of course, the kind of critique and self-critique gathered together here is not entirely new — and some of the targets are not the most difficult, such as the bad behaviour and dogmatism of political 'gangs', Leninist, anarchist or what have you — but since these problems are still ones that social movement actors struggle with on the ground, keeping them on the table — and not just the table of activist 'grey literature' — seems like a worthwhile pursuit.

As for the main body of the book, its questions and claims are interesting and ambitious — and also not without their faults.

Shah-Shuja leads her investigation with some reflections on what she sees as the current inter-related changes in the make-up both of capitalism, and of the proletariat, drawing upon recent dialogues concerning contemporary forms of 'primitive' (or not so primitive) accumulation in activist journals such as *Midnight Notes* and *The Commoner* (but not David Harvey's recent work on the same topic).

Shah-Shuja's contentions regarding the unfolding of a "roll-out neoliberal fascism" on the back of these developments are accompanied by an excursus on some of the intellectual progenitors, in her estimation, of this ideological departure, namely Leo Strauss and H.G. Wells. However, the relation between this and Shah-Shuja's larger arguments could be clearer, and unfortunately no evidence is presented linking these figures with the ideological trends that Shah-Shuja describes — other than what is already widely known about Strauss's influential role within neoconservative Republicanism in the United States.

Getting closer to her main argument, Shah-Shuja suggests that because of the political-economic changes she has identified in contemporary capitalism,

"demonstrations and riots will increase during the 21st century" (p. 15). In particular, "the *post-real* method of exploitation will be resisted by a highly skilled but discontented section of the proletariat that is not shackled by reactionary institutions of mediation such as trade unions..." (p. 16). In her study of proletarian gatherings as laboratories for revolution, Shah-Shuja draws on Guattari and Negri:

> Since no 'permanent' autonomous organisation has been devised to articulate their protests, it is safe to assume that the more rapid translation of 'molar antagonisms' into 'molecular proliferations' will be carried out during and around the arena of demonstrations, strikes, riots and carnivals for the foreseeable future. (p. 16)

Also in this vein, we are told that the "fight-back that has already begun will manifest itself increasingly in factories, workplaces, neighbourhoods and on the streets" (p. 25). These are bold claims, and Shah-Shuja goes even further, with references to the "balance... *gradually* tilting in favour of the proletariat" (p. 107; original emphasis) and to the "position of strength" from which "we are restating the relationship with our bosses" (p. 60).

The substance accompanying Shah-Shuja's rather large claims is contained in three social protest case study chapters. The London Mayday events of 1999 through 2003 are considered in relation to Vygotskian theory, a 2001 spate of football rioting in Iran in relation to Bakhtinian carnivalesque, and a comparison of the 1990 UK poll tax riots and February 15th 2003 London anti-war march in relation to Activity Theory, again of Vygotskian derivation.

The key concept at the heart of this narrative is that of the Zone of Proletarian Development (ZPD) of the book's title. The term, coined by Newman and Holzman (1993) (p. 196), updates Vygotsky's 'Zone of Proximal Development' (zoped), a concept he originally used to denote "the distance between what a child can do on his/her own and what he/she can do with the aid of a teacher or able peer" (p. 73).

This central conceptual plank suggests the general orientation of Shah-Shuja's theoretically-minded case studies: zoped and ZPD, activity theory and carnivalesque are utilised to bridge the gap between these empirical studies and Shah-Shuja's propositions regarding the new forms of consciousness incubating in proletarian gatherings, and of the changing balance of class forces.

This is an interesting theoretical approach to such material — however, a disadvantage is that, for a reader uninitiated in these theories, such as this reviewer, the significance of Shah-Shuja's findings are not always clear.

The Vygotsky-influenced analysis of the London Maydays focuses on the "proletarian development" and "social and collective learning" (see e.g. p. 79) Shah-Shuja suggests was unfolding around these events. Shah-Shuja considers how "proletarians" co-operate with and learn from one another through such events — and through such Vygotskian processes as "horizontal", "spiral" and "expansive" learning, "scaffolding" and "knotworking" (see e.g. p. 81-91). Again, I am not entirely clear as to the import of the findings presented here — such as

that "less knowledgeable revolutionaries" learn from "more knowledgeable ones" through their activities together – for example "training sessions" – and that chants and placards are illustrative of Vygotsky's "private speech".

On a more basic level, I do not always fully follow the logic of Shah-Shuja's theoretically-oriented analyses of empirical reality – such as the (in)famous "desecration" of the Churchill cenotaph in Parliament Square on the 2000 London Mayday. Here, after a brief discussion of Marx's concept of alienation, Shah-Shuja writes that

> The demonstrators feeling alienated from their environment (with its colossal and awe-inspiring buildings, over-sanitised boulevards, the presence of police, cctv and intrusive journalists), resolved some of the tension by ascribing new meaning and sense to cultural icons, such as Churchill's statue. The environment became, during the act of carnivalisation, a genuine product of their labour. The bourgeoisie rejected this humanisation of Churchill since the stable meaning of Churchill as leader and ideologue was subverted.

Put simply, it is not clear to me how any of the theory applied here adds to our understanding of what happened in this instance, how or why. Also in terms of the match between empirical fact and theoretical interpretation, I might point out that – as far as I am aware – a cadre of Kurdish Communists (as well an ex-British military officer) were among the main protagonists of the cenotaph "desecration". Some of these people had probably read Marx's writings on alienation, and the usefulness of understanding their actions in terms of some kind of (presumably) spontaneous reaction against alienation seems questionable to me. This is not to mention the fact that, according to her statements elsewhere in the book (Shah-Shuja's invective against "leftists", "activists", "middle class" people, and so forth, is extremely biting), such individuals ought presumably to be considered "bourgeois counter-revolutionaries" (see e.g. p. 83). Likewise, I do not follow how these events lead Shah-Shuja to conclude that

> ... in the near future, the proletariat should be able to win struggle after struggle in the arena of social memory interpretation. The balance is *gradually* tilting in favour of the proletariat.

> Perhaps it is the 'subconscious' realisation of this subtle shifting of power that explains the venom with which the media attacked the protesters. (p. 107; original emphasis.)

Shah-Shuja compares the post-cenotaph public slanging match between protesters and establishment figures with Bernstein's well known sociolinguistic study contrasting the "restricted" code of 'working class' forms of speech with the "elaborated" code of 'middle class' ones. We are told that this model is turned on its head in the case at hand:

> The contrast with both proletarian and bourgeois discursive practice after the May Day 2000 could not be starker. Proletarian discourse... was an exemplary manifestation of the dialectics of the concrete and abstract...

> In contrast, the bourgeois propaganda was a *restrictive* code, which
> maintained the duality between concrete and abstract (pp. 108-109).

Apart from the fact that these claims are made without evidence, I am unable,
on a conceptual level, to see the fit between Bernstein's and Shah-Shuja's
applications of categories like 'working class' and 'proletarian', 'middle class'
and 'bourgeois': it would seem to me that they are talking about very different
things. This is not to mention the suggestion that the May Day protesters
actually *represented* the proletariat in the first place, or the vagueness of Shah-
Shuja's definition of that term (p. 14).

These might seem like arbitrary selections from a book of wide scope, and of
many arguments. I hope they do not seem like nitpicking. But I think they are
not unrepresentative of Shah-Shuja's approach.

Ultimately, such exercises do not leave this reviewer with a clear understanding
of how Shah-Shuja's central idea – the Zone of Proletarian Development of the
book's title – can bring forward our understanding of popular contention (or its
prospects) against the contemporary capitalist order. At times the ZPD seems
like a metaphor for everything the author likes, and its antithesis – the Zone of
Bourgeois Development – a sin-bin for whatever Shah-Shuja does not like,
subsuming everything from Lenin and liberalism to People's Global Action and
Indymedia.

Shah-Shuja deserves most credit for the novel initiative to bring the work of
interesting writers such as Bakhtin to bear on contemporary social movements.
A disadvantage of this approach, however, is the difficulty in making the fruits
of this labour clear to readers (such as myself) who take an interest in social
movements and contemporary capitalism, but who lack the familiarity with
Shah-Shuja's chosen theoretical reference points necessary to fully appreciate
all the contours of the author's analysis.

Another unfortunate disadvantage has to do with the book's timing: published
just before the full outbreak of the global financial crisis, Shah-Shuja's
conclusions would have very quickly looked out of date to anyone who was
paying attention to what was happening in the world, in terms of the response
to the vicissitudes of the crisis on the level of social movements and popular
contention. That response might be described as: not that much – and certainly
a lot less than the rising tide of proletarian insurgency sketched by Shah-Shuja.

Of course, none of this means that 'history is over', or that the forms of
contention suggested by Shah-Shuja have no future – but it would seem that
understanding such issues will call for some serious research, and for the
putting of many heads together. Actually, a lot of pertinent work on these
themes is being done not just by activists, but also by scholars closer to the
'mainstream' in the study of social movements and contentious politics.

No doubt Shah-Shuja would be vituperative of this work – but speaking as a
junior bit player within the field – surely deep within the Zone of Bourgeois
Development in Shah-Shuja's estimation – I can tell her that she might be
surprised at what she finds here, if she looked.

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About the reviewer

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Van der Walt, Lucien, & Schmidt, Michael (2009). *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism.* Edinburgh / Oakland: AK Press.

Reviewed by **Deric Shannon**, *University of Connecticut*, USA.

At the outset, after reading *Black Flame*, it's impossible not to reflect on the massive amount of research that such a work must have entailed. The book is a narrative about anarchism and, with interest in anarchism on the rise worldwide, it could not have come at a better time. There are a couple of reasons for this. One, we need new narratives of the anarchist tradition to understand where we've been. Secondly, *Black Flame* contains critiques of the ways that "radical" circles contemporarily have too often turned away from the radical class politics that have always defined the socialist movement.

Ironically enough, this is both a major strength of the book, but also, in my opinion, one of its weaknesses. As Schmidt and van der Walt state their case early in the book, "'(c)lass struggle' anarchism, sometimes called revolutionary or communist anarchism, is not a type of anarchism; in our view, it is the *only* anarchism" (p. 19, emphasis theirs). This essentially leads to the authors deciding throughout the beginning of the book who the "real" anarchists are and who gets defined out. This is one of the major strengths of the book, first and foremost, because some contemporary anarchists do seem to have lost their commitment to radical class politics. Indeed, demands to end capitalism and class society are often drowned out in some anarchist spaces, replaced instead by a politics of identity and guilt that mirrors a sort of "Oppression Olympics", where identity becomes fetishized and separated from a radical class analysis and commitment to ending class society[2]. *Black Flame* offers a reminder to us that anarchism is a part of the socialist movement and that a concern with social oppression without a commitment to ending class society is just liberalism that is sometimes dressed up in anarchist colors--albeit with some noble goals.

Secondly, Schmidt and van der Walt take this approach in order to demonstrate that anarchist histories have often been muddled due to past academic accounts of the anarchist tradition. Indeed, scholars often argued "that anyone who held an antistatist position must be an anarchist, even if they disagreed over fundamental issues like the nature of society, law, property, or the means of changing society" (p. 17). Given this loose definition of anarchism, it provides a space for anti-state liberals like Murray Rothbard, a supporter of a stateless free market dystopia, within the anarchist tradition. However, focusing on

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[2] Please note, I am not arguing that we should reject the politics of identity in favor of class politics, nor that class politics are any more "central" than struggles against other hierarchies. Rather, I would argue for an intersectional approach to politics that takes into account struggles around specific identities and the ways that they overlap and intersect with the struggle against capital and the state. That is, these fights against white supremacy, heternormativity, patriarchy, capitalism, the state, etc. are not separate fights--they are one in the same and it is a mistake for anarchists to ignore any of them or to privilege some struggles over others.

anarchism as an ideology based in historical social movements easily demonstrates that anarchism is, and has always been, a socialist philosophy with no room for "free" market ideas.

One can see echoes of this problem in contemporary liberals who refer to themselves as "anarcho"-capitalists. Nevermind that capitalism requires the state to manage class antagonisms and, thus, the idea is preposterous to begin with. It is an insult to the history of anarchism and working class struggles to suggest that anarchism could somehow be compatible with a capitalist, "free" market worldview. To compound matters, there are likewise racists who have co-opted the label. Referring to themselves as "national anarchists" (as the Nazis famously appropriated the term "socialist" in "national socialist"), these racial separatists deserve as little space in the anarchist tradition as supporters of a stateless "free" market (which is to say, none at all). Schmidt and van der Walt outline a socialist anarchism, based in working class movements, that would provide no space within anarchism for the apostles of a hierarchical society--be they capitalists or racists.

The major strength of this approach is that it locates anarchism within its history which is embedded in working class social movements.

However, this approach leads the authors to define anarchist thinkers like Proudhon out of the tradition. Proudhon had a major impact on the development of anarchism as a political philosophy and influenced such well-known revolutionary anarchists as Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin. Likewise, they exclude the individualist strain of anarchism, removing the likes of William Godwin, Benjamin Tucker, and Max Stirner--all of whom, it might be added, opposed capitalism and the state. However, with different focuses and, importantly, without *revolutionary*, commitments, Schmidt and van der Walt exclude them from their "broad anarchist tradition" due to *strategic* differences[3].

In my opinion, this is one of the weaknesses of this approach. Imagine, for example, a world in which Marxists were expected to agree on strategy or otherwise be defined out of the tradition. We would effectively lose a chunk of past Marxisms (e.g. those that arose in response to the rise of fascism in Europe like the Frankfurt School), we'd lose contemporary Marxists such as Hardt and Negri – indeed, much of contemporary Marxist thinking would no longer *be* Marxism.

For contemporary anarchism, this would remove all of the anarchists who argue for an "exodus" strategy out of capitalism from the tradition. That is, some anarchists (alongside many Marxists) have eschewed traditional revolutionary strategy in favor of attempting to create an exodus out of capitalism. This is an old tradition within anarchism, typically arguing for the creation of alternative institutions that, when nurtured, will some day replace capitalism and the state.

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[3] It also leads to them defining Marxists like Daniel De Leon and James Connolly *into* anarchism.

I have some objections to defining them out of anarchism. For example, many of these anarchists are able theorists and doubt the ability for a traditional capital "R" revolution to be successful in the modern era. Indeed, as history has moved forward, the state has become better and better armed with new weapons capable of massive destruction on a scale that was unimaginable in the days of anarchism's early formation. Questioning whether or not an armed revolutionary struggle is possible in the modern era makes sense--and anarchists should be having these kinds of strategic debates among ourselves. Defining them out of the anarchist tradition removes a critical strategic voice from the tradition that has raised rational objections to traditional strategy[4].

As well, it might even be a mistake to think of these different strategies as somehow *separate* and necessarily at odds with each other. If we are to overthrow capitalism, we do need replacements. Much of this infrastructure could come from mass movements, neighborhood assemblies, and worker's councils developed in the process of a revolutionary struggle. This has always been a part of anarchist revolutionary strategy.

But, being anarchists, we will settle for nothing less than the demolition of *all* social hierarchies. Thus, things like rigid gender roles and norms, normative expectations around sexual practices, internalized racism, lack of social viability for the disabled, etc. must be swept into the dustbin of history with capitalism and the state as well. Some of these processes are going to require cultural and conceptual change, in addition to the institutional changes we seek in a revolutionary struggle. Anarchist free schools, spaces like infoshops, indymedia centers, and the like provide spaces for experimenting with new social and cultural forms. Through collective projects like these we get to experience non-hierarchical organization and culture in our bodies--demonstrating that other worlds are possible and introducing new ideas into our stifling, sick, and hierarchical culture. So, while mass organizing might be necessary for overturning the existing social order, our everyday lives must be transformed as well. Many counter-institutions that anarchists are currently building can serve as spaces for doing just that.

These are, however, in many ways rather minor points. After all, I agree with the authors that a line needs to be drawn between those who can rightfully be called "anarchists" and those who have no business using the label. As I mentioned before, I would exclude capitalists and racists, for example. Anyone who espouses a classing of society, private ownership of productive property, or support for social hierarchies like sexism or racism has no place in the anarchist tradition. I would, however, personally argue for a broader "broad anarchist tradition" than the authors.

So, with the good and bad that comes from defining the broad anarchist tradition this way, Schmidt and van der Walt set about the rather large task of

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[4] This is not to suggest that I agree that revolution, in the traditional sense, is not possible. It seems to me that if we had popular support, there might not be a military to point those new weapons at us!

writing a history of what they see as the two traditions within anarchism: mass and insurrectionist anarchisms. According to the authors, mass anarchism and insurrectionist anarchism can be differentiated thusly:

> Mass anarchism stresses that only mass movements can create a revolutionary change in society, that such movements are typically built through struggles around immediate issues and reforms (whether concerning wages, police brutality, high prices, and so on), and that anarchists must participate in such movements to radicalise and transform them into levers of revolutionary change. What is critical is that reforms are won from below; these victories must be distinguished from reforms applied from above, which undermine popular movements.

> The insurrectionist approach, in contrast, claims that reforms are illusory, that movements like unions are willing or unwitting bulwarks of the existing order, and that formal organizations are authoritarian. Consequently, insurrectionist anarchism emphasises armed action-"propaganda by the deed"--as the most important means of evoking a spontaneous revolutionary upsurge. (p. 20)

Schmidt and van der Walt argue for the consistency of the mass anarchist approach. Indeed, the authors outline how "the insurrectional act was increasingly seen as elitist; rather than inspiring the working class and peasantry to action, at best it reinforced the passive reliance of the masses on leaders and saviors from above, substituting a self-elected vanguard for the popular classes" (p. 133). Thus, the preferred strategy in *Black Flame* is one of patient organization, fighting for immediate demands while continuing to push for a future world without rulers, bosses, workers and slaves--that is, mass anarchism.

Schmidt and van der Walt also outline what they see as the best way for a militant minority in social movements, as anarchists are, to fight for this future world. It is through *organizational dualism* that anarchists can have the most impact in social movements. This means that anarchists would belong to anarchist specific organizations based on some common agreements and principles, as well as to social movement organizations. It is from mass social movements that revolution might come, and it is the revolutionary anarchist organization that argues within those mass movements for such a revolutionary rupture. In addition anarchists would argue for organizing those social movements in ways that *prefigure* the kind of world that anarchists want to create (e.g. democratic, egalitarian, non-hierarchical).

The question, then, that the authors pose is how much level of agreement and unity in tactics and theory should exist *within* the anarchist organization? Schmidt and van der Walt make a case for platformism, or organizing the specific organization around theoretical and tactical unity in a very tight and disciplined sense (although allowing for different "tendencies" within the organization). One can see the contemporary forebears of dual organizationalism in non-platformist groups like the Workers Solidarity Alliance (in the US and Canada) and the groups affiliated with the neo-

platformist *anarkismo* project[5] like NEFAC (Northeast Federation of Anarchist Communists – USA), the WSM (Workers Solidarity Movement – Ireland), and the ZACF (Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front – South Africa, of which the authors are members)[6].

Throughout this well-researched history, Schmidt and van der Walt touch on many other important issues within the anarchist milieu. They argue against the notion that syndicalism is somehow separate from anarchist communism, defining syndicalism as "the view that unions--built through daily struggles, a radically democratic practice, and popular education--are crucial levers of revolution, and can even serve as the nucleus of a free socialist order" (7). Indeed, this has been an accepted, if controversial, anarchist idea from its inception--though not all anarchists regarded unions as having that revolutionary potential (in fact, many anarchists argue that unions, being mediators between workers and capital, can ONLY serve a reformist role--an argument which the authors reject).

Likewise, they research and write about anarchist positions on national liberation struggles, race, gender, internationalism, armed action – this list could go on – all with painstaking research and detail. Indeed, there is too much content to comment on in a single review. And, importantly, Schmidt and van der Walt do so paying critical attention to anarchism as an *international* movement, citing anarchists from as disparate places as Germany, Britain, China, Japan, Uruguay, and so on. Indeed, the authors have done a great service to the anarchist community by drawing out these international ties and decentering the West within anarchism's historical tradition showing that we are, indeed, an international movement and that the demands for socialism combined with freedom within anarchism are not limited to the West.

As a reviewer, it is common practice to recommend a book one finds valuable and interesting. If you have a passing interest in radical politics, get this book. If you have an interest in anarchism, get this book. If you are an anarchist already, whether you agree with the authors' perspective or not, get this book. This is a thoroughly researched narrative of a political movement that promises freedom, equality, and social viability for us all.

About the reviewer

Deric Shannon is a long time anarchist living in Connecticut where he teaches sociology at the University of Connecticut. He is a co-editor of *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy* (Routledge 2009) and co-author of *Political Sociology: Oppression, Resistance, and the State* (Pine Forge Press forthcoming). He is a member of the Workers Solidarity Alliance and a believer in radically different futures.

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[5] http://www.anarkismo.net

[6] http://workersolidarity.org/; http://nefac.net/; http://www.wsm.ie/; http://www.zabalaza.net/

Woehrle, Lynne M., Coy, Patrick G., & Maney, Gregory M. (2008). *Contesting Patriotism: Culture, Power, and Strategy in the Peace Movement.* **Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press**

Reviewed by **Janeske Botes**, *University of the Witwatersrand*, South Africa.

Proponents of social protest know that the success of a campaign often depends not on what you do, but how you do it. This how, in terms of modern social movements, includes many aspects, such as who you are targeting, what you say, what emotion/s you merge with this and what broad ideas you link with your message. This excellent analysis considers all these in relation to North American peace movement organisations (PMOs). The authors specifically analyse the discourse of fifteen PMOs throughout five conflict periods: the Gulf War; the 1998 bombing of Iraq; the 1999 NATO bombing of Kosova/o; the four months post-9/11 and the first two years of the Iraq War. The study not only analyses the messages created and disseminated during each time period, but also presents a longitudinal analysis, where possible. This allows for a great deal of the data to be compared throughout the 1990 – 2005 conflict time period covered. Prominent PMOs analysed include American Friends Service Committee, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi, Peace Action, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, War Resisters League and MoveOn.

The study is well-structured and progresses logically. The theoretical framework lays a solid foundation for the actual data analysis. The authors spend much time highlighting the position PMOs take when producing societal knowledge, including the various types of oppositional knowledge they aim to present to the public, as well as whether or not they counter or harness hegemony through their statements. These positions are tracked throughout the analysis. Surprising conclusions are often reached, especially when considering whether or not PMOs counter or harness hegemony. For example, when analysing the use of nationalism in messages, the authors found that "PMOs challenged nationalism more than they harnessed it in three of the conflict periods (Gulf War, Iraq 1998, and Kosova/o), and harnessed nationalism more than they challenged it in the two most recent periods (9/11 and Iraq War)" (p. 58). While many mass media representations of social activism post-9/11 and during the Iraq War depicted participants in this sphere as unpatriotic and anti-American, attempting to 'other' them, the findings of this study show otherwise.

In order to substantiate these early findings, the study goes on to look at emotions, the role religion plays in the discourse of PMOs and their mobilisation of supporters. Emotion is a new inclusion in the field of social movement research, and one wonders, while reading through the respective chapter, how it could ever have been excluded. Throughout these chapters, it is noted that despite the different conditions inherent to each conflict period,

PMOs remained true to their core beliefs. When this finding is observed across all five conflict periods, and with the five organisations tracked longitudinally, it demonstrates both a solidity and longevity inherent in social movements, which many members of the public often choose to ignore. The authors point out that "most anyone who has ever announced to their family or to their surprised coworkers that they are going to take part in a protest demonstration has likely experienced reactions ranging from mild concern to disdain to active disapproval" (p. 27). It is precisely this stereotypical idea of social movements that this study shatters – throughout the book, one is made aware of the strength of social movements and their necessity in political landscapes today.

The authors coded and analysed 510 formal statements from their selected fifteen PMOs. The integration of this data could make the text of the book stilted and cumbersome, but the study reads easily. However, long pauses are sure to occur once tables are encountered – these are not always easy to interpret and often require much extra reading before effective understanding takes place. The authors also state that a particular goal of this study is for it to be understandable to those outside of academia. While a noble goal, this will not be easily met. It is not very well supported visually and the findings; the so-called 'meat' of the argument, take a few chapters to solidify. Early undergraduate students will struggle. That said, it should appeal to final year undergraduates.

As an academic in the field of Media Studies, I found this book an engrossing example of an often bland research method. It is an ideal book for postgraduate students, especially as it demonstrates discourse analysis so well. This research method allows for insightful conclusions to be drawn, which will benefit PMOs worldwide in the construction of messages aimed at the public. Activists can target their campaigns more effectively and, by looking at the longitudinal findings, can ensure their messages have effective sustainability. This book also opens up a new avenue of research for academics researching Latin American or African social movements; the commonly ignored regions in research of this nature. Social movements are a topical, evolving field of research, one which falls not only under Sociology, History and Political Science, as the book's publishers have categorised it, but also under various academic fields that are more common in Europe and Africa, such as Media Studies and Communication Science. While centred on North American PMOs, the findings of this study can be compared alongside the rhetoric of PMOs of other regions and in local, regional or international conflict periods.

Despite its minor flaws, this book is of significant importance. Social movements are no longer minor players in global politics – one needs only look at the number of recent publications delving into the history of certain PMOs, or other organisations, as well as their presence online and on various social media platforms to note this. Research in this area is long overdue, and the authors can be sure that they have produced a piece of work that sets the standard for future research very high. A highly recommended book.

About the reviewer

Janeske Botes is a lecturer in Media Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Her research interests include media and politics, social movements, media representation and gender issues. She is busy with her PhD in Media Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. Email: Janeske.Botes AT wits.ac.za

Jeff Juris (2008). *Networking Futures: the Movements against Corporate Globalization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Israel Rodríguez-Giralt, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, en Barcelona

En este libro el antropólogo y activista Jeff Juris explora de un modo ejemplar las prácticas políticas y culturales implicadas en la construcción de redes transnacionales por parte de activistas contrarios a la globalización neoliberal. Basándose en un estudio etnográfico centrado en las redes activistas surgidas en Barcelona, recordemos que éste fue uno de los nodos más importantes y activos del movimiento, el libro desentraña y analiza con brillantez las innovaciones tácticas y organizativas más destacadas de este "movimiento de movimientos" que, desde noviembre de 1999, reclama con fuerza que *otro mundo es posible*.

El principal argumento del libro sostiene que los movimientos contra la globalización neoliberal se caracterizarían por aprovechar de forma innovadora las posibilidades que nos brinda la confluencia entre tecnologías, formas de organización y normas políticas basadas en la metáfora, o la lógica –por utilizar conceptos del propio autor- de la red. Esto es, más allá de una cuestión de morfología social, para estos grupos la red se convierte en un potente ideal cultural, en una lógica organizativa primordial, que modela e inspira nuevas formas de democracia directa radical tanto a escala local, como a escala regional y global. Así, mientras se conectan, mientras tejen redes, estos activistas no sólo actúan contra la pobreza, la desigualdad, o la devastación ambiental creciente, sino que también contribuyen a generar, a accionar, laboratorios sociales para la producción de valores, discursos y prácticas alternativas.

En este sentido, cabe destacar el término "*lógica cultural de la red*", un término que Juris acuña para dar cuenta del sustrato histórico, social, tecnológico y económico que inspira esta permanente construcción de redes. Para el autor, éstas no son sino el reflejo, el efecto, de interiorizar la estructura y la práctica que caracterizan el denominado capitalismo informacional. Así, dicha lógica se traduce en una disposición por parte de estos actores a: 1) crear nexos horizontales e interconectados entre diversos elementos autónomos, 2) fomentar la libre circulación de la información, 3) colaborar por medio de una coordinación descentralizada y de una toma de decisiones consensuada y, 4) fomentar prácticas de construcción de redes auto-dirigidas. Claro está, también, que dicha lógica funciona más como un "tipo ideal" que como una cuestión de facto. En la práctica, como nos detalla esta excelente etnografía, esta lógica "enredada" se encuentra distribuida de forma desigual y en permanente tensión con otras lógicas alternativas. Y esto es justamente lo más interesante e innovador de su análisis, pues abre la posibilidad de explorar de forma práctica y situada esta compleja y poblada "*política cultural de la red*".

Mas en esta "nueva forma de hacer política" no podemos soslayar el importante papel que juegan Internet y las nuevas tecnologías informacionales. Además de

constituir un medio de comunicación de largo alcance, barato, rápido y flexible, estas tecnologías constituyen también la infraestructura material —digital deberíamos decir, sin incurrir con ello en un falso dualismo- que permite estructurar y coordinar de forma distinta estas nuevas formas organizativas. Si bien éste es un tema estudiado y apuntado desde hace tiempo por los teóricos de los Nuevos Movimientos Sociales, el interés de este trabajo reside justamente en el hecho de ilustrar etnográficamente, y de paso ampliar aún más, este argumento. Así, Juris nos muestra cómo dichas tecnologías son apropiadas por los activistas para fomentar un modo de organización "alternativo", es decir, reticular y radicalmente descentralizado. Esto es, un modo de organización sin apenas estructuras jerárquicas, y dónde predomina la coordinación horizontal, la participación directa, el acceso libre y la toma consensuada de decisiones. De este modo, se pretende romper la lógica vertical de los partidos políticos, de los sindicatos, y en general, de la política en su acepción más convencional.

En efecto, lejos de perseguir la hegemonía, o la representación por medio de estructuras verticales, estos emisarios de la política en red se definen por la creación de espacios amplios, donde las organizaciones, los colectivos, y las redes de diverso signo convergen en relación a unos principios básicos comunes a la vez que preservan su autonomía y su identidad específica. Su último objetivo, más que la adhesión, es la expansión horizontal de estas redes y el aumento de su "conectividad" por medio de la articulación de distintos movimientos dentro de las estructuras flexibles y descentralizadas de comunicación de las que se proveen, facilitando así una organización y una coordinación más eficaz de la acción colectiva.

Sin embargo, no sólo encontramos ventajas en esta aplicación de la lógica cultural de la red a la producción de actores de cambio social. Por un lado, porque ésta alumbra también una serie de exclusiones, muy importantes, y muy vinculadas con la denominada brecha digital y, que como nos recuerda Juris, no deberíamos soslayar. En ese sentido, la articulación de redes requiere, como decía anteriormente, de una infraestructura tecnológica que se distribuye de forma desigual entre grupos, geografías y niveles educativos dispares. Pero además, la exploración de esa utopía informacional, trae consigo también una buena dosis de tensiones y de encendidas polémicas dentro del propio movimiento (antiglobalización/anticapitalismo; saltar de protesta en protesta/organización sostenida; violencia/no violencia; consenso/votación...). Si bien es cierto que esto no es algo negativo, en todo movimiento encontramos diferencias y luchas internas, también es cierto que dicha lógica "enredada" contribuye a hacer si cabe más visible esta tensión constitutiva que acompaña la articulación y desarrollo de un movimiento social. En ese sentido, lejos de sugerir una apropiación uniforme, la lógica cultural de las redes nos invita a explorar un escenario mucho más antagónico, interesante y variado. Un escenario tan complejo como densamente poblado, en el que encontramos actores, sensibilidades e interpretaciones muy distintas del paradigma de las redes y en el que cada apropiación es decisiva para comprender cómo estas redes se producen, desarrollan y relacionan formando un marco u otro de acción.

Mas la metáfora de la red también proyecta algunas sombras de orden teórico que quisiera comentar antes de terminar. Si bien es cierto que los tropos y modismos que nos invitan a pensar en una política en red o en una cultura de la red son decisivos para aprehender la lógica y las características primordiales de este momento-bisagra que vivimos, por acuñar la expresión de Melucci (1996), también es cierto que su uso prolongado detenta riesgos. El primero, convertir la idea de la red en nuestra principal y casi única guía teórica (Castells 1997). En efecto, a pesar del evidente éxito que ha cosechado la noción en los últimos años, o quizás por eso mismo, su omnipresente y omniabarcante utilización no hace sino fomentar un progresivo ahuecamiento conceptual de la propia noción. Prueba de ello es que lo "enredado" ha pasado a ser el epíteto preferido de toda una época. El concepto que lo dice y lo conecta todo. Una tesis sin prácticamente antítesis. No faltan las pruebas en ese sentido que ilustran hasta qué punto la red ha pasado de ser una simple metáfora, un tropo más en el acervo conceptual de las ciencias sociales, a ser una precondición causal, una unidad casi-fáctica que nos viene dada y que es supuesta de antemano. Si bien ésta no es una crítica aplicable al sólido trabajo de Juris, no está de más recordar hubiera sido interesante incluir una reflexión crítica más decidida sobre justamente los riesgos y problemas que entraña el uso sociológico, y a veces el abuso, de una noción como la de la red.

En una línea parecida, quisiera recordar que una de las formas de conjurar el peligro de sobreexplotar este epígrafe pasa por fomentar abordajes prácticos, situados y específicos, es decir, por abordar fenómenos concretos, atendiendo siempre a sus componentes singulares y a las prácticas específicas que le dan sentido (Woolgar 2005).   Si bien es importante apuntar que éste es un objetivo que persigue el libro que nos ocupa, también es justo destacar que dicho análisis carece de un estudio pormenorizado del papel de algunos componentes importantes en la conformación y articulación de estas complejas redes. Me refiero particularmente a la ausencia de una pregunta por el papel de los no humanos -por utilizar un término propio de enfoques muy próximos al estudio de las redes como es el caso de la Actor-Network Theory (Latour 2005) - en la conformación de estas redes activistas. Como el propio Juris reivindica, son muchos y variados los componentes que contribuyen a articular estas complejas redes, entre ellos los propios dispositivos tecnológicos. Y de hecho son los lazos y vínculos entre estos variados componentes lo que nos permite hablar de redes que actúan. Mas a posteriori, en el plano analítico, dicha precaución se va desvaneciendo en favor de un enfoque más antropocéntrico de la agencia y de la acción social. Con ello, se hace más difícil también el poder desentrañar cómo este actor-red establece de un modo práctico y efectivo conexiones, continuidades e interdependencias entre tecnologías contextos, momentos, ideas, afectos, actores e intereses muy variados. Es decir, cómo esta red que enlaza entidades y actores distintos actúa a la vez como un actor que incorpora actividad y agencia y, por tanto, moviliza, ejecuta y reordena identidades y formas particular de ver el mundo que nos rodea.

Pero al margen de estos debates teóricos, *Networking Futures* es un libro absolutamente imprescindible y que a buen seguro se convertirá en una

referencia insoslayable tanto para activistas como para académicos y docentes interesados en la antropología, la sociología, las ciencias políticas, la comunicación o la geografía de los movimientos sociales y los procesos de globalización política, cultural y económica contemporáneos.

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También es editor de la revista "*Malababa: contrapublicidad, resistencias y subculturas*" y miembro del comité editorial de la revista "*Athenea. Revista de Pensamiento e Investigación social*".

Jeff Juris (2008). *Networking Futures: the Movements against Corporate Globalization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

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In this book, the anthropologist and activist Jeff Juris explores, in an exemplary way, the political and cultural practices involved in the construction of transnational networks by activists who oppose neoliberal globalisation. Based on an ethnographic study that focuses on the activist networks that have surfaced in Barcelona, the book unravels and brilliantly analyses the most prominent tactical and organisational innovations of this "movement of movements" which, since November 1999, forcefully has claimed that *another world is possible*.

The book's main argument is that the movements against neoliberal globalisation are characterised by their taking advantage in an innovative way of the possibilities offered by the junction between technologies, forms of organisation and political norms based on the logic of the *network*. That is for these groups the network turns into a powerful cultural ideal, into a primary organisational logic that models and inspires new forms of radical direct democracy, on a local scale and on a regional and global scale alike. Thus, while they connect, while they weave their webs, these activists do not just act against poverty, inequality or the growing environmental destruction, but rather, they also contribute to generating, enacting, social laboratories for the production of alternative values, discourses and practices.

In this sense, it is worth highlighting the expression "cultural logic of the network", an expression coined by Juris to account for the historical, social, technological and economic sub-stratum that inspires this permanent construction of networks. According to the author, these are merely the reflection, the effect, of interiorising the structure and practice that characterises so-called informational capitalism. In this way, the "networking logics" translates into a willingness by these actors to: 1) create horizontal, interrelated bonds between different autonomous elements; 2) promote the free movement of information; 3) cooperate through a de-centralised coordination and consensus-based decision-making and; 4) promote practices for the construction of self-managed networks. It is also obvious that this works more as an "ideal type" than as a matter of fact. In practice, as this excellent ethnography details, this "entangled" logic is unevenly distributed and it is in permanent tension with other alternative logics. And this is precisely what is most interesting and innovative about his analysis, as it opens up the possibility of exploring the complex and well-populated "cultural politics of the network" in a situated way.

But in this "new way of doing politics" we cannot overlook the important role played by Internet and the new information technologies. Apart from constituting a means of communication that has a wide reach and is cheap,

quick and flexible, these technologies also constitute the material infrastructure that enables the structuring and coordination of these new organisational forms in a different way. Although this is a theme that has been studied and noted for some time by the theorists of the New Social Movements, the interest of this work lies precisely in the fact that it illustrates this issue ethnographically and in doing so, it widens it further. In this way, Juris shows us how these technologies are appropriated by activists to promote an "alternative" mode of organisation, that is, one that is web-like and radically de-centralised. This means a mode of organisation that hardly has any hierarchical structures and in which horizontal coordination, direct participation, free access and consensus-based decision-making are predominant. Through it, these groups seek to break the vertical logic of political parties, trade unions and, in general, of politics in its most conventional sense.

In effect, far from pursuing hegemony, or representation through vertical structures, these transmitters of *networked politics* are defined by the creation of ample spaces in which organisations, collectives and networks of different persuasions converge in relation to some shared common principles, at the same time as they preserve their autonomy and specific identity. Their final goal, beyond adhesion, is the horizontal expansion of these networks and an increase in their "connectivity" through the articulation of different movements within the flexible and de-centralised communication structures that they equip themselves with, thus enabling a more effective organisation and coordination of collective action.

However, we do not just find advantages in this application of the cultural logic of the network to the production of actors for social change. It also gives rise to a series of exclusions that are very important and are very closely linked to the so-called digital divide, which, as Juris reminds us, we should not overlook. That is the structuring of networks requires a technological infrastructure that is unevenly distributed between groups, geographies and educational levels that are not equal. But furthermore, exploring this information utopia also entails a good deal of tensions and of heated discussion within the movement itself (anti-globalisation/anti-capitalism; jumping from one protest to another/sustained organisation; violence/non-violence; consensus/voting...). Although it is true that this is not something negative, as there are difference and internal struggles in every movement, it is also true that this "networked" logic helps make visable, the constitutive tension that accompanies the structuring and development of a social movement In this sense, far from suggesting that there is a uniform appropriation, the cultural logic of networks invites us to explore a scenario that is far more conflictive, interesting and varied. This is a scenario that is as complex as it is densely populated, in which we find actors, sensitivities and interpretations that are very different from the paradigm of networks and within which each appropriation is decisive to understand how these networks are produced, developed and relate to each other by forming one or a different framework for action.

But the metaphor of the network also projects some shadows of a theoretical kind that I would like to comment on before ending. While it is true that the figures of speech and idioms that lead us to think of a *networked politics* or a *culture of networks* are decisive to grasp the logic and primary characteristics of this *hinge moment* (Melucci's expression, 1996), it is also true that its prolonged use carries risks. The first is that of turning the idea of the network into our main and almost sole theoretical guide (Castells 1997). In fact, in spite of the obvious success that the notion has harvested over the last few years, or perhaps for this very reason, its omnipresent and all-encompassing use only promotes an increasing conceptual emptying of the notion itself. The evidence of this is that what is "networked" has become the preferred epithet of an age. It is the concept that says and connects everything. A thesis for which there is practically no antithesis. The network has changed from being a simple metaphor, one more figure of speech in the conceptual inventory of the social sciences, to becoming a causal precondition, an almost factual unit that we are given and is taken for granted *a priori*. Although this is not a criticism that can be levelled at Juris' solid work, it is not superfluous to recall that it could have been interesting to include a more determined critical reflection, precisely about the risks and problems that the sociological use, and at times misuse, of a notion such as that about networks entails.

Along the same lines, I would like to point out that one of the ways to avoid the danger of over extending the concept of network lies with grounding analysis in specific, situated practices, that is, concrete phenomena, paying careful attention to their singularities and the specific practices that give them meaning. (Woolgar 2005).

While it is important to note that this is a goal that the book that we are dealing with pursues, it is also fair to stress that this analysis lacks a detailed study of the role played by some important components in the formation and structuring of these complex networks. I am referring in particular to the absence of a question about the role of non-humans (Latour 2005) in the creation of these activist networks. As Juris himself claims, the components that contribute to structuring these complex networks are many and they are varied, among them are the technological devices themselves. And in fact, it is the bonds and links between these different components that allows us to talk of networks that act. But on an analytical plane, this caution progressively disappears, with a more anthropocentric focus on agency and social action taking its place. Consequently, it also becomes harder to disentangle how, in a practical and effective way, this actor-network establishes connections, continuities and interdependencies between very varied technologies, contexts, moments, ideas, affections, actors and interests. In other words, how this network that intertwines different actors and entities, at the same time acts as an actor that incorporates activity and agency and therefore mobilizes and reorders identities and the way we view the world around us.

Beyond these theoretical debates, *Networking Futures* is a book that is absolutely indispensable and that will certainly become a reference that cannot

be overlooked for activists, academics and teachers interested in anthropology, sociology, political sciences, communication or the geography of social movements and contemporary processes of political, cultural and economic globalisation.

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About the reviewer

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Call for papers vol 3 issue 1 (May 2011): Repression and social movements

Special issue editors: Cristina Flesher Fominaya, Lesley Wood

Interface is a new journal produced twice yearly by activists and academics around the world in response to the development and increased visibility of social movements in the last few years – and the immense amount of knowledge generated in this process. This knowledge is created across the globe, and in many contexts and a variety of ways, and it constitutes an incredibly valuable resource for the further development of social movements. Interface responds to this need, as a tool to help our movements learn from each other's struggles, by developing analyses and knowledge that allow lessons to be learned from specific movement processes and experiences and translated into a form useful for other movements.

We welcome contributions by movement participants and academics who are developing movement-relevant theory and research. Our goal is to include material that can be used in a range of ways by movements – in terms of its content, its language, its purpose and its form. We are seeking work in a range of different formats, such as conventional articles, review essays, facilitated discussions and interviews, action notes, teaching notes, key documents and analysis, book reviews – and beyond. Both activist and academic peers review research contributions, and other material is sympathetically edited by peers. The editorial process generally is geared towards assisting authors to find ways of expressing their understanding, so that we all can be heard across geographical, social and political distances.

Our fifth issue, to be published in May 2011, will have space for general articles on all aspects of understanding social movements, as well as a special themed section on

Repression and Social Movements

The question of repression is important for social movement scholars and activists. On a practical level, activists need strategies to deal with repressive forces – and build them by sharing their experiences and analyses. But the question of repression and mobilization is also very intriguing theoretically. Scholars have explored the contradictory effects of repression on mobilization (sometimes it inspires more mobilization, sometimes it

effectively quashes it or pushes it underground; sometimes it is successful in characterizing protestors as legitimate targets of repression, and other times it delegitimizes the State and increases the legitimacy of the social movements; facing repression collectively can strengthen bonds between activists and strengthen movements or can lead to fragmentation; and so on).

Without wanting to be prescriptive and purely in the spirit of prompting critical reflection we offer these questions as themes for possible contributions:

- What are the effects of repression on activists and organizations (biographical effects, solidarity/trust within movement groups, evaluation of risk and participation)?

- What are the effects of repression on movements (over time, within particular national or local contexts, transnationally)?

- What are the effects of repression on civil society? What happens, as in Haiti or South Africa, when popular politics is targeted for repression but professional civil society is allowed to operate freely?

- How are particular narratives and projects such as "the war on terror", "Operation Green Hunt" in India, state paranoia about the "Third Force" in South Africa and so on affecting social movements' strategies and experiences?

- How does the existence of new technologies affect repression and how are social movements dealing with these changes?

- How are supra national contexts, actors like multinational defense corporations and institutional frameworks like the European Union affecting repression of social movements on the national level?

- What are the connections between social movement tactics and repression? In particular, what is the relationship between violent state repression and violent social movement tactics?

- How are changes in repression intersecting with changes in social movements in different regions? Is a new global repertoire in protest policing emerging – or is there increasing fragmentation in the ways movements and repressive forces are interacting?

The **deadline** for initial submissions to this issue (volume 3 issue 1, to be published May 2011) is **November 1st 2010**.

For details on how to submit to Interface please consult the "Guidelines for contributors" on our website at http://www.interfacejournal.net/2008/03/interface-guidelines-for-contributors.html, and submit to the appropriate regional editor (http://www.interfacejournal.net/2008/03/editorial-contacts.html).

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