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### **Resisting Neoliberal Capitalism: Insights from Marxist Political Economy**

Two insights of Marxist political economy inform this chapter. The first is that political life is partly determined or conditioned by the economic system within which they take place - not just any kind of politics or social life is possible within a given historical moment. Instead, how people get together in order to make what is necessary to live, what Marx called the mode of production, limits the range of political possibilities. Of course, this does not mean that variety is not possible within given economic systems. At least since Esping-Andersen (1990), for example, it is clear that there are varieties of capitalist welfare states, and now, varieties of neoliberal, market-dominated states within a world capitalist system. Nonetheless, the boundaries of political life and even what is considered politically possible are profoundly shaped by the economy. Indeed, the mode of production shapes all aspects of social life, including human beings most intimate thoughts and hopes, with important implications for political struggle.

The second insight is that economies are not natural and inevitable. Social reality is ultimately contingent: human beings make (and re-make) the economic world and therefore, can change the rules of the game to which they are, at any given time, collectively and individually subject. No political economy is forever. Feudal economies preceded capitalist economies and capitalist economies, in all their variations, will one day be superseded by different ways of organizing social life. If economies *seem* natural and inevitable they are, in fact, ultimately political and social, contingent and changeable.

In what follows, these two insights of Marxist political economy are the starting point for a discussion of contemporary battles over neoliberal capitalism, particularly the role played by the movements opposing neoliberal capitalism. In what ways do these movements reflect the dynamics and constraints of the neoliberal societies from which they emerge? What are their contradictions and limits? How, and to what extent, do they alter the balance of political (class) forces, both challenging the common sense of neoliberal precepts and reclaiming social spaces from the market – and so, potentially foreshadowing a noncapitalist future? Considered against the historically specific phase of contemporary neoliberal capitalism, at once the context and object of the transnational movement analysed here, this essay draws attention to the movements many faces, its contradictions, its limits and its emancipatory possibilities.

### **Neoliberal Capitalism: A Material and Ideological Project**

Capitalism has undergone several major transformations following recurrent, structural crises, with the most recent, neoliberal phase of capitalism emerging in the wake of the 1970s stagflation. In particular, the oil crises of 1973 and 1979, along with ‘stagflation’, a hitherto unseen combination of slow economic growth, unemployment and inflation, marked the beginning of the undoing of the varieties of welfare states that had developed in the world economy’s core in the postwar period. At the same time, the crisis helped precipitate the death of the national liberation movements in many of the developing countries, as the world periphery sank under debts and came, in large measure, under the tutelage of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Later, 1989 marked the beginning of the collapse of the officially communist or ‘state capitalist’ regimes, leaving Western market economies unchallenged by any actually-existing alternatives. By 1992, Francis Fukuyama had announced the ‘end of History’, arguing that the triumph of liberal democracies and liberal

economics worldwide marked the final stage in an evolutionary process. Human beings, he argued, could not hope to find more perfect principles along which to organize society: if actually existing liberal democratic economies might be improved in practice, the struggle to improve everyday life would be carried out within the possibilities offered by liberal political and economic theory.

Although linked with capitalism's structural crisis in the 1970s, the advent of contemporary neoliberal capitalism is not the *spontaneous* expression of underlying economic relations. Instead, its emergence has depended upon a number of factors in conjuncture with the crisis, in particular, the mobilization of organized fractions of capital and the 'technical' support of networks of semi-autonomous neoliberal economists, often holding vital positions in national and international financial bodies (Dezalay and Garth 2002). Moreover, if neoliberal capitalism is partly the result of informal regimes operating across transnational corporations (Cutler 2003), it is frequently conjured through favourable rules negotiated, elaborated and enforced by states and the reconfigured postwar International Financial Institutions, notably the IMF, World Bank and more recently the World Trade Organization (Coburn 2003 pp.160-161). Indeed, neoliberal capitalism arguably requires a muscular state, not limited to the policing of populations marginalized by neoliberal policies (Wacquant 2006). Finally, in some cases, neoliberalism has been imposed by military force (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001). In short, fractions of neoliberal capital or 'technocrats' acting on their behalf, if not at their behest, succeeded in institutionalizing rules reproducing and extending further the relative power of capital over labour and the state, often with muscular or even military action.

The role of the declining economic and military hegemon, the United States, is probably difficult to overstate in the emergence of a neoliberal phase of capitalism. The US plays a central if not determining role in the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), supplies many of the world's intellectual and economic elite through its better-known universities (Dezalay and Garth 2002), can use its market power to coerce nations or entice and bribe their elites and is able to credibly threaten military action when negotiated outcomes fail. In this respect, the well-known circumstances of Chile's precocious conversion to neoliberalism is instructive: following a CIA backed coup against Salvador Allende's democratically elected Socialist government in 1973, dictator Augusto Pinochet pursued an austerity policy designed by alumni of the Chicago School of Economics with the guidance of monetarist and 'Nobel' prize-winning economist Milton Friedman. In short, the contemporary phase of neoliberal capitalism is the reconfiguration of the capitalist world system to better accommodate the interests of organized, international fractions of capital. Yet, this outcome is not the automatic expression of structural factors. Rather, it is the result of opportunistic political struggle by organized capital and other actors, including collaboration between the dominant classes in the core and periphery (Navarro 2007 pp.54-56), in a moment of generalized economic crisis.

Why characterize the contemporary phase of capitalism that Fukuyama celebrated as neoliberal? If classical economic liberalism is about the operation of unfettered markets, neoliberalism is about (re)establishing markets as *the* organizing principle of social life. Ideally, this includes commitments to the privatization of formerly public goods and services, the liberalization of trade and financial capital flows and the dismantling of labour, environmental and other regulations that are costly for capital. Domestic fiscal reform favourable to national capitalist fractions includes reduced revenue, inheritance, capital gains and other taxes for the (very) wealthy (Piketty 2001, pp.547-552; Sutcliffe 2005). Such costly measures are then used to justify the imposition of new constraints on access to 'unaffordable' welfare programmes, like unemployment insurance and health care, e.g., by imposing user fees or making the criteria for access much stricter. Whether pursued 'autonomously' by

states in the developed core or at the behest of the IFIs, as in much of the world periphery, the general consequence of this reorganization is to shrink alternatives to participation in market relationships. Although greater exposure to the market is supposed to foster individual responsibility and entrepreneurialism while eliminating government waste, its major consequence is to leave the world's vast majority more vulnerable to market vicissitudes, with precarious access to basic 'goods', like adequate food, clean water, health, housing, safe working conditions, and education (Coburn and Coburn 2007).

Of course, there are important variations across and within different parts of the world system regarding the extent to which neoliberal policies are translated into practice. These variations are not idiosyncratic. Instead, they reflect factors like the differential ability of class coalitions to pressure states to resist specific neoliberal policies, as well as the differential ability of state actors to circumvent neoliberal principles unfavourable to its domestic capital fractions. For example, the United States has successfully resisted free trade with respect to the vulnerable domestic textile and agricultural sectors. In Kerala, since the Communist Party of India came to power in 1957 through an alliance of poor tenants and landless labourers on a strong platform of social justice – a platform informed by the struggle for independence -- the state has consistently supported an expanded welfare state and protection for the lowest social classes, resisting neoliberal measures sought by the IMF and World Bank (Sandbrook, Edelman, Heller and Teichman 2007 pp.65-92). Other important variations in the breadth and types of neoliberal policies implemented exist across the former Communist countries, which have embraced 'varieties of Eastern European capitalism' (Buchen 2005). In some cases, as in Hungary, they have embarked upon technocratic versions of neoliberalism marked by 'ritual calls for sacrifice' (Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley 1998, p.103), although heavy-handed moralistic overtones accompanying neoliberal reforms may not be as unique to Eastern Europe as these authors assume. The class coalitions that historically enabled the Scandinavian countries to establish social democratic welfare states, providing citizens with strong alternatives to participation in the market, now allow these states to resist many neoliberal policies (Rothstein and Lindbom 2004). In short, there are important, ongoing nontrivial differences among state regimes across the world system. Still, in general - if unevenly - varieties of neoliberal states are replacing the varieties of postwar states.

The neoliberal phase of capitalism is a material project embedding goods and services within market relationships, so shrinking 'the commons' and reducing protections from, and alternatives to, market participation. Yet, neoliberal capitalism is also an ideological project, a utopia 'en voie de réalisation', in the process of becoming (Bourdieu 1998 p.108). The same market formulas of privatization, liberalization, deregulation and tax reforms are applied worldwide, regardless of the specificities of regional, national and local circumstances. It is taken for granted that the introduction of market mechanisms frees capital, so stimulating entrepreneurialism, economic growth, employment and, in a virtuous cascade, adequate food, clean water, health... The underlying assumption is that markets are intrinsically efficient, given a minimum of 'good governance' by states. Typically, negative outcomes are explained, not as a result of market failures but rather as a consequence of residual state interference. Although the IMF conceded that the 1997 Asian crisis was *mainly* the result of financial systems' weaknesses, for example, the same 'factsheet' adds that it was 'made worse by governance issues, notably government involvement in the private sector' (IMF External Relations Department 1999). (A remark that likewise denies one main insight of political economy, insofar as it assumes that markets function outside of state rules). Thus, neoliberal institutions combine with neoliberal ideology in what Smith (2004) has characterized as the 'relations of ruling' (pp.73-95).

Less visibly and less formally, neoliberal capitalism's reorganization of social life along market principles means a 'colonization of the lifeworld' by market logics (Habermas

1987; Hackett and Carroll 2006, pp.52-53). As Polanyi (1957) reminds us, markets exist in market *societies*. All aspects of societies are transformed by the fundamental fact of markets as the central organizing principle for social life. Thus, for example, it should not be surprising that in a world of commodity exchange, there are 'black markets' in which almost anything can be bought and sold, including subjects and objects typically formally excluded from the market nexus, e.g. children and human organs. Market logics seep into every pore of society, transforming the way we appreciate human beings, abstracting them so that they become a commodity like any other, weighted literally as well as metaphorically in terms of costs and benefits. All market societies tend in this direction, but this may be especially true in an era of neoliberalism when the market expands unchallenged by the spectre of the actually-existing alternative Communist system and national liberation movements. The contemporary phase of neoliberal capitalism, in all its variations, is the worldwide material and ideological terrain within and against which resistance has arisen.

### **Beyond the Market: International Movements Against Neoliberal Capitalism**

Marxist political economy has a long-standing concern with the potential for movements to fundamentally transform social life. Indeed, one of Marx's major insights was to explain the transition from one mode of production to another as the result of political struggle between opposing classes, struggles themselves related to structural contradictions within the mode of production. Thus, the feudal mode of production was unable to contain the new class dynamics of the emerging bourgeoisie, leading to the breakdown of feudalism and the emergence of early industrial capitalism. Ultimately, Marx predicted the demise of the capitalist mode of production, in its turn, as the result of working class struggle, arguing that workers concentrated together on assembly lines would recognize their shared interest in overthrowing private ownership of the means of production. This struggle does not triumph in a vacuum, but within the broader context of a capitalist system that is not stable, but subject to recurrent crises. At the same time, it should be emphasized that working class mobilization is not automatic. Ideologically, the working class must overcome the apparently natural, rational, and inevitable character of the capitalist mode of production, as well claims that the capitalist system is 'in the general interest' (Marx 1978 pp.172-174). Indeed, Marx's own writings, both scholarly and journalistic sought to contribute to developing workers' consciousness as distinct from hegemonic bourgeois consciousness. Materially, revolutionary class struggle ultimately seeks to overthrow the institution of private property as *the* major source of inequality, although in practice this must be confronted alongside other forms of inequality organically intertwined with capitalism, including racism and sexism. As Marx cautions, it is the economic structure that is the ultimate guarantor of the bourgeoisie's ideological hegemony since ownership of the means of mental production enables the exclusion of what Gramsci (1971) called counterhegemonic voices. If class struggle is the engine of social change, this struggle is inevitably both ideological and material, with the success of the movement partly dependent upon the propitious fragilities of a crisis-ridden capitalist system.

### ***What's in a Name? Describing Actually-Existing Movements Against Capitalism.***

Yet, if Marxist political economy emphasizes the essential role of class struggle in overthrowing capitalism, it must consider actually-existing contemporary movements against capitalism, whether or not they take the anticipated revolutionary form of a self-conscious international working class movement. The concern here is not 'resistance' in its myriad, day-to-day and sometimes ambiguous forms, although such acts of resistance, both individual and collective, clearly matter. Rather, the concern – at once empirical and analytic -- is with organized, self-consciously political, public mobilizations that directly (seek to) challenge contemporary capitalism. In the last decade, the movement that has arguably most captured the attention of Marxist political economists, among others, as at least potentially filling this

role is the ‘alternative globalization movement’, also known in the popular press, less accurately, as the ‘antiglobalization movement’. Announced by the Zapatista uprising in 1994, the movement came to the attention of the developed nations with the 1999 protests in Seattle, Washington against the World Trade Organization and then took on a new form with the first-ever World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2001 (more about these events later).

Within the Marxist tradition, both old and new vocabularies have been mobilized to describe the alternative globalization coalition. Of course, these vocabularies are not innocent but express theoretical commitments and empirical judgements, making varying assessments about the movement’s revolutionary or reactionary potential, its inherited or novel character, its material and ideological contributions and limits. In particular, they consider whether or not the movement is a contemporary working class movement, and what this suggests about the movement’s likely impact. Indeed, the alternative globalization movement is interesting partly because the tensions within the movement reveal important controversies within Marxist political economy; such controversies are never ‘merely’ theoretical since interpretation has crucial implications for political practice. Below, central contributions by several Marxist political economists specifically concerned with the alternative globalization movement are briefly reviewed, with the insights and arguments of individual authors considered first separately and then together.

Making a case for the ongoing relevance of the working class as *the* engine of social change, the editors of *The Monthly Review* wonder if the ‘Battle in Seattle’ against the World Trade Organization marked ‘a new internationalism’ (Sweezy and Magdoff 2000).<sup>1</sup> Here, the suggestion is that the alternative globalization movement *may* be the latest development in a long history of international working class movements, dating back at least to Marx’s 19<sup>th</sup> century rallying cry, ‘Workers of the world, unite!’ a call which both participated in and sought to encourage working class struggle. By raising the possibility of a ‘new internationalism’, the Monthly Review editors consider the likelihood of a revived worldwide labour movement that finally includes overt class struggle in the hegemonic world power, the United States, where class conflict is typically submerged within classless nationalist rhetoric (resurgent following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre). Despite nationalistic and xenophobic temptations, not least within the American labour movement, the alternative globalization movement is seen as at least potentially representing a new international working class coalition that challenges capitalism from the hegemonic centre.

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, Marxist political economists do not have a monopoly on naming the movement. An early term, probably bestowed by an unsympathetic media, was ‘antiglobalization’, a label supposed to identify the extent to which activists opposed neoliberal globalization, but simultaneously implying that the only possible form of globalization is neoliberal. Subsequent terms tended to emphasize the movement’s oppositional character, although more vaguely, as with ‘les nouveaux mouvements contestataires’, the new contestatory movements (Sommier 2001). Bourdieu (1998) spoke about “la résistance contre l’invasion néo-libérale”, the resistance against the neoliberal invasion. della Porta (2007) borrowing from Italian activists, refers to ‘the movement of movements’ and ‘the global justice movement’. Within an elaborate theoretical context, Hardt and Negri (2004) talk about the ‘multitude’, a term that arguably joins neoliberalism in celebrating the individual, rather than class or other social movements as the subject of history (Carroll 2006). Finally, others emphasize the movement in more narrowly political terms, writing of ‘un mouvement citoyen international’, an international citizens’ movement (Favreau, Larose and Fall 2004).

McNally (2002) focuses on the prefigurative potential of the alternative globalization movement, highlighting dynamics that appear most favourable to a socialist project. Thus, McNally writes about 'socialism from below: radical democracy for the age of globalization' (p.238), a characterization that simultaneously contrasts the movement with a world capitalist system inevitably organized 'from above' and with the authoritarian, bureaucratic post-war Communist states. In particular, McNally highlights the autonomously organized Landless Workers Movement in Brazil, one of the few self-proclaimed socialist currents within the movement, e.g., the contingent unfurled a banner reading, 'Another World Is Possible – Only As Socialism' at an early World Social Forum (cited in Callinicos 2003, p.85). Yet, McNally is cautious about the leading role of labour, narrowly defined, within the movement and within a socialist democratic project more generally. He argues that radical democracy is only possible when the working class mobilizes its most marginalized elements, including women and people of colour; socialist struggle must be grounded in the actual experiences of gendered, racialized working class people (pp.221-223). At the same time, 'radical activists' within the movement that have too often dismissed unions as merely bureaucratic must support organized labour, taking the struggles of working people seriously and, through their involvement, helping to transform union practices, particularly in the world's core, to become more radical and democratic (p.264). Despite the movement's ideological success in putting neoliberal institutions like the World Trade Organization on the defensive (p.258), McNally suggests that its future material success will therefore depend upon democratizing organized labour and struggling against the various forms of injustice – including racial and gender discrimination – to which workers' are actually subject.

For Wallerstein, the alternative globalization movement is best understood as the latest development in a long history of 'antisystemic' struggle against the world capitalist system. Like McNally, and in keeping with his earlier work, Wallerstein rejects the idea that movement will be led by an ideal-typical proletariat: the adult, male, salaried factory worker (Wallerstein and Zukin 1989, p.438). The 1968 anti-systemic movements, he argues, ensured that the main challenge to world capitalism will emerge from diverse 'minorities' – labour, in its various occupational guises, but also ecological, sexual, feminist, and other 'minority' movements. In this account, the much-remarked diversity of the alternative globalization movement is not unprecedented, but the legacy of the 1968 mobilizations. Yet, compared to prior anti-systemic movements, including the national liberation movements, the alternative globalization does have particular responsibilities. Given the relatively imminent collapse of the five hundred year old world capitalist system due to internal contradictions, including the unsustainable use of natural resources, the alternative globalization movement is critical to deciding the shape of a post-capitalist future (2005, p.38). Of course, the movement, at least as embodied in the World Social Forums, has important shortcomings, including a lack of transparency in decision-making and a stated unwillingness to embrace formal politics. Yet, Wallerstein argues that it is the only actually-existing body that may plausibly contribute to building a new, democratic and egalitarian world-system to replace a world capitalist system that was, in any case, never eternal and is now entering its terminal phase. This involves both collective, democratic imagining of different visions of an egalitarian and democratic future, but also political action directed towards achieving egalitarian, democratic social relations at multiple levels from the local to the transnational (pp.39-40).

At its best, Carroll (2006) suggests that the 'global justice movement' is a counterhegemonic bloc (see also Evans 2005). This characterization does not imply a purely 'idealistic' or discursive vocation, since an effective counterhegemonic challenge must lay bare the material bases for capital's ideological dominance, as well as tackling the substance of capitalist ideology. Given the hydra-headed nature of capitalist discourse, the latter (like the former) is not a simple task: there is no single, unitary, transhistorical and transcultural

hegemonic capitalist 'story' to defeat. Rather, a variety of myths, motivations and social roles for various groups are admitted, as long as they are compatible with capital accumulation, encourage consumption and discourage scrutiny of basic, unequal social relationships (Carroll 2006 p.12). Yet, neoliberalism, as a particular set of ideological claims, is vulnerable, with its celebration of individual rights and freedoms, narrowly interpreted (e.g., to mean consumer choice), its characterization of society as no more than a sum of interacting individuals, its understanding of the state as little more than a guarantor of private property protection (p.15) and an assemblage of coercive, disciplining practices exercised in the name of 'security' (pp18-19). Against this, the movement is well-positioned to reclaim community, solidarity, and justice as positive values, an ideological challenge that must be linked with political action that reclaims the state, as well as local and transnational spaces. At the same time, Carroll suggests, the movement should *embody* solidarity, refusing to celebrate (individual) difference for its own sake and instead articulating common action across working people in both their 'old labour' and 'new social movement' guises (p.26). Without such an articulation, both old labour and new social movements, as diverse expressions of the human needs of workers, remain trapped: 'ecology', for example, simply becomes green consumerism and labour 'rights' remain premised on ever-increasing, unsustainable consumption. Articulating struggles across working peoples' movements means recognizing that unalienated human existence requires *fundamental* transformation of social relationships, beyond capitalism.

Finally, although Callinicos' (2003) refers to the alternative globalization movement as an 'anti-capitalist' movement, he is sceptical of the movement's transformative potential. At present, he argues, the movement is dominated by currents espousing, at best, ambiguous and contradictory positions as they react against different aspects of the capitalist political economy. First, there are 'bourgeois anti-capitalists', who encourage consumers to pressure corporations to carry out less exploitative practices, a stance that, in Callinicos' view, dangerously positions corporations, rather than states, as privileged sites for progressive 'development' policies (pp.70-73). Second, there are 'localists' who celebrate 'good markets', seeking to challenge corporate monopolies by favouring small-scale local producers selling to 'the socially aware consumer' e.g., as with the Fair Trade movement (pp.74-76). To Callinicos, this stance naively posits normally-functioning capitalism, including corporate monopolies, as anomalous. Third, 'reformists' focus on humanizing capitalism by redesigning institutions like the IMF and World Bank, an approach which specifically eschews transformation of basic capitalist commitments to private property. Finally, 'autonomists', although explicitly condemning capitalism, celebrate highly individualized, decentralized acts of resistance. Callinicos regards this approach, theorized in Hardt and Negri's (2004) celebration of the revolutionary potential of 'the multitude', as hopelessly utopian in its rejection of coordinated political action. Thus, the alternative globalization movement is seen as multifaceted and contradictory, although with a latent socialist potential – indeed, Callinicos sees his contribution as part of the struggle for a decisive socialist turn within the movement. This turn may be achieved partly through a 'transitional programme' (pp.132-139) of reforms (e.g., cancellation of Third World debt, reduction of the working week) whose combined logic challenges the principles of capitalist social organization.

'A new internationalism', 'socialism from below', 'anti-systemic movements', 'counterhegemonic bloc' and 'anti-capitalist movement': these names, and the accompanying accounts, combine descriptive statements of the movement as it is with analytical judgements about what might be, if the movement's most promising dynamics -- from the point of view of achieving a democratic, socialist future -- are encouraged. The descriptive project requires a frank analysis of the movement's limits, including, for example, a tendency to disperse political energies around disarticulated specific 'causes'. Yet, such critical assessments sit alongside a fundamental optimism about the alternative globalization movement's existence –

the emergence, however flawed, of an international movement challenging (aspects of) neoliberal forms of capitalism, if less often capitalism itself.

Together, contemporary Marxist political economists suggest that the alternative globalization movement is an ideological project, attacking the taken-for-granted nature of neoliberal commonsense, as the contemporary version of a flexible capitalist ideology. The many different movement participants agree at least on this, that ‘Another World Is Possible’ – the official slogan of the World Social Forum – firmly rejecting the notion that there is no alternative to neoliberalism as *the* approach to organizing the world political economy. Yet, the movement has many currents and not all of them question the principle of markets as a basis for organizing human relationships. Instead, some, perhaps a majority, seek relatively limited reforms of corporate behaviour, e.g. via pressure applied directly to for-profit enterprises or through reform of international financial institutions. Such approaches do not entail a critique of capitalism and at the same time typically underestimate the importance of the state as a site for struggle. As a whole, the movement is committed to participative, democratic decision-making, against the inevitably top-down nature of decision-making within capitalism. Although such commitments are not always met with truly democratic practice, they act as prefigurative experiments in collective, democratic decision-making, as well as marking the movement’s distance from the bureaucratic totalitarian states of official Communism.

With the possible exception of Magdoff and Sweezy, none of the authors expect that a successful transformative movement against capitalism will be spearheaded by organized, white, male, salaried workers in the world’s developed core. They point out that the vast majority of participants in the alternative globalization movement are workers, at least in the sense of selling their labour power in order to make a living (see, for example, Carroll 2006, p.25). But, they argue that workers’ varied occupational status, the historically specific reality of workers’ gendered, racialized existences, and the fact that as human beings, workers’ have multiple capacities for creative, unalienated expression that capitalism cannot satisfy, mean that labour’s struggle is inevitably multifaceted. Thus, the alternative globalization movement is acknowledged to be ‘diverse’ and this diversity is not seen as inherently problematic – although the authors’ warn against depoliticized, post-modern celebrations of ‘difference’ and autonomist celebrations of highly individualized ‘microresistance’ that prevent effective unified political action. Finally, the movement’s transnational dimension, both in fact and as a desirable component of the movement as it develops, seems acquired, if not irreversible, continuing a long anti-capitalist tradition of internationalism, going back at least until Marx. Yet, the future successes of the movement will depend upon the recognition that internationalism should be pursued alongside, not at the expense of, state and local activism.

### ***Defining Moments in the Movement against Neoliberal Capitalism***

At its best, then, the alternative globalization movement is a diverse, transnational movement committed to democratic participatory methods that challenges contemporary capitalism both ideologically and materially. Of course, in practice, the movement is not this straightforward, with tensions, for example, between a commitment to internationalism and the danger that this results in abandoning serious efforts to reclaim the state from capital. But before returning to a consideration of the movement’s potential and limits, it is worth asking: How did this movement, with its ambitions, its socialist democratic potential but also its weaknesses, emerge?

An exhaustive approach to this question would chronicle the many struggles against a centuries-old world capitalist system by participants in the alternative globalization movement. These struggles have, of course, been punctuated by many different events, in many different parts of the world system, including, for example, illegal occupations of agricultural territory by landless workers in Brazil, strikes by South Korean labour unions,

social and cultural mobilizations by dalits in India, the organization of women's non-profit cooperatives in rural China, the establishment of transnational associations like the Third World Network based in Malaysia, South African and international movements against the privatization of water, the protests of the Ogoni against foreign oil companies in Nigeria, and so on... (for an overview, see Amin and Houtart 2002; Forum mondial des alternatives 2004). Many of these events have long histories, for example, the occupation of agricultural land by landless workers in Brazil has occurred sporadically for decades, across both democratic and authoritarian state regimes. Rather than attempt such an exhaustive history of the different participants within the movement, I sketch a brief history of three of movement's emblematic moments. The aim is *not* to reduce the alternative globalization movement to a series of recent 'events' but simply to juxtapose these moments with their commonalities and contradictions as one entry point into description and analysis of the movement.

*The Zapatista Uprising: Linking Local and Global Struggles*

Arguably, the initial event that announced the emergence of an international movement against neoliberalism was the military uprising by the Zapatista Liberation Army in Chiapas, Mexico on January 1, 1994, the date that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) entered into force (Le Bot 2003). The movement's implicit articulation between a local, mainly indigenous movement and broader struggles against neoliberalism, as exemplified in the NAFTA, was made explicit two years later with the 'First Intercontinental gathering for Humanity and against Neo-liberalism' held in 1996. The gathering attracted several thousand, mostly young people from the United States, Canada and South America. In the declaration announcing the conference, the Zapatistas denounced neoliberalism as an 'historic crime in the concentration of privileges, wealth and impunities, democratizes misery and hopelessness' (sic) and called for an opposition movement, 'an international of hope' (ELZN 1996). The Zapatistas, somewhat surprised by the international resonance of their uprising, nonetheless rejected the idea of setting an example for others:

'...don't follow [our example]. We think that everyone has to build his and her own experience and not repeat models... We think that the people have enough courage and wisdom to build their own process and their own movements, because they have their own histories' (Marcos quoted in Muñoz Ramírez 2004).

As an organization of armed resistance, the Zapatistas were subsequently excluded from the World Social Forum and other events premised on non-violence. Yet, the armed rebellion and subsequent conference was arguably one of the first to receive broad international attention for linking local struggles with the potential for an international movement against liberalization. Prefiguring later developments, the Zapatistas insisted upon the importance of decentralized, participatory methods of organizing, despite the visibility and media popularity of Subcomandante Marcos, as well as the value of differentiated identities and strategies.

*The Battle in Seattle: Bringing Dissent to the Developed Core*

The second main event in the history of the movement was the 'Battle in Seattle', the protest against the 'Millennium Round' negotiations of the World Trade Organization held in Seattle, Washington in November and December 1999 (Coburn 2003). The negotiations within the WTO, established in 1995 as the successor to the postwar General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), were ambitious, seeking agreement among the more than one hundred member states on a wide range of measures from trade liberalization to protection for intellectual property and equal treatment for foreign and domestic investors. In opposition to this wide-ranging programme, tens of thousands of protestors descended into the streets, marching under banners with slogans like 'No New Round, Instead Turnaround!', also the title of a petition endorsed by more than 1500 organizations, 'WTO/Democracy' with arrows pointing in opposing directions, and 'Teamsters and Turtles Together at Last!', an allusion to the presence of the Teamsters unions alongside environmental activists. The protestors

successfully blocked the opening speech and disrupted access to the conference. A state of emergency was declared, nearly a hundred activists were hospitalized because of police violence and hundreds of others arrested. The meetings, already facing important obstacles because of disagreements among member states over textile and agricultural subsidies, investment rules and other topics, collapsed with an admission by the organizers that the discussions had been a 'failure'. Not least because the protests took place in the United States, the (declining) hegemon, the 'Battle in Seattle' became an explicit reference for subsequent protests organized 'in the spirit of Seattle', e.g., against the IMF and World Bank in Prague on September 26, 2000, during the Asia-European Union meetings in Seoul on October 20-21, 2000, and in Genoa on July 20-21, 2000 during the meeting of the G8, the eight wealthiest developed nations, when an activist, Carlo Giuliani, was killed by police.

*The World Social Forum: Seizing the Initiative Back From Capital*

The third defining moment in the history of the movement was the establishment of the 'World Social Forums', initiated principally by the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil and, in France, the Association pour la taxation des Transactions pour l'Aide au Citoyens (ATTAC), an association advocating a tax on speculative financial capital movements, using the proceeds for a development fund (Evans 2000). Initially held from January 25-31 in 2001 Porto Alegre, Brazil, a municipality which had experimented successfully with participatory budgets for a decade, the WSF was convened in parallel with the World Economic Forum of business leaders traditionally held in Davos, Switzerland. The Forum was an attempt to move beyond reacting to initiatives taken by representatives of capital, to foster autonomous discussion and organizing among movement participants. Held annually, the World Social Forum officially summarizes itself as an:

“open meeting place where social movements, networks, NGOs and other civil society organizations opposed to neo-liberalism and a world dominated by capital or by any form of imperialism come together to pursue their thinking, to debate ideas democratically, for formulate proposals, share their experiences freely and network for effective action” (WSF 2007).

In principle, the World Social Forum does not allow the participation of political parties, although members of political parties are allowed to participate as 'private persons'. As a Forum, the WSF does not issue any common platforms, including from its 100-strong international organizing council, although various organizations operating from within the WSF have issued charters, sometimes (mis)represented as official Forum statements e.g., the Call of Social Movements at Porto Alegre II, the Bamako Appeal. Following the first social forums, the WSF moved to Mumbai, India in 2004, then took place in a 'polycentric form' in Bamako (Mali), Caracas (Venezuela), and Karachi (Pakistan) in 2006, and finally, was organized in 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya. Many of these events attracted large numbers. For example, the Mumbai WSF had approximately 75 000 participants and 1500 organizations representing 115 countries (Morgan 2006, p.93). During this period, the WSF inspired other social forums, including the European and Asian Social Forums, as well as smaller events like the 2005 Russian Social Forum. In 2008, the World Social Forum was replaced by a Global Day of Action on January 26, to coincide with the World Economic Forum in Davos, with mostly small, local and regional protests autonomously proposed and organized, in some eighty countries, under the slogan 'Act together for another world' (WSF 2008). The next Forum will be held in January and February 2009 in Belém, Brazil.

*The Alternative Globalization Movement: Tensions and Contradictions*

As even this cursory summary suggests, the alternative globalization movement already has a history, which is not without its tensions and contradictions. Thus, in inaugurating the World Social Forums, the movement sought to increase its autonomy, both vis-à-vis governments and political parties, but also from capital. This was not simply to

avoid instrumentalization and co-optation, but to seize the initiative back from capital, a shift that the vocabulary ‘antiglobalization’ to ‘alterglobalization’ and ‘alternative globalization’ sought to capture. In this, the WSF has only been partially successful. Indeed, the decision to hold the WSF in parallel with the World Economic Forum, at least initially, arguably implies symmetry between these events, when clearly the two Forums have vastly unequal financial and organizational resources as well as unequal access to political power. Notably, the WEF can translate its discussions into policies in ways that the WSF cannot. Arguably, this asymmetry is exacerbated since the WSF specifically rejects the idea of (official) alliances between the movement and political parties, making the kind of class alliance central to the most important achievements of social democratic welfare state, in health, literacy, the schooling of female children and so on, (Esping-Andersen 1990; Sandbrook, Edelman, Heller and Teichman 2007) more difficult. The unofficial presence of politicians and political parties, including the President of Brazil, Luis ‘Lula’ Da Silva and President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, among others -- with Chavez unofficially ‘closing’ the WSF at Porto Alegre in 2005 by giving a speech in Gigantinho stadium-- suggests that efforts to hermetically seal off the Forum from political parties are, in any case, difficult if not impossible to maintain in practice. Since progressive political parties need close connections with grassroots organizations if they are to counterweight capital and a mostly hostile media when in government (Carroll and Ratner 2005), the price of the WSF’s principled, official exclusion of political parties may represent a missed opportunity to generate support for progressive governments and policies nationally. Seizing back the political initiative from capital is complicated when alliances with formal political parties are *a priori* excluded.

The efforts of the World Social Forum and the alternative globalization movement to maintain the initiative in a world where it is structurally disadvantaged compared to capital is not simple, as the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the United States illustrates. Until September 11<sup>th</sup>, the movement’s main success had been ideological, changing the international political climate so that neoliberal capitalism became debateable, rather than taken-for-granted ‘commonsense’. Following September 11<sup>th</sup>, the United States government, in particular, sought to make this debate irrelevant, partly by discrediting the opposition: *the* major world struggle was now to be defined (once again) in nationalistic terms, as between the United States and its allies against (Islamic) terrorists, a struggle sometimes cast in essentialist cultural terms as a ‘clash of civilisations’. In this calculus, criticism of the United States’ neoliberal policies and capitalism are un-American, making the alternative globalization movement functional partners with terrorists. At the same time, materially, aggressive attacks on civil liberties in the name of ‘security’ and the ‘war against terror’, particularly targeting migrants and people of colour, circumscribe(d) the space for social protest, especially in the anglo-saxon world where neoliberal measures were historically the strongest (Beaudet 2002; Zarifian 2002).<sup>2</sup> For the rest of the world, September 11<sup>th</sup> became justification for further armed intervention by the United States, with the wars in Afghanistan

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<sup>2</sup> It is worth insisting that the ‘climate of fear’ (Zarifian 2002) fostered by the American government after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks is most pronounced in the anglophone, neoliberal nations of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and possibly also Australia. France, for example, is not especially immune to anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment, especially as connected with youth in the impoverished Parisian suburbs. Nor is France a stranger to ‘security’ oriented rhetoric, which was successfully employed by the far-right Presidential candidate LePen, vaulting him into the final round of the Presidential elections in 2002, and now used by President Sarkozy, partly to justify draconian policies against illegal immigrants (often working, paying taxes, with children in French schools). But, these measures are not (explicitly) linked with ‘the war on terrorism’, nor is the notion of a nation at war omnipresent, perhaps in the absence of Fox News and other channels regularly carrying ‘terror alerts’ and also given the fact that France did not participate in the war in Iraq. The climate of fear of the anglosaxon countries is not universal and its relevance to Europe and the rest of the world should not be exaggerated.

and Iraq, but likewise accentuated militarization, especially marked in South and Latin America (e.g., as with the Colombia Plan). In this respect, the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> were less an excuse for a radical new politics than justification for ongoing American military interventionism (Achar 2002, p.263). In short, the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> were used by the American government, in particular, to make counterhegemonic initiatives more difficult, particularly within the American and anglo-saxon world.

The alternative globalization movement's initial response was to wage a defensive ideological battle. Two 2002 reports of the World Social Forum International Council mentioned the events – which were, however, far from being the focus of the reports -- rejecting the notion of a functional alliance between the alternative globalization movement and the authors of the attack and simultaneously insisting upon the movement's ongoing relevance. Specifically, the first Report emphasized that 'all the members of the World Social Forum have unanimously condemned...the criminal attacks' (WSF International Council 2002), while the second insisted that 'September 11<sup>th</sup> did not...interrupt the struggle of movements' (WSF International Council 2002a), e.g. since the 2002 World Social Forum went ahead as planned with more participants from a wider range of countries than at the inaugural Forum. The movement, which had hitherto been relatively silent on security and military questions (Achar 2002 p.263), now noted that, 'The struggle for peace... does not cancel out the struggle against neoliberal globalization. Both are core elements of our agenda' (WSF International Council 2002a). At the same time, both activists and organic intellectuals for the movement began to theorize contemporary American imperialism and 'political Islam', often building upon a Marxist political economy long critical of imperialism as an integral part of the world capitalist system. Thus, among others, Amin (2002) argued that the true 'functional alliance' is not between alternative globalization activists and terrorism, but between capital and political Islam: historically, insofar as the United States armed political Islamists during the Cold War and supported them against national liberation movements, and ideologically, since both the US and political Islamists displace social (class) struggles by focussing on conflict between supposedly transhistorical cultural communities (p.99; see also Achar 2002; Zarifian p.197). Yet, such critical analytical efforts and huge anti-war protests, overlapping with alternative globalization movement, did not succeed in stopping the war in Afghanistan nor in Iraq, nor have they had major success in limiting legislation attacking basic civil liberties in the name of the 'war on terror'.

Another source of tension within the movement is the imbalance between activists and organizations from the global core and those from the periphery. In particular, decisions about where to hold the WSFs reflect a desire to recognize struggles in the periphery, where the vast majority of the world's people live, where the inequalities linked with neoliberal capitalism are among the most striking and where many of the most dynamic, committed struggles against capitalism take place. Symbolically, then, this shift recognized the central role of movements from these areas while pragmatically enabling the participation of local movements and activists from the 'global South' who – like the disadvantaged in the world's core -- may otherwise have difficulties meeting basic travel and other costs associated with attending the Forum. Certainly, the evidence suggests that the protests prior to the WSFs were heavily dominated by organizations and activists from the developed nations: a petition that circulated at the Seattle protests against the WTO was dominated by organizational signatories from just three countries, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom (40%) and the vast majority (about 70%) of organizations that signed were from developed nations. Least developed and Eastern European countries have less than 5% of organizational signatories combined (Coburn 2003 p.172). Furthermore, albeit on a much smaller scale, the 2005 Hong Kong protest against the WTO was dominated by 1500 Korean workers who had travelled to continue the 'offshore struggle' against the WTO (Sohi 2006 p.356), suggesting

that participation is heavily biased towards local and regional activists. Thus, the decision to move the WSF amongst various locations in the global periphery, besides helping the Forum resist institutionalization, has allowed for more participation from organizations and activists from these areas. Indeed, one of the (few?) positive outcomes of the WSF in Nairobi, Kenya – plagued by important problems, including a remote location, heavily armed private security guards, prohibitive entry fees, corporate sponsored telecommunications, and high charges for food and even water (Oloo 2007)– was that the Forum enabled African participation and exchanges, although with relatively few Kenyan participants.

Finally, there is some question about the extent to which the movement successfully differentiates itself from capital and the ‘ruling relations’. Earlier, I noted that the establishment of the WSF was partly an attempt to ensure the autonomy of the movement, both from capital and from formal political parties. Yet, Dezalay and Garth (2005) have suggested that it is increasingly possible to have a ‘career’ as an activist, drawing ‘symbolic capital’, as well as actual wages and other benefits, like subsidized travel, from working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Certainly, there is a danger that frequenting the United Nations, for example, becomes a full-time engagement for actors who then become decreasingly engaged with everyday protest and actions. Symptomatic of this danger, a few well-known ‘activists’ at one of the Porto Alegre Forums issued a declaration from the lobby of luxury hotel (Pleyers 2006). At the same time, the movement against neoliberal capitalism is not coterminous with the universe of NGOs, which is much larger than the movement, growing exponentially from the 1970s to the 1990s (Tarrow 2005, pp.188-189); NGOs are only one element in the movement, which also includes much more decentralized associations, ‘affinity groups’ and so on. These have widely varying degrees of engagement with states, IFIs, and other official bodies – a source of considerable tension within the movement, as more professionalized NGOs seek to influence, for example, World Trade Organization proceedings as officially invited guests while more horizontal groups reject such engagement as potentially legitimizing the decisions taken within such institutions. Ultimately, the movement’s rich organizational ecology may be protective: the movement is vast and varied enough that it cannot be reduced to those actors closest to institutionalized sources of power, the circuits of capital.

### *Local, National, Global*

The WSF, the Battle in Seattle, and the Zapatista uprising and conference against neoliberalism are among the more visible events marking the movement’s history. Behind these, there are less visible moments, in particular, the processes by which mainly local, national and regional movements became articulated, to varying degrees and with varying consistency, with an international movement against neoliberal capitalism.

Clearly, there are objective reasons that different movements might be expected to protest neoliberal capitalism. To artificially disaggregate components of the movement for the sake of analysis, the case of labour, women and the environmental movement are instructive. Among other factors, labour faces increasing exploitation in a neoliberal era where the relative power of capital is enhanced, partly through the increasingly credible threat of transnational capital mobility (Ross and Trachte 1990). With the important exception of the European Union,<sup>3</sup> free trade and investment agreements that specifically facilitate the

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<sup>3</sup> According to the European Union, “Free movement of persons is one of the most **fundamental freedoms** guaranteed by Community law. It includes the right for EU nationals **to move** to another EU Member State **to take up employment** and establish themselves in the host State with family members. EU Member States are **precluded** from directly or indirectly **discriminating** against **migrant workers** and their families on the basis of their nationality. EU migrant workers and their families are entitled to **equal treatment** not only in

mobility of goods, capital and business persons rarely contain parallel provisions for working class labour mobility. At the same time, women are confronted with a shrinking welfare state, simultaneously depriving them of formal employment in the public sector where women's paid labour is concentrated, while increasingly burdening women with caregiving tasks that were formerly partly socialized in the welfare state (Coburn 2005). For their part, environmental groups are confronted with the 'deregulation' of environmental laws costly to capital. For example, enhanced trade liberalization rules specifically forbid the enforcement of 'protectionist' national environmental regulations (Coburn 2003), while at the national level state environmental agencies are deprived of funds, making enforcement of environmental laws difficult. In short, processes of privatization, liberalization and deregulation central to neoliberal capitalism create enlarged market spaces that threaten the interests of workers, women and those acting out of concern for the environment, among others.

To such 'objective' reasons for the emergence of opposition to neoliberalism may be added the relative *visibility* of many neoliberal policy measures, internationally as well as nationally. Thus, for example, free trade and investment agreements must be negotiated and ratified by states. Cuts to welfare programmes, from health to education, are frequently formally announced by governments. The privatization of nationalized industries and the lifting of subsidies on basic foodstuffs are not easily disguised. Of course, other neoliberal policies may be less visible or implemented in less visible ways. For example, tax credits for the very wealthy may pass relatively unperceived, at least in the short and medium term. Governments may choose *not* to announce cuts to public services, instead reducing funding with the consequence that the standards of care deteriorate. Subsequently, the formerly supportive middle class may withdraw political support for degraded public services. In this case, the decision to privatization services may then appear less brutal. Still, many neoliberal policies are relatively formalized, direct and visible. Because they typically have important negative effects on the vast majority, including labour and women as well as the environment, there are good reasons to expect popular opposition to neoliberalism to emerge.

Yet, it is clear that significant obstacles to coordinated international activism persist, even given what might appear to be an objective shared interest in forming oppositional coalitions. As Marx reminds us, there are ideological obstacles. This includes the seeming inevitability of neoliberal reforms, at least until the early 1990s: Fukuyama's 'end of History' remarks were made at a time when neoliberal market solutions appeared to be the only reasonable, or at least the only possible, route for reform. Yet, there are also conflicts among the dominated classes in the world capitalist system that make international mobilization, in particular, unlikely. Thus, for example, Evans (2000) argues that workers may see workers in other countries primarily as competitors rather than as partners with common labour concerns. Women's organizations face the significant challenges of operating across different regions of the world system with their vastly different histories and unequal material and normative resources. Environmental movements are not welcomed universally as 'progressive'. In particular, 'conservation' efforts initiated in the world core may be perceived as insensitive to basic human needs in the global periphery. Of course, many of these tensions are not new. With the introduction of laws threatening to privatize formerly public commons, Marx sided emphatically with poor people and against new bourgeois property laws hiding behind what he castigated as the artificial 'rights of trees' (Marx 2007 pp.93-94). In sum, an objective

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employment related matters, but also as regards public housing, tax advantages and social advantages" (Commission of the European Communities 2006, p.3 bold in original). Of course, in practice, states may or may not respect this right e.g. Italy has passed legislation that criminalizes the Roma population and does not recognize their right to free movement of persons.

interest in opposing neoliberal capitalism may not be sufficient to overcome hegemonic ideologies legitimizing and naturalizing neoliberalism especially when combined with tensions among the dominated classes. These dominated classes are not homogenous, but act from differentiated social locations across an uneven world capitalist system.

*The Council of Canadians: Local, National and Transnational Activism*

In this context, it is useful to consider an empirical case of how a local, in this case, ostensibly national, social actor became implicated in the transnational movement against neoliberal capitalism. The Council of Canadians (COC) was established in 1985 by a 'handful' of prominent Canadians, including Margaret Atwood (novelist), Bob White (president of the Canadian AutoWorkers and later the Canadian Labour Congress) and David Suzuki (environmentalist), with a focus on 'the future of Canada as a nation-state on the North American continent' (COC 2007). In particular, the COC was part of the 'Pro-Canada', later Action Canada, network of "labour unions, churches, women, social justice activists, farmers, cultural workers, First Nations peoples and others" (COC 2007) that mobilized unsuccessfully against the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement, which became law following the re-election of Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government in 1988. Arguing that closer economic integration with the United States threatened Canadian sovereignty, the COC maintained that, "the trade agreement would be the first step to the elimination of our social security, our distinct culture, and our stewardship over our natural resources and would make us infinitely weaker as a nation" (COC 2007). Subsequently, the COC continued its struggle against the North American Free Trade Agreement for Canada, the United States and Mexico, which was passed on January 1, 1994 under the Liberal government.

Following this second major defeat, the COC suffered an internal crisis and only refrained from disbanding after a poll of its members suggested that the COC could play an important role defending Canada's social programmes. Partly as a result of the continental-wide ties that had been formed during the struggle against NAFTA, the COC became increasingly internationalized. Indeed, the unsuccessful mobilization against continental free trade led naturally to campaigns against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which among other measures would have required equal treatment of foreign and domestic investors among signatory nations, and then to the World Trade Organization, where a new investment agreement was proposed following the defeat of the MAI at the level of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). During this time, new networks led to an increasingly selfconscious embrace of internationalism. The Council writes that:

"In building continental and international alliances, we realized that we had more in common with one another than with our own [political] leaders and that to fight for health care or cultural diversity in Canada necessitated fighting for those rights everywhere. Our campaigns were increasingly based on international solidarity and a critique of global corporate rule. And we no longer saw U.S. imperialism as the only place where this corporate tyranny existed" (COC 2007).

The COC has since been embedded in international networks and actions, for example, participating in the International Forum on Globalization, signing petitions and participating in protests against the WTO in Seattle and subsequently, building campaigns in coordination with a worldwide movement against the sale of the 'global commons' and, in particular, water. The COC now maintains that it would be a 'mistake' to return to the nationalism of the 1970s and 1980s, especially insofar as such a perspective excludes a consideration of 'class, youth and colour' (COC 2007).

Nonetheless, it would be a misleading to suggest that the Council of Canadians has shifted *from* the national *to* the international level. Rather, the Council of Canadians remains active locally, through local chapter initiatives, and many of its criticisms and actions target

the federal state of Canada, including both Canada-wide legislation but also Canada's positions with respect to international treaties (e.g., Kyoto) and organizations (like the World Trade Organization). Indeed, the structure of the Council of Canadians mirrors the federal structure of the Canadian state, with a federal office and four regional offices, in addition to defined 'campaigns' ('health' 'water' 'trade' 'peace' etc. but not 'labour'!) each steered by a paid staff person. At the same time, international activism and partnerships with, for example, the worldwide movement against the privatization of water are pursued *alongside* national and local actions. At times, this articulation has meant a reconceptualization of national concerns. For example, Maude Barlow (Patterson 2005, p.21) argues that while formerly the organization spoke of 'protecting Canada's social programmes' against pressures towards downward North American integration, they now (also) speak of fighting for the *principle* of sovereignty, of self-governance. This way of framing the struggle makes the links between the COC's struggles and those of others around the world more obvious: no longer simply a nationalistic defense of specifically Canadian social programmes, the COC's activities are, in addition, linked with world wide struggles for democratic decision-making.

The brief and inevitably incomplete description of this case obviously cannot substitute for a more systematic analysis of the movement as a whole, either at an organizational level or at the level of individual activists. Moreover, the COC has particular characteristics that, despite its nationalistic orientation, might have enabled the organization's shift to, in addition, include a more international outlook. For example, the COC was founded by members with quite different areas of expertise, including labour, culture and the environment, and, as a member of the Action-Canada Network, was embedded in a transnational community of highly differentiated organizations. This experience likely facilitated later cooperation with international movements with diverse priorities. In addition, the COC has a strong formal structure, which likely enhances the COC's ability to interact with other formal organizations for the purposes of networking. Moreover, Maude Barlow has been COC's chairperson since 1988. This is quite different from the radically decentralized, participatory structures of some of the other currents opposing neoliberal capitalism. Yet, it may have facilitated, albeit in a highly personalized way, the progressive development of expertise and contacts. Finally, the COC is located in one of the "richest underdeveloped countries in the world" (Levitt 2002, p.25). This means certain material resource advantages for international organizing, from paying for plane tickets to the WSF and other protests to maintaining and using infrastructures for communications, from traditional mailing to establishing and renewing an important, professional presence on the internet. Of course, relative privilege is not only enabling but may imply certain constraints (Antrobus 2007, p.15), particularly when coordinating across class and education lines, whether across or within the 'core' or 'periphery'.

If the COC has particular characteristics that may have facilitated its shift from a national to international orientation, it is by no means totally idiosyncratic. While maintaining awareness of its specificities, the organization's trajectory is suggestive. Although initially established with a nationalistic outlook, the COC shifted its 'vision' – to use its own terminology – to articulate national with international concerns. This was partly as a result of networks, discussions and contacts forged with others engaged in a struggle against a neoliberal agenda that was itself increasingly internationalized. Thus, neoliberal forms of capitalism were initially organized around national fractions and coordinated through states whose autonomy within capitalism is only ever relative. Yet, such apparently national initiatives were already partially transnationalized insofar they included strong elements of mimetism: it is probably not incidental that Mulroney repeatedly and publicly deferred to the Ronald Reagan, referring to him as 'sir'. Subsequently, the internationalization went further and became progressively more institutionalized, first via the continent-wide free trade and

investment agreements and then via truly international forums like the OECD and the WTO. The COC's shift from national to also include international activities and outlook is thus a pragmatic shift: resistance became transnational in response to the transnationalization of the neoliberal initiatives on behalf of capital. Although this may not be a necessary outcome of transnationalization, it is worth noting that the COC radicalized and broadened its agenda as it became more international. In particular, the COC shifted from a focus on American corporations to corporate hegemony broadly defined and from a preoccupation with trade to other issues related to the expansion of the market, notably the privatization of the 'global commons'. Finally, as remarked earlier, the COC has regretted its early failure to consider the salience of the notion of 'class', although its analyses tend to focus, for example, on 'citizens' rather than working people, as such. Nonetheless, this recognition suggests some growing appreciation, if mainly rhetorical so far, of the salience of critiques, not just of corporate power, but of a capitalist system that organizes social relationships as unequal class relationships, within Canada and worldwide.

### ***The Alternative Globalization Movement: Beyond Capitalism, Towards a Better World?***

As noted at the outset of this essay, the problem for the alternative globalization movement is that the world capitalist system is both the object of struggle and the terrain within which the struggle is being fought. This means that the movement is constantly susceptible to being captured by dynamics and inequalities that work against its aims. This is true across the whole range of its activities and even with respect to the means it uses to coordinate its activities: the movement confronts systemic barriers as it seeks to move 'beyond capitalism' and struggles for a better – more just, more democratic, more equal - world.

Thus, for example, the alternative globalization movement has made significant use of the new communications technologies, particularly the internet, to coordinate and make public its activities, reports, debates, protests, as well as to launch alternative media, like indymedia, established during the Seattle protests as an independent media refusing all corporate, government and foundation funding. Yet, inevitably, access to the internet and especially the ability to provide high-quality content to the internet is uneven, reflecting both inequalities between capital and others, as well as inequalities among working people across the world capitalist system (Calhoun 2003). Movements in the world periphery, for example, including the former Communist countries, simply do not have the same access and presence as well-funded organizations in the developed core, which in turn may have difficulty competing with capital e.g., in terms of having professionalized, accessible content that is frequently updated.

In addition, the movement has its own 'organic intellectuals', including Callinicos, Wallerstein and others cited in these pages, who are sympathetic to the movement's aims and seek to make rigorous analyses of the movement available to activists. Inevitably, however, these intellectuals are not nearly as well connected with the circuits of power and do not have nearly as many resources (from 'independent' foundations, the government, and so on) to make and publish their cases as those sympathetic to capital. Thus, neoliberal economists hold positions in finance and trade ministries that negotiate international financial and trade agreements and are invited as experts, for example, to the Davos economic summits. In contrast, the organic intellectuals of the alterglobalization movement can only expect to affect political decision-making much more indirectly through their involvement in the movement and, often, in academia (although typically not in the best funded business and economics departments).

Further, the movement's vocabulary was, in large part, developed within the 500 year old capitalist system. Such inherited discourses, when they are not rejected outright, must be reinfused with new meanings. The established liberal rhetoric around individual human rights, for example, has been mobilized for the new purpose of limiting the encroachment of markets e.g. as with contemporary efforts to declare access to water a right and restrict its

commercialization or similar campaigns to protect the right of peasants to produce, use, share, and store seeds, rather than being required to pay agricultural businesses for new seed every year. Yet, such rights, even if enshrined in charters, are likely to be disregarded in ways that are not idiosyncratic, but reflect capitalism's basic, unequal structures (Teeples 2004). Further, there is the danger that the use of rights rhetoric will mean that questions that should be a matter of democratic discussion, instead become 'legal' rights decided by a handful of experts in courts (ibid). Building counterhegemonic discourse and practice is susceptible to capture by existing structures in this way.

Finally, the criticism that the alternative globalization movement is simply talk and no action – a criticism confirmed rather than refuted by the relatively small, local, low-profile actions undertaken during the Global Day of Action in January 2008 – is similarly linked to the difficulties of manoeuvring in a political world structured in favour of capital. Thus, the refusal to articulate such actions with organized political parties because of a fear of being captured by them, is itself informed by the recognition of the limits of 'bourgeois' liberal democracy. Radical political action and even peaceful political protest, often carries a heavy price when capital and capitalism is directly targeted. This is a lesson that may be familiar to, say the Brazilian landless workers' movement, but was less familiar in the developed core – until the death of an activist and the serious injury of many hundreds more in the Genoa 2000 protests. Thus, political activism that matters is discouraged, often by the heavy hand of the state and its representatives.

To these are further obstacles, not least a flexible capitalist ideology that is arguably already post-neoliberal, insofar as it incorporates some aspects of the critique of neoliberalism. Thus, the World Bank is now preoccupied by the question of poverty, although resolutely avoiding class analysis. At the same time, the International Financial Institutions and many non-profit foundations have become increasingly concerned with 'good governance', particularly with respect to states. It is no longer state interference, *per se*, that is seen as disturbing the proper functioning of markets. Rather, the problem is 'incorrect' state behaviour that must be remedied. From this point of view, concerns about 'corruption', for example, are simply another way of suggesting that (improperly functioning) states are the problem, markets the solution... This post-neoliberal ideology, like its neoliberal predecessor, will not be without its internal contradictions and weaknesses, but it means that the alternative globalization movement is struggling against an adaptable, moving target.

Other developments are likely more propitious for the movement. Thus, the International Monetary Fund's role has dramatically declined over the last decade, in terms of loans to the developing world, and with it, the ability of the organization to demand structural adjustment programmes that enhance market structures. The rising importance of China and India and the challenge they represent to American hegemony *may* lead to slightly enhanced autonomy for the developing countries, particularly Africa: states may be able to play off Chinese and American bids for influence, the same way that Cold War competition created some space for autonomy in the global periphery (although alongside its militarization, another existing threat). The alternative globalization movement may be able to use this enhanced state autonomy as it struggles for progressive social reforms. The emptying out of the rural areas in the world, so that now more than 50% of humanity lives in cities, means the decreasing ability of capital to relocate to regions where recent urban migrants may be superexploited to maintain profit margins (Wallerstein 2000). In turn, this suggests enhanced relative power for labour over time. The environmental crisis means there are absolute limits to capitalist expansion, although there is also the very real possibility that profound changes in capitalism required to prevent ecological disaster will come 'too late', not so much for the planet, which will continue, but for the existing human, animal and plant life on it... In short, there are conjunctural, structural weaknesses within contemporary capitalism that may allow

the alternative globalization movement some increased, relative power, and not only at the margins.

Despite recognition of the strengths of an adaptable capitalist system and of the limits of the alternative globalization movement, there is optimism around the latest anti-capitalist movement. This optimism is *necessary* as a spur for political action. But, it is not merely strategic. Rather, it is based upon the recognition of the ultimately ephemeral nature of any existing political economy, the possibility for change through collective struggle. The direction of change is not certain -- a reality underlined by Amin in a recent article, entitled, 'Beyond liberal globalization: a better world – or worse?'. But this only underscores the importance of the alternative globalization movement which, however flawed, seems the only actually-existing, credible candidate to lead an international struggle, articulated with local and national activism, for *progressive* change. In this light, it is simply historical truth to proclaim, with the movement, that another world is possible – and it is an urgent, human necessity that this new world is a better one.

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