Interface volume 4 issue 2

For the global emancipation of labour: new movements and struggles around work, workers and precarity

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About *Interface*

Interface: a journal for and about social movements is a peer-reviewed journal of practitioner research produced by movement participants and engaged academics. *Interface* is globally organised in a series of different regional collectives, and is produced as a multilingual journal. Peer-reviewed articles have been subject to double-blind review by one researcher and one movement practitioner.

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The *Interface* website is based at the National University of Ireland Maynooth.

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For the global emancipation of labour:
new movements and struggles around work, workers and precarity

Peter Waterman, Alice Mattoni, Elizabeth Humphrys, Laurence Cox, Ana Margarida Esteves

Marikana: a massacre and a symbol?

At about 4 pm on 16 August 2012, one hundred kilometres northwest of South Africa's largest city Johannesburg, the state used lethal force in order to supress a worker's strike at the Lonmin platinum mine. The massacre of 34 mine workers (Anonymous 2012) gained global attention because of the deaths, as well as the injuries to many more miners, but also because many of the workers were shot in the back (Laing 2012). The massacre also occurred some distance from the mine, when workers were not "not blocking mining operations or any other facility, and although they were on an 'unprotected' wildcat strike, the workers had a constitutional right to gather" (Bond 2012).[1]

This was not the first time in recent years that police and the state have murdered workers in the course of them taking industrial action in South African mines; but it now seems that prior to these widely-reported events, the antagonism of workers to the once-revolutionary NUM, now closely tied to the state and management, had been confirmed by an earlier phase of the strike in which union officials had opened fire on their own wildcat-striking members, killing two (Sacks 2012). Eight people were to die over the next three days, between this attack and the final massacre. Adding insult to injury, legal authorities brought charges against the miners they had arrested, asserting that they were themselves responsible for the shootings.

At one level Marikana (and associated strikes elsewhere in the SA mines) represent a very classic assertion of the power of mass working-class resistance and solidarity, in one of the world's strategic industrial nodes. At another level the relationship between the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the African National Congress (ANC) and indeed the company involved, Lonmin (in the shape of Cyril Ramaphosa, one-time NUM and COSATU leader, now a leading "tenderpreneur") to say nothing of the wider mining industry and global agreements going back to the pre-1994 period, says a lot about the process of movement-become-state .

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[1] For immediate responses to Marikana, see the Church Land Programme's powerful collection, available at http://churchland.org.za/padkos%20articles/Marikana%20resources%20final.pdf. For ongoing critical coverage, the *Daily Maverick* analyses by critical academics and activists are a fundamental resource: http://dailymaverick.co.za/. See also the *Debate* mailing list from South Afric,a http://lists.fahamu.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/debate-list. For a critique of media coverage, see Fogel 2012. For some useful background, see Breckenridge 2012 and Gentle 2012.

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The efforts of independent / rank and file union activism to break out of the stranglehold of "official" unions has parallels across the world, from Germany to China. In some ways Marikana symbolizes the catastrophic decline of three major emancipatory forces of the late 19th and 20th centuries – the party, the national independence movement and the trade union.

As we go to press, the commission of inquiry is in progress and disturbing evidence of weapons planted on the bodies of the dead has emerged (Marinovich 2012). Meanwhile, the South African mining strike wave (Hartford 2012), and the ripples from the massacre, are continuing and will shape movements in the future.

Geographies and articulations of labour movements in the 21st century

Once, the labour movement was seen as *the* international social movement for the left (and it was the spectre haunting capitalism). Over the last century, however, labour movements have been transformed. In most of the world membership rates have dwindled, and many act in defence of, or simply provide services to, their members in the spirit of interest or lobbying groups. Labour was once a broad social movement including cooperatives, socialist parties, women's and youth wings, press and publications, cultural production and sporting clubs. Often it was at the core of movements for democracy or national independence, even of social revolution.

Today, however, despite the rhetoric of "socialism", "class and mass trade unionism" or, alternatively, technocratic "organising strategies", most union movements internationally operate strictly within the parameters of capitalism and the ideology of "social partnership" (i.e. with and under capital and / or the state). Hence new labour organising efforts increasingly take other forms, as we shall see below.

These changes relate to the neoliberalisation and "globalisation" of capitalism, and its result in restructured industry and employment. And while neoliberalism is often associated with the efforts of the Right, in some countries it was the political parties of social democracy and labour that implemented radical restructuring. In some notable cases, such as in Australia, this was done with the active consent of the official trade unions. These changes have led to a disorientation of the left.

Transformations at the political and economic level have not, however, meant the disappearance of labour movements and neoliberalism has seen reaction from below. In considering the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, trade unionist and democracy activist Sasha Simic concluded "that Egypt's revolution...was a response to years of neoliberalism which have made a tiny elite there obscenely wealthy but which have impoverished the vast majority of its 85 million-strong population" (2012: 3). Multiple new expressions of labour discontent arise from the bases and the margins of the world of work.

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Actors in the workers' movements of the 21st century

If at the level of formal organisation trade unions remain unchallenged as the leading actors of the labour movement, today we see many other movement forms emerging from the bases and the margins of labour, often with far more active participation. The relationship between "old" and "new" labour movements varies hugely from country to country and industry to industry; here what we want to stress is that a simple identification of "the labour movement" with "trade unions" is both politically and intellectually unhelpful.

Firstly, from the *bases* we find movements of workers, often in alliance with local communities or other social movements. They are to be found not only in advanced industrial and "postindustrial" economies, but also — more dramatically — at the capitalist periphery. Labour movements were important in the recent Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings (2010-2011). In the world's second biggest economy, China, labour has been flexing its muscles in the most repressive of circumstances. Labour struggle has also begun to revive in the United States, and in the most dramatic fashion with the occupation of the legislature in Wisconsin (2011) and the strikes of Chicago teachers (2012).

Secondly, we see those who are situated at the *margins* of labour markets and who experience continuous uncertainty. Increasingly addressed as the "precariat", this includes both high- and low-skilled workers in the old metropoles of the global North as well as in the slums and fields of the global South. The precarious are often younger people, women and migrants, but increasingly those previously full-time workers whose rights and conditions are under attack due to the current economic crisis.

The margins also include the un- and under-employed. Since the end of the long boom, orthodox economics accepts a higher rate of unemployment in the global North as "full" employment. Meanwhile, the reserve army of labour in the majority world also lays the basis for precarious and marginal work. As Shaikh puts it,

> Finally, as capitalism develops, so too does its level of mechanisation, so that it is progressively less able to absorb labour. In the developed countries, this manifests itself as a growing mass of unemployed people at any given "natural" rate of unemployment. In the Third World, as the incursion of capitalist relations lays waste to earlier social forms, the mechanised processes which replace then are able to pick up only a fraction of the huge numbers previously "set free". Thus the rising productivity of capitalist production is accompanied by a growing pool of redundant labour all across the globe. The presence of starving masses in the Third World, as well as of floating populations of unemployed in the developed capitalist world, are bitter reminders of these inherent tendencies. (1990: 77)

New movements are taking place at the local, national and transnational level, signalling the ongoing transformation of workers' struggle all over the world. As capitalism reorganises, expands and reinvents, so too does resistance to its

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exploitation and subjugation. Some trade unions are struggling to organise amongst workers who do not conform to the model of the full-time, male, family-wage-earning worker, and are seeking new ways of mobilizing and organising. This appears to be the case with "informal" workers in Ghana and Zambia, as with "undocumented" or "excluded" labour in California. Yet both trade unions and the labour movements at the bases and at the margins of the labour realms, women, men and youth are experimenting with radical new forms of struggle, new demands, new places / spaces of articulation, and perhaps re-discovering or re-inventing a global movement for "the emancipation of labour"[2].

Some places to start?

In this issue of *Interface: a journal for and about social movements,* we aim to reflect both this immense richness of experiences linked to workers' movements and to articulate what has been learned in one place in ways that may be useful for activists elsewhere. The articles in the special section provide a wide range of perspectives on workers' struggles across the globe. In doing this, they reveal the complex patterns of political organization and political resistance that show the geography of labour struggles in the 21st century, from the local mobilizations of precarious workers who engage in the autonomous organization of conflict to the transnational coalitions in which trade unions engage in international advocacy actions.

A related question, when looking at the role of trade unions in international labour struggle, is their role at the global - or at least transnational - level. The recent coordinated strikes, protests and general strikes against austerity measures in 23 European countries (14 November 2012), show that after years of economic crisis national trade unions are taking a first shy step towards the construction of common struggles at the European level[3]. But this is not the only way in which trade unions position themselves in the international space of labour struggle.

The voices in this issue are as varied as the shapes and trajectories of current workers' movements. Our perspectives, and those of the authors who contributed to this issue, are multiple ones but all in different ways shaped by our new context. Some authors are active trade unionists of long standing; others are researchers on or in labour movements of different kinds. Some voices represent the discontents of "actually-existing" unions and the struggle to break the stranglehold of social partnership; others speak from newer organizing processes and the world of precarity. Others again, as participants in other movements, are coming to recognise the importance of "work" as a major site of alienation, of workers as agents of emancipatory movements, and of new or renewed labour movements as partners and allies in the global struggle for

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[2] See the just-published collection on the new global labour solidarity (Waterman 2012).

[3] http://roarmag.org/2012/11/14-n-european-strike-austerity-protest-clashes/

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human liberation. Taken together, the voices to be heard in this special issue of *Interface* help us to consider some crucial questions when it comes to workers movements in the 21st century.

Themed articles

The themed section of this issue starts with Wolfgang Schaumberg's reflections from German-Chinese labour solidarity. Germany has long been one of the world's industrial powerhouses and centres of the labour movement; in recent decades China has become both. Schaumberg's action note highlights the contradictory nature of labour struggles in both countries in the context of pressures to compromise. Growing inequality, converging workplace experiences and closer contacts enable the development of bilateral and international solidarity but much remains to be done.

Dae-Oup Chang's article discusses the paradox of East Asian development: how the integration of most of the population into capitalist labour relations has not meant an integration into an organised working class but rather into many segmented labouring classes fragmented by insecurity and other survival activities. The article discusses a series of social movements of labour in East Asia to understand what possible alternatives to neoliberalism they can create. The emergent movement of the poor in Thailand has played an important role in linking local and anti-globalisation struggles, while the strikes of Chinese migrant workers are moving from defensive to offensive struggles. Irregular workers in South Korea are increasingly unionising in a variety of innovative ways, while informal and formal workers in Cambodia are finding effective ways of organising together. Such movements do not constitute a unified working class, and often struggle to overcome the constraints of local politics. Nonetheless they show a significant capacity to cut across their diverse working situations in innovative organising campaigns. In this way, the struggles of workers in the East Asian "workshop of the world" highlight the need to resituate the labour movement as part of the wider movements of labour.

Joe Sutcliffe's action note warns against writing premature obituaries for labour. Labour movements in the global South remain key to anti-neoliberal struggles, and have adapted both to informalisation and to new social movements. His note identifies some ways in which Southern trade unions have managed to navigate the challenges of their context and discusses some general principles of practice.

Stefania Barca's article reflects on the possibility to understand working-class environmentalism within an environmental justice (EJ) framework. Highlighting the analysis of social inequality vis-a-vis the environmental costs of economic activities, EJ links occupational, environmental and public health. Her article explores the intersection between EJ and labour struggles in three different countries. In the US, alliances between labour and environmental activists were important in the 1970s but subsequently undermined by corporate attempts to counterpose jobs and the environment, in turn overcome

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in the 1990s. In Italy, too, a new working-class environmentalism marked the later 1960s and the 1970s in the development of a "class ecology" paradigm which remained active in a wide range of struggles around toxic workplaces. In Brazil, finally, rural workers played a particular role in the formation of popular environmental consciousness, with urban struggles and the EJ framework taking root in the 1990s. Barca proposes a work-centred theory of environmental justice highlighting workers' subjectivity, the classed distribution of environmental costs, the centrality of sustainability and the need to incorporate workers and the labor process within EJ theory.

Nora Räthzel and David Uzzell's article also challenges oppositions between labour and environmental movements, in which union activists saw the environment in terms of leisure and health and environmentalists saw a fundamental conflict between production and ecology. This opposition has been mirrored in both labour and environmental studies. The article argues for overcoming this opposition in the context of climate change and that this entails changed power relations between Northern and Southern trade unions.

Melanie Kryst's piece discusses the interaction between labour unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in coalitions aiming at fair transnational regulations of labour standards. She focusses on the investigation of the German branch of the Clean Clothes Campaign against the use of sandblasting to fabricate vintage jeans - an infamous technique that causes lung cancer to workers. Through a longitudinal analysis of the campaign's demands, Kryst shows the different types of coalitions and networks that can emerge between trade unions and NGOs at the transnational level. She illustrates how the campaign, and its protest targets, changed over time: from the initial focus on confrontational collective action to the more recent use of collaboration and negotiations with corporate and state institutions. Oscillating between social movements and interest groups, the campaign's experience sheds light on how trade unions work with NGOs to have an influence on labour regulations at the transnational level.

In contrast, Jean Faniel looks at how trade unions interact with the unemployed at the domestic level. He proposes a dialectical approach to the dynamic and often disputed relationship between trade unions and the unemployed. Discussing numerous examples in different European countries, Faniel considers both the internal processes in the life of trade unions and the external processes that characterize trade union interactions with other political actors. In particular, he discusses the constituency of trade unions, their organizational characteristics, the relationship between unions and the capitalist system in which they are embedded, and finally the interactions of trade unions with political parties. In analyzing these four dimensions, the author grasps the ambiguous attitudes of trade unionists towards the unemployed in both past and present times.

Three other articles in this issue show that while traditional trade unions might not represent the unemployed - or those workers who do not have open-ended and full-time contracts - new forms of struggles within the vast workers'

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movements across the world also emerge as a response to the crisis of unionism. Taken together, these three articles show that grassroots organizing in workers movements is an important element in the creation of voice and visibility for those who are at the basis and at the margins of the labour market. Each of the articles shows how the self-organization of these workers enables the construction of shared representations - not only at the political, but also at the public level - as well as the coordination of effective struggles within, and more often beyond, specific workplaces.

Focussing on the childcare service sector in Quebec, Martine D'Amours, Guy Bellamare and Louise Briand illustrate how changes in the nature of work within contemporary societies contribute to the development of a unionism that goes beyond the traditional boundaries of the single factory (and the single company), ceases to represent only the traditional unionized workforce, and leads to alliances with political and social actors usually outside the sphere of unionist activities. The authors show that when unions embrace these transformations they shift the logic of action to demands and claims addressing identity issues and the whole lives of workers, also outside their working place.

Considering the case of Italy, Annalisa Murgia and Giulia Selmi discuss two recent struggles of precarious workers that did not involve the presence of traditional trade unions as agents of bargaining in the workplace: firstly the "network of precarious editors", a group of precarious editors working in different publishing houses and secondly the "SEA girls", a group of precarious hostesses working in the main airport of Milan. The two case studies highlight the ability of self-organization and self-advocacy of precarious workers beyond traditional trade unions. Murgia and Selmi, in fact, argue that the problem is not really the impossibility of organizing precarious workers. The real challenge seems to be to imagine and then bring into existence unions with structures that take into consideration the peculiarities of the living and working conditions of precarious workers.

On a similar vein, Alberto Arribas Lozano discusses the concept of "social unionism" through the experience of the Oficinas de Derechos Sociales, a loose network of activist groups spread in different Spanish cities. First organized in 2004-2005, the Oficinas de Derechos Sociales elaborated a political praxis rooted in the daily lives of precarious workers, going beyond the "politics of the [protest] events", to produce and circulate critical knowledge on precarity. In particular, Arribas discusses one of the main aim of the Oficinas de Derechos Sociales: the production of connections between migrant and non-migrant precarious workers in the attempt to construct common collective struggles.

In his thought-provoking contribution about the rhetoric of job creation in times of crisis, Franco Barchiesi deconstructs some of the rhetorical devices that emerge in discourses - and policies - concerning precarity. Barchiesi starts from postcolonial Africa to explain how expressions like "diginity of labour" and "decent work" have been frequently translated into coercive and repressive practices against the African labour power. Criticizing work-centred approaches to precarious labour, Barchiesi argues that precarity opens up radical discourses

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able to trigger processes of decommodification and redistribution, like the introduction of non-work related universal income.

Elise Thorburn's article discusses the changing composition of the working class and proposes that the assembly is distinguishing itself as an emergent mode of organising in recent struggles, by comparison with party and bureaucratic union models. She argues that this may open the possibility of a "politics of the common", not mediated by the state or capital. Thorburn explores the theoretical and historical lineages of autonomist discussions, using the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly as an example of an effective process of rethinking working class organising pointing towards the creation of a new world.

Godfrey Moase's action note looks at the crisis of representative trade unionism in the context of the state's carrot-and-stick strategies, and the impact of increasing precarisation on traditional union strategies. He argues that "direct unionism", combining the political strategy of insurrectional unions with the everyday foundations of representative unionism through tools like the action conversation may point the way forward, as can the creative use of new IT technologies and the building of common campaigning infrastructures.

Nicolás Somma's event analysis explores the dramatic Chilean student movement of 2011-12, arguing that this was an unintended consequence of the marketisation of higher education, unexpectedly rebelling against broad features of neoliberalism and maintaining relative unity thanks to an intensely participatory approach.

Tristan Partridge's action note looks at the organization of everyday life in an indigenous village in Ecuador. He shows how community-based collective projects aim to counter the negative effects of precarity and temporary labour migration in remaking a dignified and sustainable way of life.

Finally, Peter Waterman's article critiques the social-liberal orientation of the "new global labour studies" as it has emerged around a series of specific intellectual contexts. In a passionate engagement with a series of contemporary authors, he argues for a genuinely emancipatory approach. Discussing the particular role of IT work and cyberspace in new struggles and research, he discusses some relevant cases in which emancipatory elements can perhaps be found. The paper concludes with an extensive list of relevant resources.

Non-themed articles and reviews

As always, this issue of *Interface* contains a number of general articles on topics other than the main theme, as well as book reviews.

Jackie Smith's article discusses how the current global upsurge of struggles can be maintained, arguing for the need to explore the lessons and resources of earlier movements, in particular the global justice movement and the World Social Forums. Smith highlights the earlier movements' combination of resistance to neoliberalism, articulation of alternatives and working to build

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counter-power as a future strategy, arguing for Occupy activists to connect with these earlier strands of organising and movement development work.

Kenneth Good's piece explores some aspects of the history of struggles for democratisation, contrasting liberal-parliamentary and participatory forms. The article discusses the Portuguese Carnation Revolution of 1974-5 and in particular the interaction between the popular movement and the armed forces movement, the experience of democratisation struggles and their aftermath in Eastern Europe in 1989 – 90, and the experience of Egypt and Tunisia from 2010 on.

Mayssoun Sukarieh's article discusses the paradox whereby Arab youth have gone from being discussed as potential terrorists in the wake of 9/11 to now being presented as revolutionary youth. Exploring youth programmes in Jordan, Sukarieh argues that the focus on youth is geared to neoliberal models of reform which places the responsibility for broader structural and regional inequalities on young people, relying on an Orientalist "cultural deficit" model.

Corey Wrenn's paper on abolitionism within animal rights – a complete cessation of the use of nonhuman animals – contrasts this approach to other animal rights movements and discusses its current prospects, both in terms of its marginalisation by animal welfare approaches and its prospects for online mobilization and other successes.

The article by Ángel Calle Collado, Marta Soler Montiel, Isabel Vara Sánchez and David Gallar Hernández explores challenges to the global agro-food system in the light of recurring food crises in the North and South. Some of these are visible protests, while others involve the exploration of alternative food production and consumption approaches. The authors discuss the spread of these critical networks with particular reference to the Spanish case.

Tomás Mac Sheoin's article tackles the issue of the relationship between local campaigns and transnational NGOs, which is often criticised as being simply a hierarchical one, often discussed in market terms. In the case of the movement for justice in Bhopal, a coalition between various local actors, the interaction with Greenpeace was at times a tense one, particularly in terms of claiming credit. Despite the power imbalance, local actors were not afraid to challenge Greenpeace. Mac Sheoin argues that this was due to their experience of transnational coalitions and the major symbolic and local capital of the Bhopal campaign.

Finally, this issue sees reviews of Ben Selwyn's *Workers, state and development in Brazil: powers of labour, chains of value* (Ana Margarida Esteves); of two edited collections by Jai Sen, *Interrogating empires* and *Imagining alternatives* (Guy Lancaster); of Janet Conway's *Edges of global justice: the World Social Forum and its "others"* (Mandisi Majavu); of Alan Bourke, Tia Dafnos and Markus Kip (eds.), *Lumpencity: discourses of marginality* (Chris Richardson); and of Craig Calhoun's *The roots of radicalism: tradition, the public sphere and early nineteenth-century social movements* (Mandisi Majavu).

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Reflections

The contemporary world continues to be shaped, and reshaped, by *work*: by the rapidly-changing production and reproduction of what we as human beings need to live, flourish (or waste our time) - however material or immaterial this is (Lebowitz 2003). From micro-level resistance and sabotage - or the non-capitalist forms of mutual support which are necessary for even the most instrumentally-organised corporation - the struggles and tensions around work continue to underpin human activity.

At a broader level, if European anti-austerity struggles show the continued significance of both organised and disorganised labour, the same is no less true where (as perhaps in the US bailout of the car industry, or where a right-wing Irish government prefers to ally with union leaders against workers rather than to directly attack the organisations themselves) employers and states take the power of labour into account in advance, so that it has less need to appear as a visible actor.

More broadly, we see across the world - from the Oakland general strike and its links to Occupy to the role of the Mahalla workers in the Egyptian revolution, chronicled by Austin Mackell (2012) in our last issue, and most recently to the strike wave in the South African mines, against which the Marikana massacre was targeted but which repression has not, at time of writing, subdued.

Labour struggles in general continue to be a central part of the big politics of our time as well as a key means of securing ordinary people a decent existence (or not, where they are absent). Intellectually we need to reconsider the forms of labour struggle, widen our conception of their subjects, and as activists rethink how best to organise ourselves and how to form broader alliances (Anonymous 2012b). In the most general terms, "the global emancipation of labour" - how we can not only produce the world but become genuinely free agents within it, in our paid work as in whatever caring and free time we have - remains an unfulfilled vision.

It is of course important to avoid simple celebration or condemnation. Bored activists at British labour conferences came up with the phrase "THIGMOO" - This Great Movement Of Ours - to count the number of occurrences in self-congratulatory speeches by conservative union leaders. Conversely, celebrating "newness" for its own sake and condemning "the old" is simply to repeat the gestures of contemporary capitalist style.

Rather, we need to focus on how far emerging forms of struggle, solidarity, organisation, agency etc. seem to be expressing genuine needs and having real political impact, or not (see e.g. Senalp 2012 on the role of peer-to-peer communications in recent movement struggles). It is in this terrain that experienced union organisers can find a wider sense of hope, and that activists in other movements can find the elements of common ground and alliance with labour.

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On the basis of an increasing wave of news, longer reports and the revival of labour studies it seems clear that labour is beginning to be reborn as part of the broader global justice and solidarity movement against neo-liberalism.

Next issue and call for papers

The next issue of *Interface* will be an open issue with no themed section. We hope to receive submissions on any aspect of social movement research and practice that fit within the journal's mission statement. Submissions should contribute to the journal's mission as a tool to help our movements learn from each other's struggles, by developing analyses from specific movement processes and experiences that can be translated into a form useful for other movements.

In this context, 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 thus seek work in a range of different formats, such as conventional (refereed) 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.

We can accept material in Afrikaans, Arabic, Catalan, Croatian, Danish, English, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Maltese, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish and Zulu.

The deadline for this open call is 1 May 2012, with publication in November 2013. For details of how to submit to *Interface*, please see the 'Guidelines for contributors'. All manuscripts, whether on the special theme or other topics, should be sent to the appropriate regional editor. Submission templates are available online via the guidelines page.

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About the issue editors

Peter Waterman (London, 1936), retired from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, 1998. He has specialised on international(ist) labour and social movements, on alternative international(ist) communication and culture – particularly the cyberspatial. He has been active on UnionBook and been publishing with into-ebooks.com. He has been one of the major contributors to discussion on 'the new labour internationalisms'. He initiated the ongoing international exchange on 'social movement unionism' (aka 'the new social unionism'), and in 2005 floated a Global Labour Charter project. He has just published *Recovering internationalism: creating the new global solidarity* (http://www.into-ebooks.com/book/recovering_internationalism/) and is currently completing his autobio under the working title, 'Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist: From International Communism to the Global Solidarity Movement and an Emancipatory Cyberspace'. He can be contacted at peterwaterman1936 AT gmail.com

Alice Mattoni is a Postdoctoral Associate Fellow in the Department of Sociology at the University of Pittsburgh and a member of the *Interface* spokescouncil. She is a co-convenor of the standing group "Forms of Participation and Mobilization" of the European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR). Amongst her recent publications are: *Media Practices and Protest Politics. How Precarious Workers Mobilise* (Ashgate, 2012); *Mediation and Protest Movements* co-edited with Bart Cammaerts and Patrick McCurdy (Intellect 2013); and *Alla Ricerca Dell'Onda. Nuovi Conflitti nell'Istruzione Superiore* co-edited with Loris Caruso, Alberta Giorgi and Gianni Piazza (Franco Angeli, 2010). She can be contacted at alicemattoni AT gmail.com.

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Elizabeth Humphrys is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Economy, University of Sydney, and a member of the *Interface* spokescouncil. She is co-editor of the book *On Utøya: Anders Breivik, right terror, racism and Europe* (2011, with Tad Tietze and Guy Rundle) and recently published a chapter on climate change ('The Science Cannot Save Us') in an edited collection *Left Turn: Political Essays For The New Left* (2012). She can be contacted at lizhumphrys AT gmail.com.

Laurence Cox is a member of the *Interface* spokescouncil and director of the MA in Community Education, Equality and Social Activism at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He has been involved in a wide range of movements shaped by the discontents of organised labour and is a not-very-active trade union member. He is co-editor, with Colin Barker, John Krinsky and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, of the forthcoming *Marxism and social movements* (Brill / Haymarket). He can be contacted at laurence.cox AT nuim.ie.

Ana Margarida Esteves is a scholar-activist, born and raised in Portugal in 1975, one year after the Carnation Revolution. Lived and worked in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Brazil and the USA. Ph.D. in Sociology from Brown University.Member of the United States Solidarity Economy Network. Collaborator of the Solidarity Economy movement in Brazil and the anti-austerity movement in Portugal. She can be contacted at anamargarida.esteves AT gmail.com.

Development in China and Germany: another world is possible?

Wolfgang Schaumberg

Germany was once among the centres of the world's labour movement, but as China has become the world's leading industrial power so too it is becoming central in global labour struggles. The two experiences are linked by German firms operating in China and multinationals present in both, but also by some developing experiences of labour solidarity which this paper explores in greater detail[1].

The current development of the capitalist crisis made me compare developments in China and Germany around this question:

Are there any experiences of wage-dependent people in China and Germany that encourage the future chances of co-operation of social activists against the power of transnational corporations, banks and their governments, for "another world", "without exploitation"?

Current developments

In China

(1) Strikes in several factories succeeded in securing wage increases, sometimes more than 30%. Workers experienced their own power during their self-organised struggle.

They provoked a debate within the Chinese trade union federation ACFTU: for a new trade-union identity (no longer as service organisation and mediator between employers and employees, but a clear-cut "representation of interests"), for free election of trade union representatives on enterprise level, for "collective bargaining", which means that the struggle should no longer be limited to single isolated enterprises.

They found out that their struggles also initiate political changes: the freedom of assembly and the right to strike are now part of official draft legislation...

(2) *But* at the same time there were contradictory experiences.

Their trade union and political leaders aim at "harmonious labour relations" to avoid spontaneous industrial action...

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[1] This is an edited version of a talk given to the international conference "Workers' struggles from East to West: new perspectives on labour disputes in globalised China" at the University of Vienna, September 2011.

... and they want the workers to take into account the "economic situation of their companies" when listing their demands.

(3) Some questions *remain*:

how do the workers see and discuss these experiences of capitalist structures against the background of the 1949 revolution and the resulting struggles for socialist transformation? Are there differences in their reception by workers in the former state sector enterprises, those in the new enterprises, by migrant workers, by old workers and the young? On May 29, 2010 a Honda worker complained on a website

> China! It has been promoting low-cost competition and cheap labor. Our GDP keeps growing! *However this growth relies on exploiting our cheap labor. … We do not want to go this way either. Times have changed! So this kind of cheap labor regime must end! … China is supposed to be a socialist country! The Japanese companies investing in China must follow the rules of China. Implement socialism! Do not give us capitalism!*

During the current struggles, what is the importance of the fact that the CCP has 78 million members, which means that in a total population of 1.3 billion people, i.e. about 1 billion adults, there is an average of 8 communists per 100 adults? Can we perceive their influence, e.g. in industrial and trade enterprises, in the government, in the neighbourhoods of the cities?

In Germany

Wage-dependent people have only occasionally recognized that changes in the organisation of industrial production because of interlinked chains of production help workers to put pressure on employers and to get the workforce of dozens of other enterprises to join in the struggle (which happened at Opel Bochum in 2000 and especially in 2004[2]).

The overwhelming experience of recent years was mostly cuts in wages and job losses, an increase of precarious working conditions and the extension of working-hours; their own experiences in the struggles mostly did not encourage them, but rather caused increasing resignation, intensified by widespread fears of growing crisis. New forms of global networks of production and introduction of new technology caused massive blackmailing on the workforce and on trade unions.

The level of trade union organisation in large companies is relatively high, but the principle "one company – one union" has become obsolete because of the splitting of employment within the firms (outsourcing, temporary work, fixed-term contracts). Collective wage agreements have become less important, also

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[2] See the English-subtitled film at https://vimeo.com/44512168.

because union leaders agreed to opening clauses in favour of company-related regulations. Works councils gain more influence in conflicts with employers, but they do not win any more power in the fight against profit interests in general.

We must consider the historical experiences to arrive at a more accurate assessment:

The workers are used to compromises, which are arrived at through negotiations by their representatives, by experts from work councils and trade union leaders, who do not want to jeopardise the competitiveness of "their" company...

What are the chances of creating "another world", without wage-dependency?

"Workers of all countries, unite! - It seems we must be thankful to capitalists today that their globalization forced us to reunite around one table, bringing us a step closer to the old labor movement's slogan." These were Chen Weiguang's opening words in October 2010 at the foundation meeting of the "International Center for Joint Research Laboratory" at Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou, China. Chen Weiguang is the chairman of the approximately two million-member union of Guangzhou (Canton), capital of the industrial province of Guandong with its 96 million inhabitants.

Indeed: With the example of China it becomes clear how capital connects people worldwide by forcing them to deal with the same contradictions and problems – while at the same time creating the explosive potential that we can use to defeat it:

(1) The worldwide economic crisis forces us everywhere to discuss basic problems of the economic and social system.

In China and in Germany they officially admit that the gap between the poor and the rich is increasing.

There is also already public discussion about the fact that growing consumerism is linked to *an idea of growth* that is causing dangerous new problems through environmental devastation (e.g. transport system focussed on cars, nuclear energy...)

(2) There are more and better ways of exchanging experiences and ideas. The managers in bigger factories want workers to learn English. In China as in Germany now all children have to learn English at school.

 The internet is increasingly used for international exchange, even if - up to now - only few people use the new communication technologies to debate what "another world" could look like.

It is quite likely that more people from China will participate in the World Social Forum...

(3) Extremely important, but in fact rarely taken into account, the daily production experiences become more and more similar:

- the Chinese workers are quickly learning not only the most modern methods of production, but also the typical antagonism of private capitalist production like speeded-up production, pressure on wages as well as the lie of "people-centred production"...

- there is an increase of stress and time pressure. Demanding shorter worktime will emerge as a result of both, experience in production and the problem of unemployment...

- wages, e.g. paid by car multinationals, may be relatively high, but the work is often experienced as degrading..

- wage-dependent people suffer from their employers' blackmailing around relocations, rationalisation ...

- The worldwide development of the organisation of production has led to massive changes in the workforce structure of western companies. For the personnel managers it has become increasingly difficult to create *"corporate identity"*. In China, e.g. in the Honda factory in Guangzhou, there are only fixed-term employment contracts. Thus the workers live in permanent job insecurity, which does not help building "corporate identity" at all...

International solidarity has to be organized...

Facing these problems, many activists, unionists, as well as many academics emphasize the necessity to strengthen the international exchange of experiences. They demand this should form an essential part of the necessary expansion of education measures for union cadres and workers in general.

But

who is supposed to educate whom concerning what issue? Where did "social partnership" and collective bargaining practices in the Western countries lead us? In the end, everything will depend on the question *which* experiences, on the basis of *which* analysis of capitalist development, will be conveyed to the colleagues...

German activities

On the one hand, there are currently 4,500 German companies with dependencies in China. But on the other hand information on the development in China and the promotion of international solidarity of the workers has not come very far.

(1) There are only very few "leftist" German groups and individuals who continuously attempt to direct attention on the development in China, to develop co-operation and discuss a perspective of a future "other world". They can be found around the magazine "wildcat" and in the 5 organisations at "Forum Arbeitswelten China und Deutschland" (magazine express, Labournet Germany, T.I.E., Südwind, WOEK).

(2) The factory based leftist groups have only very rarely initiated discussions on China on the shopfloor; as far as I know, in the recent 12 months only regarding pending relocations of the workplace and demands for securing their own jobs. According to the Works Constitution Act (BetrVG), members of the works council would be in an excellent position to get information about the workers' situation in China and to push for the necessary co-operation, especially when their employer plays an active role in China, sends people there or invites Chinese workers to come to Germany for training purposes, which happens very often...

(3) Some NGOs and individuals such as Dr. Rolf Geffken try to promote co-operation on trade union level.

What about official trade union policy? We only see some steps towards co-operation with Chinese workers, and they are limited to very few visits and conferences of officials, although the DGB as an important member of the IGB/ITUC with 180 million members worldwide would have the means to organise some information exchange with employees in China and to promote co-operation with the Chinese trade union federation ACFTU and its 226 million members.

In 2005, DGB and IG Metall published their international aims in a brochure:

a) *world works councils* have to be built up in multinationals (currently there are ten of them)

b) *international framework agreements* (e.g. codes of conduct) are the center piece of labor's global strategy. The basic norms of the International Labor Organisation (ILO) always lie at the core of these agreements. The employers' competitiveness remains of fundamental importance:

> By signing a framework agreement, corporations also recognize social partnership on an international level.

It looks as if capitalist globalization could be brought under control through a global social partnership. According to DGB and IGM, reasonable employers are apparently already voluntarily on the way there:

> Because studies have shown that *when labor relations improve, productivity increases. Improvements in health and safety conditions, in wages and worktime strengthen the companies' relations with its employees and thus, nearly always influence the quality of the production.*

According to this view, international contact between workers, European and world works councils and companywide agreements will regulate globalization in such a way that working people, shareholders and their managers will all profit.

c) DGB and IG Metall emphasize that *"The state has the main responsibility…* to achieve a binding, transnational regulation to push forward the social dimension of globalization…".

It is a tradition of German official trade union policy to concentrate so much on *"national identity"* and make the workers put their trust in the state to regulate the conflict between capital and labour, which should increase the competitiveness of the German economy rather than question it.

Conclusion

Is it not true that in China the "harmonious society" is the national objective, everything being focussed on *"national identity"?* – A political class-consciousness, *"working class identity",* does not emerge automatically from the daily struggle for improvements or against deterioration when there is largely a lack of historical awareness and too little sharing of historical experiences.

In my opinion, the hope for welfare-state regulation of capitalist globalization is senseless. Of course it makes sense to criticize its brutal consequences and explain its causes, even if this alone doesn't offer us much hope.

Instead, the chance to exchange experiences and ideas with more people worldwide about other forms of living together, and of organizing the production and distribution of necessary and desired things may offer more hope. If, by doing so, we can approach a feasible vision, the indignation at capitalism's attacks can become a fury that leads to tackling the cause at its very roots...

About the author

Wolfgang Schaumberg was a magazine worker (in the logistics department) from 1970 – 2000 at the GM/Opel car factory in Bochum/Germany and for many years a member of the workers council .Now retired, he is still an IG Metal member and active in the Opel factory workers´ group GoG ("resistance without borders"). Since 1981 he has been active as a member of T.I.E. (Transnationals Information Exchange).

He is also active as president of Labournet Germany (*www.labournet.de*), and as a contributor in the "Forum Worlds of Labour – China and Germany", a project for a regular exchange between workers, activists, and researchers from China and Germany (*www.forumarbeitswelten.de)* He was a co-organizer of 3 political education trips to China 2005 / 2006 / 2007 with activists, members of works councils, elected union delegates at grassroots level, scientists and journalists, and of three similar "Germany tours" of Chinese guests.

He took part at the World Social Forum 2003 in Porto Alegre, Brasil and 2004 in Mumbai, India. He can be contacted at w.schaumberg AT gmx.de.

The neoliberal rise of East Asia and social movements of labour: four moments and a challenge

Dae-oup Chang

Abstract

The celebrated 'rise of East Asia' as a centre of global capitalism resulted from the increasing integration of East Asia into the expanding circuit of capital that turned most of the East Asian population into 'capitalist value-subjects'. This means that the vast majority of East Asian population now have to make and reproduce living at different moments of production, reproduction and realisation of capitalist value. However this integration does not create these new value subjects as a singular and cohesive class of working women and men. Instead, it produces many segmented labouring classes whose livelihoods depends on insecure and oppressive wage employment or a wide range of survival activities for money income in the informal economy. The result is the paradox of East Asian development - the increase of the traditional working class has been marginal in the rise of East Asia as a workshop of the world. This again created a complex condition for social movements of labour.

A close look at the current struggles of new value subjects in Thailand, Korea, Cambodia and China reveals that these new value subjects are capable of going beyond the boundaries set up by the previous struggles of organised labour. However, it also tells us that there is a serious disjuncture between the emerging social movements of labour and the existing trade union movement of the 'industrial working class' in East Asia. This challenge calls for a reconsideration of the theories and practices of the labour movement that presuppose a process of coherent working class formation.

Introduction

The celebrated 'rise of East Asia' as a centre of the global accumulation of capital resulted from the increasing integration of East Asia into the expanding circuit of capital that turned most of the East Asian population into 'capitalist value-subjects' who now have to make and reproduce their livings at different moments of production, reproduction and realisation of capitalist value. However this 'integration' does not create these new value-subjects as a singular and cohesive class of working women and men. Rather it produces many segmented labouring classes whose livelihoods depend on insecure and oppressive wage employment or a wide range of survival activities for money income in the informal economy. The result is the paradox of East Asian

development - the increase of 'the working class' has been marginal in the rise of East Asia as a workshop of the world. This again created a complex condition for social movements of labour. Current uprisings of new value-subjects in rural and urban areas of accumulation in Thailand, Korea, Cambodia and China show these new value-subjects are not merely passive victims of the rise of East Asia. They do fight and are capable of going beyond the boundaries set up by the previous struggles of organised labour. However, on the other hand, these emerging social movements of labour develop without being articulated with the existing trade union movement of the 'industrial working class'. I find different degrees of disjuncture between the traditional working class movement and newly emerging movements of labour in Cambodia, China, Korea and Thailand. This condition calls for an urgent and fundamental reorientation of the labour movement in East Asia to go beyond the theories and practices of the labour movement that presuppose a process of coherent working class formation.

1. Paradox of the rise of East Asia

While global capitalism is undergoing a prolonged recession, East Asia is rising as a model for developing countries and moreover as the future of global capitalism. This optimism comes firstly from the relative endurance of East Asian economies against the on-going global recession. More fundamentally, it is based on the stunning growth performance that East Asian economies, including Japan, the Newly Industrialising Economies (NIEs) and China, have been demonstrating since the end of World War II and subsequent rise of the region as an active builder of global capitalism. The transformation of East Asia from a peripheral player to an active builder of the global economy is marked by a *twin-process* of integration that entails both tighter integration between East Asian economies and deeper incorporation of East Asia as a whole into the global market. Perhaps the active role of East Asia in sustaining global capitalism is best seen in the increasingly important role of East Asian capital in building East Asia as the epicentre of global manufacturing. Intra-Asia Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows in 2005 accounted for about half of Asia's total FDI inflow, all major capital sending and receiving countries being East Asian (UNCTAD, 2006). In East Asia alone, reliance on intra-regional investment is even greater. Nearly 70% of FDI inflow to 15 East Asian economies[1] came from within the sub-region in 2005, one third of the flow being Japanese and another one third from Hong Kong (ADB, 2010: 36). Reflecting this trend, a large portion of FDI to China, the driving force of the region's export-led growth, is from East Asia itself. In 2010, according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, China received a total of US $105.735 billion, out of which investment from 10 East Asian countries and regions (Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Republic of Korea) was US $88.179 billion. East Asian economic development is driven also by

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[1] They include 10 countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), mainland China, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

increasing trade within the region. East Asia's trade reliance increased with trade/GDP share growth from 42.4% in 2000 to 66.4% in 2008 (ADB, 2010: 29). The intra-regional trade doubled during the decade between 1995 and 2004, reaching US $1,296 million (ADB, 2007: 87).

Having seen this, it is safe to say that East Asian capital is leading the rise of East Asia. However, this does not mean that East Asia is being insulated from the global economy. What features increasing intra-regional trade is the increasing flow of components and parts that are produced and supplied to make final products to meet the demands outside East Asia. For instance, as of 2001, about 73 % of intra-East Asian trade consists of intermediate goods used in and processed for production of final goods (ADB, 2007: 69). Again about half of this intermediate goods trade was driven by final demand outside Asia, leaving only 21.2% of Eat Asian export finally consumed in East Asia (ADB, 2007: 69). More recent trade data reveal that this trend continues. As of 2006, 67.5 % of export from 'integrating Asia', which is integrating East Asia plus India, ended up in Europe and North America (ADB, 2008: 71). This means the increasing importance of East Asia as a producer of consumer goods for the global market. East Asia produces 32.5% of global manufacturing exports in 2008 (compared to 27.2% of 1992) (ADB, 2010: 34).

It is perhaps quite natural to have a proliferation of 'the rise of (East) Asia literature' that predicts an era of the East in near future. This literature has a long story. The earlier generation of this literature recognised that East Asia's new economies commonly had so-called developmental states that 'repaid debts, successfully climbed the ladder of industrialisation, educated their workers, reformed their agricultures – in short developed' (Radice, 2008: 1166). The more contemporary literature tends to present the rise of East Asia as a not-too-surprising event that is likely to transform global order one way or the other. Discussions about the East Asian model, whether its distinctiveness is based on stronger states restricting free markets, Confucian work ethic and entrepreneurship or a mysterious 'oriental' propensity toward harmonious development, tend to juxtapose East Asia's seemingly unique developmental model vis-à-vis the developmental model of Atlantic capitalism that is often regarded as destructively competitive and speculative (Arrighi, 2007; Gill et al., 2007; Jacques, 2012; Mahbubani, 2009). Although different commentators in this literature may disagree on what sorts of alternative to predominant neoliberal capitalism East Asian economies can offer, they seem to agree that East Asia is capable of offering something authentic and unique vis-à-vis western or neoliberal model. However, a careful look at the way in which East Asian capitalist labour has been created, disciplined, mobilised, and combined with capital for the miraculous development tells otherwise: the rise of East Asia is a consequence of East Asia being an integral part of global neoliberalism rather than being an alternative to it. It is important to notice that East Asia grew fast neither because of its defiance against neoliberalism nor because of its subjugation to the overwhelming power of global neoliberalism. It was rather a consequence of a process in which East Asia and Atlantic neoliberalism together built global neoliberalism. It was a *reciprocal* process in which both global

capitalism and East Asian capital benefited from each other, allowing them to build truly global capitalism. The role played by East Asia was at the centre of the neoliberal recovery from the recession in the 70s, generating new centres of capital accumulation. In particular, China's return to the global capitalist system and subsequent remarkable economic growth would not have taken place without global neoliberalism and vice versa (Harvey, 2005; Li, 2008; McNally, 2011). Then how did East Asia complete the neoliberal dream?

It was *East Asian labour* that completed global neoliberalism. East Asia, with anincrease of the labouring population from 100 million to 900 million from the 1990s, became the centre of production and reproduction of global capital (McNally, 2011: 51). It is in this neoliberal reorganisation of the world of labour and mobilisation of this population in newly emerging centres of global neoliberalism as producers, reproducers and consumers that East Asia played a particularly vital role. The neoliberal rise of East Asia is based on and results from the increasing integration of East Asia into the expanding circuit of capital that turns most of East Asian population into 'value-subjects' whose survival is guaranteed only within and relies upon capitalist value relations. These value-subjects are capitalist subjects in a sense wider than being 'industrial workers' at the immediate point of industrial production. They are people making and reproducing their livings at different moments of the expanding circuit of capital and on whose livelihoods within and outside the immediate place of production capital depends for accumulation (Dyer-Witheford, 2002). Their survival and social activities may not involve direct employment relations at designated workplaces. Yet, it is not possible for them to survive without relating to capitalist labour one way or the other. Capitalist labour became the principle of or common substance in maintaining social life, mediating almost all aspects of social life both in production and reproduction process. The long process of integrating East Asia into global capitalism is finally reaching an end. This was done however not only by creating new value-subjects but also by creating a particular social form of capitalist labour to which they have to relate for survival. Increasing informality and insecurity characterise the particular form of labour. It is this labour that played a particularly important role in turning East Asia into a vital part of global neoliberalism.

The heart of neoliberalism is removing unnecessary barriers to the free movement of capital. Amongst many, the most important barrier against which neoliberalism posed a decisive challenge in an attempt to revive capital accumulation in the end of the post-war boom was the social institutions that once constituted the traditional industrial working class and 'formal labour' i.e., regulated labour market, state provision, union rights and more importantly the power of the working class behind the institutions (Chang, 2009b). The core of neoliberalism was then a global scale political project aiming to restore capital's class power vis-à-vis labour (Harvey, 2005) so that disposable labour can be flexibly utilised according to the ever changing need of mobile capital. Without power balance between labour and capital in place, it is no longer necessary for capital to rely on regular, protected, and formal jobs for accumulation and expansion (Chang, 2009b).

East Asian capital (both national and transnational) and states responded to emerging neoliberalism with massive scale social engineering of creating and disciplining a huge labouring population and thereby changed global power relations between labour and capital decisively. The impact of neoliberalism on labour has been uneven, depending upon the socio-political power of and cohesiveness among the labouring population as well as the diverse accumulation strategies of national and transnational capital across the world (Bieler, Lindberg and Pillay, 2008). In East Asia, neither the old industrial working class nor new value-subjects had proper means to protect themselves from neoliberalism. Industrial workers in East Asian countries did not have much time to prepare their counter strategy against neoliberalism by using collective labour rights as these rights were granted to industrial workers together with neoliberal labour market reforms (Chun, 2008; Brown, 2007; Arnold and Toh, 2010). In China, labour market deregulation advanced leaps and forward for last two decades, but collective labour rights are yet to be recognised (Pun, Chan and Chan, 2010).

The result is the *paradox of East Asian development* - the increase of 'the traditional industrial working class' has been marginal in the rise of East Asia as the workshop of the world. In other words, the neoliberal rise of East Asia did not create a condition on the basis of which a coherent industrial working class can emerge. Rather it produces many segmented labouring classes whose livelihoods depend directly or indirectly on insecure and informal waged jobs or a wide range of survival activities for money income in the 'informal economy'. Informal and insecure labour is then not a by-product of underdevelopment, but both a product and driving force of 'development' in the region. This again created a complex condition for the social movements of value-subjects. There are increasing protests of value-subjects against the transition. These struggles however do not follow the usual model of working class mobilisation. To understand the real implication of the rise of East Asia and what alternative to global neoliberalism East Asia actually can create, we need to investigate the implication of those diverse collective endeavours to challenge the very basis of the neoliberal rise of East Asia.

2. The emerging poor movement in Thailand

The full-scale integration of people into global capitalism has been a brutally coercive process, removing all remaining elements of non-capitalist social relations or subsuming, where necessary, non-capitalist forms of social relations to the need of capital accumulation. Its logic dictates that each aspect of human life should not be organised, even partially, through non-market mechanisms. Challenges of value-subjects against this coercive process take extremely diverse forms, largely depending upon the different moments of the circuit of capital at which particular value-subjects are located. The poor's movement in Thailand has emerged from mass protests to the threats imposed upon the poor population in rural villages, located at the periphery of the globalising circuit of capital, by the aggressive attempts of capital and the state to accelerate the

industrial boom of 1980s and 1990s by exploiting natural resources such as rivers, forests and lands that played vital roles in sustaining rural livelihoods. In Thailand, the traditional labour movement was weak throughout the 1980s due to the heavy suppression of progressive social movements in urban centres after the short heyday of the democratic labour movement in the mid 1970s (Glassman, 2004: 102). During this period, none of the surviving union federations could claim to represent the majority of Thai workers, covering all together less than 1 % of total employees. It was in the late 1980s that workers began to make their voice heard within and outside the existing trade union movement. Prem's government (1980-1988) encouraged export industries, such as electronics and garment as an alternative to the industrialisation strategy focusing on the export of primary products and import-substitution, introducing the FDI promotion schemes of the Board of Investment. This included currency devaluation and tax exemptions and tariff cuts to export industries. The Thai government subsequently liberalised the economy with easier access to Thailand's commodity and financial markets, accelerating the integration of Thailand into global neoliberalism. While traditional subsistence agriculture was getting less important, industry and services became the backbone of economy. Manufacturing industry grew rapidly with steeply increasing FDI inflow. It accounted for 13.4 percent of total employment in 1996, in comparison to 7.1 percent in 1981 while it produced 28.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as of 1996.[2] GDP per capita more than tripled between 1985 and 1995, reaching US$2,800 in 1995.

Labour activism managed to re-emerge between 1988 and 1989, corresponding with the period of very rapid industrial expansion. The first significant challenge to global neoliberalism came from the state-owned enterprise (SOE) unions whose membership numbers exceeded half of all unionised workers in Thailand.[3] Although the 'labour-aristocracy-like' SOE unions were neither very militant nor very enthusiastic in using their power to help organising new workers in private enterprises (Glassman, 2004: 90), they were active in confronting the privatisation of public enterprises pushed by the elected civilian Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan. In particular, the port workers' union, in collaboration with electricity and telecommunication unions, was at the frontline of struggles against privatisation and managed to disrupt port operation in Bangkok twice in 1989 and 1990, forcing the government to reconsider its privatisation plan. However, the heyday of the SOE unions did not last long. The new military government, which came into power after 1991 military coup, introduced the State Enterprise Employees Relations Act and disallowed unions and collective actions in state enterprises to circumvent increasing union militancy.

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[2] From ILO and World Bank on-line databases.

[3] Unions in the private sector covered only 152,000 employees at the time (Hewison and Brown 1994: 507).

While smaller and newer unions in the private sector and labour NGOs struggled hard to build union militancy and intervene in the democratic transition from 1992, more serious challenges against global neoliberalism was surfacing in rural areas. The Assembly of the Poor (AOP) was the representing organisation of the rural poor movement (Baker, 2000; Glassman, 2001; Missingham, 2003). Established by 250 villagers' representatives and NGO delegates on the international human right day in 1995 (Missingham, 2003), the AOP came out as 'an umbrella network linking the struggles of numerous rural and agrarian organizations' (Glassman, 2001: 522). In 1996, the AOP organised, together with residents in fishing villages in Ubon Ratchathai province, a protest to the Pak Mun Dam project funded by the Thai state and the World Bank to provide much needed electricity for growing cities and export-oriented industries in Thailand. Starting from the successful mobilisation of a five-week sit-in in the government house in Bangkok in 1996, the AOP's strategy of combining localised daily activities with centralised 'occupation' has been proven to be effective. The AOP managed to mobilise again twenty thousand strong participants in the 99-day occupation of the government house in 1997 as well as the protest-camp at Pak Mun dam in 2000. The AOP claims that 'its mass action against government's large-scale development projects managed to stop at least three mega development projects in northern Thailand' and 'changed the way in which the state introduces and implements these development projects once and for all' (interview with AOP activists Ken and Nu, 9th August 2008).

Although the main constituency of the AOP continues to be rural areas with people refusing to be forcefully integrated into global neoliberalism, the AOP has transformed from a local movement of the rural poor to a nation-wide movement of the working poor both in rural and urban areas, incorporating those marginalised within the circuit of capital. The AOP expanded by incorporating 7 different networks of villagers, urban poor, NGO activists and academics, covering major developmental issues such as dams, forestry and land, urban slums, work-related diseases and accidents, alternative agriculture and small-scale fishery (Missingham, 2003: 324-325). The AOP initiated its urban expansion by launching a campaign to protect slum dwellers and homeless from the daily harassment of local authorities and police (interview with AOP activists Ken and Nu, 9th August 2008). The AOP also campaigned for basic living standards, welfare and health care for the poor in urban slums. Another group of people at the peripheral area of urban capitalism the AOP work with is the victims of work-related diseases and accidents who lost their work capacity and inevitably became poor. The AOP helped those victims learn their rights through education programmes and if necessary directly assisted their legal claims for compensation. At the national level, the AOP campaigned for higher minimum wages and called for stricter price policy for staple goods. Although the AOP managed to become a vehicle for nation-wide social justice, their activism is tightly embedded in the communities where they started the movement. Each of the seven networks within the AOP operates independently with their own secretary, local organisers and focus groups in different local

communities. Network activists are embedded in the local communities and regularly organise discussions with villagers and communities affected by particular policies or state projects and often mobilise direct actions with local population at the local level while major concerns are being brought up to the Assembly to organise national level actions. The Assembly is regarded as 'an arena where these different networks find a common target and potential power to change by acting together' (interview with AOP activists Ken and Nu, 9th August 2008).

The AOP played a major role in developing the anti-globalisation movement in Thailand together with other networks working on similar issues such as NGOs Coordination Body and FTA Watch. In doing so, the AOP extended the scope of solidarity to reach the established labour movement of the industrial working class. At the beginning, this new movement of people at the margin of the globalising circuit of capital did not attract much attention from the existing trade union movement of the industrial working class such as state enterprises unions. However it was during the anti-globalisation protests that SOE unions, who were against privatisation plans, and the AOP came together to form an alliance. Many anti-globalisation organisations effectively halted the 6th US-Thai Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiation in Chiang Mai in 2006 by mobilising the biggest protest ever in Thailand on the issue of trade and globalisation with ten thousand protesters. Furthermore, the AOP participated in international protests against WTO and FTAs. The AOP was one of the major Thai organisations presented in the Hong Kong WTO protest in 2005. Together with hundreds of Korean protesters, 79 members of the AOP were arrested by the Hong Kong police during the protest. Combining local-based activism with national and international actions and incorporating both the rural and urban working poor, the AOP opened up a new possibility for people at the margin of the globalising circuit of capital to challenge global neoliberalism.

3. Struggles of Chinese migrant workers

According to official statistics, the number of China's internal migrant workers employed outside their hometowns has reached 153 million by 2010. They are no longer a supplementary workforce but became a 'major component of the new Chinese working class' as they now account for more than half of the urban workforce (Leung and Pun, 2009: 552). The creation of these new value-subjects was an integral part of China's capitalist transformation in which socialist production units were becoming capitalist firms and 'socialist masters' in SOEs becoming capitalist workers. Despite the rhetoric of 'retaining socialism in China', the strategy of introducing market 'elements' to boost the socialist economy transformed China into an integral part of global neoliberalism by being an assembling hub of the globalising circuit of capital. This transformation changed all dimensions of the existing relations between enterprises, labour, and the state. Privatisation of SOEs was initiated by separating the management of enterprises from ownership through the 'contractual management system' and increasing enterprises' autonomy in

personnel management and profit allocation. The Communist Party's policy of 'grasping the big one and letting the small one go' accelerated privatisation of small- and some medium-size enterprises through selling off shares to domestic and sometimes foreign investors (Hart-Landsberg and Burkett, 2004: 46-7). Direct control over SOEs has also been gradually replaced by control and regulation through state-owned banks. The State's regulation of private enterprises was also relaxed in the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1987. Altogether they created a capitalist form of capital-state relations.

Socialist masters have become capitalist workers in this process. From 1986, all new workers in SOEs were subjected to the labour contract system, which later integrated all SOE workers. Contracted labour was finally recognised as the primary form of employment in the first Labour Law enacted in 1995. These 'masters' were also disappearing in the process of downsizing and privatising the SOE since the mid-1990s. A particular scheme of laying-off called '*xiagang*' was introduced in the mid-1990s and about 28 million SOE workers have been sacked by the end of 2003 (Naughton, 2007: 186). As a consequence, SOEs' contribution to total employment in manufacturing decreased from 44 % in 1980 to a mere 14.8% in 2001 and slightly higher than 10% in 2010 (China Statistical Yearbook, 2002; 2011). As Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) and urban collective enterprises have also been privatised, public enterprises employed only 7% of total employment in 2003 (Naughton, 2007: 184) and 27% of the urban workforce in 2005 (Andreas, 2008: 130). Whilst the majority of the laid-off state enterprises workers returned to the labour market as self-employed and temporary workers (Solinger, 2004: 51) and remaining SOE workers were becoming capitalist labourers, it was the huge influx of young internal migrant workers that satisfied the ever growing demand for cheap and flexible labour in private enterprises in China's coastal cities.

In the earlier stage, migrant workers left their lands but stayed at their hometowns, mostly working for TVEs which attracted more than 60 million rural workers by 1988. The rural to urban exodus accelerated when it became obvious that the rural development could not match the rapidly growing urban counter part with the massively increasing inflow of FDI.[4] After decades of being mobilised under the strict control of the party-state and different collective work units, the rural population was not merely 'peasant' in a traditional sense, but rather a well disciplined reserve army of labour ready to work. The household registration system called *hukou*, although relaxed, continued to function to minimise the cost of utilising the rural labour force in the urban industries. While the loosening of the *hukou* system allows the

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[4] The rural population was suffering not only from sharply declining welfare provision but also from diverse forms of implicit dispossession - from land grabs by expanding cities to the growing influence of large scale agribusiness operating around the collective land tenure system by organising production through 'putting-out system' or by 'leasing land and hiring labour' (Andreas, 2008: 133). While the former provoked numerous rural disputes (between 1999 and 2005, 1 million cases of land dispossession were reported to the Ministry of Land and Resources), the latter shows the growing risk of turning farmers into factory workers in their own land.

migrants to work in big industrial towns, their rural residential status does not give them the right either to be permanent residents or to claim social benefits from the cities they are working (Chan, 2003: 44).

The legal minimum wage, which varies significantly from one region to another, was introduced in the early 1990s. However, the increase in minimum wages during the 1990s' economic boom only kept pace with inflation (Chan and Siu, 2003). Most of all, wages are in principle paid on piece-rate. This means that employers pay only for labour that results directly in products during a given period of time. A large part of the social cost of labour is imposed on individual workers, rather than on the state or on the employers, meaning that capital does not have to pay insurance schemes including pension, industrial injury, maternity, health, and unemployment. By offering their disciplined labour power without burdening capitalists with additional cost for social benefits, migrant workers allowed capital to enjoy high profit. Although extreme exploitation continued to dominate China's labour scene well into the 21st Century, Chinese migrant workers are known for docile characteristics and willingness to work under harsh conditions with low wages. However, current uprisings of migrant workers in industrial cities certainly tell us a different story. In particular, it was the new generation migrant workers' protests that overturned the usual image of submissive Chinese workers.

Various surveys estimate that more than 60% of these migrant workers are new generation migrant workers born after 1980 (China Labour Bulletin, 2011: 13). Compared to the first generation whose iconic figure was 'a young, shabby farmer making his way to the city for a limited amount of time with limited ambitions and expectation for his time there' (Gallagher, 2010), these new generation migrant workers are more deeply integrated into capitalist China. Grown up in the booming cities and naturally having no attachment to farming, they consider themselves not as peasant-workers but as permanent residents in cities. They aspire to city life and have greater expectation for upward mobility with their career development in the cities (Pun, Chan and Chan, 2010: 136). They are relatively well educated and exposed to various media discussions about social issues. They are also well aware of rights of citizens. In fact they tend to act as citizens even if their residential status does not grant full citizenship to them (China Labour Bulletin, 2011: 13-14; Wong, 2010: 3).

The recent wave of strikes and the desperate protests of Foxconn workers clearly revealed accumulated discontents among migrant workers as well as the characteristics of the new generation. Even before these struggles, struggles of migrant workers have been increasing in number and 'radicalizing' in form (Leung and Pun, 2009). More active individual and collective actions taken by migrant workers have moved the centre of labour disputes from SOEs to the private sector over the last decade and became an important cause of social unrest in China. Between 1993 and 2005, the number of 'officially recognised' mass protests increased from 10,000 to 75,000, showing a 20% annual increase (Leung and Pun, 2009: 553). Approximately 70% of them have been organised by peasants and workers (Leung and Pun, 2009: 553). China Labour Bulletin

(2011) estimates that there were about 90,000 mass incidents in 2009, about one third of them being labour disputes. An increasing number of workers also address grievances through legal channels. Arbitrated labour disputes increased from 135,000 cases in 2000 to 500,000 in 2007 and 602,600 in 2010 (Leung and Pun, 2009: 553; China Labour Bulletin, 2011: 11). Together with cases handled through labour mediation procedure, a total of 1,287,400 dispute cases were handled though legal channels in 2010 (China Labour Bulletin, 2011:11).

These increasing protests led the party-state to addressing emerging discontents among the working population (Gray, 2010). Dubbed with 'harmonious development', which became an official direction of Chinese development after Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao came into power in 2003, several measures have been introduced. They include policies addressing rural-urban disparity with increasing government investment in inland areas, a more efficient system of managing minimum wages, more aggressive campaigns to establish trade unions in private enterprises, pursuit of wage negotiation through the collective contract system and finally labour law amendment. The labour law reform has been regarded as particularly favourable to migrant workers as it intended to improve job security of migrant workers and provoked strong protests from business leaders. Nevertheless, the year 2010 witnessed an important development of labour activism among migrant workers. The epicentre of the wave of strikes was the automobile industry, particularly concentrated in components manufacturers along the supply chain of Japanese car manufacturers.

The most important and influential strike was in Honda Auto Part Manufacturing (HAPM) in Foshan city of Guangdong province in May 2010. But actually it followed many other strikes mostly organised by migrant workers in the booming automobile industry. More than 10 strikes were reported between the second half of 2009 and May 2010 (IHLO, 2010: 18-19). The Honda strike was indeed the climax of the wave of strikes not only because it was a successful strike but also because they managed to very clearly articulate their demands for trade union reform and successfully communicate to the wider public, demonstrating the maturity of the migrant workers movement. HAPM is an auto component manufacturer with an annual capacity of 240,000 units, producing and supplying automatic transmission for Honda's assembly plants in China. About 2,000 workers are employed in this factory, about one third of them being industrial trainees who are spending their final year of vocational schools for on-the-job training. As in many strike actions in China, the HAPM strike took place spontaneously without prior mobilisation or preparation. The 14-day strike began with two frustrated workers who decided to do 'something meaningful' before they left their jobs (Wong, 2010: 2). Two workers' agitation for a walkout in protest over low wages quickly turned into a peaceful sit-in strike of 1,800 workers, including both trainees and regular workers. The workers then quickly elected their representatives and selected core demands. This manifests the increasingly fragile nature of Chinese workplace labour control and accumulating frustration among the workers. One of the major sources of workers' resentment was extremely low wages. Not to

mention the trainees making less than 1,000 Yuan per month - that is less than the tuition fees they paid for the school (IHLO, 2010: 13), the regular workers were also earning a strikingly low salary of 1,200 to 1,600 Yuan a month (US $190 - $238) which is a lot less than industry standard. As their basic salaries were so low, the legal minimum wage of Foshan city (920 Yuan a month) could be met only after adding all other allowances including overtime payment. Frustration was getting bigger not only among workers in HAPM but also other auto parts manufacturers in Guangdong province as these companies had been enjoying snowballing profits in the automobile boom in China and workers in assemblers were earning much more than the workers in HAPM.

While the Guangdong police force was on alert and setting up a cordon surrounding the factory, negotiation between management and workers representatives began. The HAPM management firstly tried to end the strike by firing two leaders of the strike and proposing fringe benefits to the workers. The striking workers came up with more articulated demands on 27 May, including 800 Yuan pay increase for all the workers, a seniority increment of 100 Yuan per year, reinstatement of the dismissed workers, no disciplinary action for all strikers and most importantly re-organisation of the trade union in HAPM with an elected chairman (Globalisation Monitor, 2010: 22). The management responded with the usual divide-and-rule tactics, proposing higher increase in wages for the trainees with a condition of not participating industrial action again. However, the strikers were not easy to divide once the workers had learnt how to coordinate the strike and earn public support. The workers at HAMP created a chat group called 'Unity is Victory' on China's biggest instant messaging programme, 'QQ'. This allowed strikers 'to provide rolling briefings on progress in the strike', inform reporters of the progress and invite lawyers and labour right activists to provide expert advices (China Labour Bulletin, 2011: 14). In addition, the management was facing emerging problems. Firstly, Honda's zero inventory system and just-in-time management turned out to be disastrous for strikes in parts and components suppliers. As the strike lasted for more than 10 days, Honda was running out of time. Secondly and more importantly the incident on 31st May where 200 'officials' wearing yellow baseball caps and union badges were sent by the local branch of All China Confederation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) in an attempt to violently disperse the striking workers in the factory. This incident not only strengthened workers' unity in the factory but also created support to the strikers from the general public. While even national and Guangdong province party leaders were condemning the union's action, the story of the striking workers in HAPM was widely covered by media with ample sympathy expressed to the workers. In subsequent negotiations, workers managed to get considerable concession from the employer, including an 11% pay rise, a 33% increase on meal and accommodation allowances, and most importantly direct election of union team leaders, committee members and vice chairman (Wong, 2010: 2; China Labour Bulletin, 2011: 41). In 2011, a collective contract was signed between the new union and management with an average 33% increase in wages.

The strike in HAPM spread out to about 100 other workplaces mostly though

not exclusively in automobile part suppliers in Guangdong province (IHLO, 2010: 20-22). With on-going nation-wide discussions about sweatshop conditions in foreign-owned auto-parts factories and mounting condemnation of the official trade union's irresponsibility and incompetency, migrant workers were now much more confident. Many relied on the same leverage HAPM workers used, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the just-in-time management of Japanese carmakers. A strike at Denso in Nansha Guanzhou effectively paralysed operation of the Toyota assemblers, which again forced the employer to meet the demands of the workers rather quickly (China Labour Bulletin, 2011: 24). Migrant workers in those strikes put up demands similar with those in HAPM strike, including pay rise in proportion to the rising profits of the companies, and in some cases reform of unions at the plants (IHLO, 2010: 19). They also combined new tactics used in the HAPM strike, such as online forums and instant messaging, with more typical tactics established over the years of workers struggle in China, including mass demonstration, sit-ins in factories and public spaces, blocking factory gates to stop deliveries, collective petitions and etc. As HILO claims, 'the strike marks a significant turn in the spontaneous labour struggles of migrant workers in China from defensive to offensive' (2010: 19). The more daring and rights-sensitive generation of migrant workers began to act as full-citizens with self-claimed social and economic rights and self-invented collective bargaining in which spontaneously but democratically elected labour leaders confronted the employers. These struggles are certainly opening up a new phase of the struggles of value-subjects in China.

4. Irregular workers' movement in Korea

The irregular workers' movement in South Korea emerged from the neoliberal reformulation of Korea's capitalist development through which Korea became one of the central players of global neoliberalism. Active participation in emerging global neoliberalism was indeed a response of Korean capital and the state to the crisis of earlier development strategy, which was manifested during the Asian economic crisis of 1997-1998 (Chang, 2009a). Since the mid-1980s, favourable conditions in export-oriented labour intensive industries, such as garment, sportswear and low-end electronics, began to move away from Korea. Growing protectionist pressure from the US to compensate its worsening trade balance with Korea slowed down export growth while accelerating export-oriented industrialisation of Southeast Asian countries and China were challenging Korea. More importantly, Korean capitalist development faced the explosive development of new independent trade unionism in the summer of 1987, during which 1,300 new democratic trade unions were organised and recognised, facilitating wage increase in manufacturing - 10.4% in 1987, 16.4% in 1988, 20% in 1989 and 16.8% in 1990 (Chang, 2009a).

The state and capital attempted to overcome these difficulties by embracing neoliberalism, pursuing the usual three pillars of global neoliberalism - commodity and financial market liberalisation, privatisation of SOEs and

flexibilisation of labour. However, this was only partially successful largely because the restoration of the power of capital vis-à-vis labour remained to be achieved. Indeed, the Korean state realised that 'Korea's entire future as a major center of accumulation was critically dependent on the achievement of a substantial redistribution of income from labor to capital' (Pirie, 2006: 216). However, it was during this period that labour became an important social force by establishing a nationwide union movement with the establishment of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) whose members exercised huge influence in strategically important workplaces. The attempts of capital and the state to remove strong trade unions precipitated more militant resistance from organised labour, making it harder for individual capitals to survive increasing competition in the export market by squeezing labour. On the other hand, financial liberalisation caused growing dependency on short-term credit, making the economy vulnerable to external shocks. These problems manifested themselves in a general crisis in 1997-1998. It was not until the restructuring period in the aftermath of the general crisis that a new and more genuinely neoliberal basis of further capital accumulation emerged.

Sky-rocketing unemployment, combined with the continuing attempt of the state - now with enhanced legitimacy of the state on the basis of the shift from the authoritarian developmental regimes to democratic neoliberal regimes (Chun, 2008: 28) - to isolate the labour movement by portraying it as the movement of labour aristocracy against the poor, enabled the state and capital to get away with the piecemeal introduction of irregular work arrangements mostly through utilising dispatched and temporary labour in manufacturing and self-employed waged workers called 'special employment' in the service sector. Union response to this has been largely ineffective. The KCTU was overwhelmed defending their heartland from mass lay-offs and the aggressive attempt of the state to oppress the most militant wing of the labour movement (Chun, 2008: 28-29). After years of desperate defensive struggles, the labour movement survived in large-scale manufacturers. However, the labour movement faces a crisis of representativeness for the working class as a whole - the new irregular working class immensely expanded outside the comfort zone of the union movement.

Irregular workers became the backbone of the new and 'revitalised' neoliberal economy by working harder and longer with smaller compensation and often no welfare provision. The absolute majority of new jobs created after the crisis was predominantly irregular. The number of temporary and daily contracted workers finally outnumbered that of standard-regular workers by 2001. This trend continues to develop even after all major economic indicators returned to the pre-crisis level. The degree of insecurity and informality is higher among the less powerful segments of the labouring population. As of 2008, about 4,156,000 male irregular workers accounted for about 47% of total male employees whereas 65.5% of all female workers, an estimated 4,424,000, were surviving with irregular jobs (Kim, 2008). At the bottom of the hierarchy within the working population are about a half-million documented and undocumented migrant workers labouring for small and medium size

manufacturers or small shops and restaurants with irreversibly temporary labour contracts. It is in under these conditions that irregular workers started 'building power from the margin' (Chun, 2009). At the beginning, these struggles underwent extremely difficult process mainly because of the reluctance of the established trade union movement to move out of its comfort zones. Hyundai automobile canteen workers' struggle against lay-off in 1998, the 290-day strike of Korea Telecom Contracted Workers Union in 2000 and Career In-Company-Subcontract Workers Union's struggle in 2001 all shared bitter experience with so-called democratic trade unions affiliated to the KCTU (Chang, 2009a: 154-155; Chun, 2009: 90-97). However, this new movement has created innovative tactics of organising, new forms of unions and centres of solidarity and soon become a new centre of labour militancy.

'Social organising' — organising across boundaries of workplaces and occupations — has emerged as an important method to organise irregular workers. This led most of all to ultra-firm level labour unions targeting 'any workers' without regard to clearly defined employment relations or workplaces. One form of these organisations is the general union (Ilbannojo). General unions offer umbrella union membership and provide legal consultancy and advices to workers in petty-scale enterprises, construction workers, cleaners, domestic service providers and part-timers in convenient stores. Most common general unions are region-based general unions open to workers in a specific township, city and province. As of 2010, more than 50 regional general unions have been established in all major cities and provinces. This form of unionisation is gaining increasing significance since it is in these petty-scale enterprises that most irregular workers are concentrated. There are also general unions which aim to organise women irregular workers such as Seoul Women's Trade Union, Korean Women's Trade Union and the National Federation of Women's Trade Unions. They offer union education, conduct collective bargaining and provide legal advice particularly for gender discrimination and sexual harassment. They have been also very actively organising branches of the union in small workplaces. These unions also function as solidarity hubs of irregular workers in different workplaces and occupations and organise national and regional campaigns by combining some similar urgent issues their members are facing at and outside work. In 2010, a new general union has been established to address specific issues of the youth working poor aged from 15 to 39. This Youth Union is concerned about the fact that the vast majority of youth workers are suffering from insecure employment and lowest wages. These difficulties are exacerbated with the long period of job-seeking mostly due to limited experiences and skills. The union is open not only to irregular workers but also to job seekers. Although the union has been assisted by the KCTU, the union maintains its independence and pursues a union without 'too high walls' around. Their activities are characterised with more informal networks and discussions mainly organised online. Although it is a small organisation with only about 500 members, it managed to launch a national campaign for union recognition and has won it recently.

Struggles organised by workers in special employment or 'disguised freelancers' in the service sector also widened the basis of labour organising. Good examples can be found in the struggle of private tutors and lorry drivers. A month long strike of private tutors in Jeneung Education to organise a union in 1999 and subsequent struggles of Jeneung Education Teachers' Labour Union to have a collective agreement with the employer proved that the increasing self-employed 'workers' were actually eligible for collective action and bargaining and other workers' rights as they are subjected to relation of control with the service providing firms. Many other nominally 'self-employed' also managed to organise trade unions, in spite of an on-going dispute about their legal status as 'workers'. The lorry drivers' strike in 2008 was another successful case. The lorry drivers had to organise themselves into an alliance of individual cargo transportation workers (*Hwamulyeondae*) rather than a trade union as there was no legal employment relation between them and the user companies. However, the association managed to force the user companies to have collective bargaining with the drivers after a successful nation-wide general strike. The government could not find legitimate methods to stop the strike action of the alliance because the drivers did not violate any legal 'employment contracts' with employers. It demonstrated that new methods devised by capital to utilise labour in more profitable ways can always be dealt with new forms of organising which often go beyond existing union boundaries.

Because of these struggles of informal workers, there is growing awareness of the importance of solidarity-building with irregular workers from within the traditional labour movement. The KCTU is increasingly involved in organising the irregular segment of the working class. The KCTU introduced a 'strategic organising plan' in 2003, targeting unorganised irregular workers. In 2005, KCTU leadership announced an ambitious training programme for organisers and a fundraising campaign aiming at total US\$ 4 million for organising initiatives for irregular workers. The KCTU also launched a three-year strategic organising campaign and sent out 24 specially trained organisers to industrial federations in 2006. The Korean labour movement is witnessing the shifting centre of labour militancy from the large enterprise unions in the manufacturing sector to irregular workers in small- and medium-size manufacturing firms and the service industry (Shin, 2010). Demonstrating this shift, almost all major militant struggles between from 2005 have been organised by unions of workers in informal and insecure jobs, including the Korea Train Express (KTX) Union, Daegu Gyeongbuk Construction Workers Union, Pohang Construction Workers Union and New Core Workers Union.

5. Informal workers' association in Cambodia

Another case of the emerging movement of new value-subjects is from Cambodia. The Cambodian experience is important in the sense that the social movements of new value-subjects in the informal economy develop hand in hand with the struggles of the industrial working class which is itself not too old, informalising and has made a conscious effort to overcome the barriers between

formal and informal labour. Cambodia became an integral part of the neoliberal rise of East Asia since regaining peace in 1999. Influx of international aid with structural adjustment programmes encouraged free market economy and export-oriented industrialisation. Since then Cambodia, a country of 14.3 million people with half of them being under 20 years old, has been growing fast with a 9.3% average annual growth rate between 2000 and 2008. GDP per capita (in current US$) reached US $710 by 2008. Although Cambodia is still largely an agrarian economy with more than 70% of workforce employed in agriculture, the contribution of value-added in agriculture (forestry, hunting, fishing, cultivation of crops and livestock production) to total GDP accounts only for 35% in 2008 while the share of industrial value-added to GDP in 2008 was 24%.[5] Value-added in agriculture in Cambodia increased relatively slowly at the annual average of 5.4% between 2006 and 2008 while value-added in industry increased faster with 10.2% average annual growth (ADB, 2011). Cambodia's fast economic growth in the last decade heavily relied on the expanding garment production network of East Asia and it is the garment industry that has been single-handedly sustaining Cambodia's industrial output growth as well as export growth with up to 90% of total export revenue coming from the sector which employed around 350,000 workers in 2008 (Arnold, 2009: 116). However, the garment sector exists as an island industry relying almost entirely on imported materials, foreign capital and export markets (Arnold and Shih, 2010). The service sector is also growing faster than agriculture with a 9.73% growth rate between 2006 and 2008 (ADB, 2011). Increasing income from tourism, which is an important foreign currency earner only second to the garment industry, contributes a lot to the service sector growth.

In Cambodia, informal workers are not exceptionally underprivileged population. Rather informal labour is a norm and standard form of employment, accounting for about 85% of the total working population (Arnold, 2009: 109). An absolute majority of informal workers are own-accounted workers and contributing family workers, accounting for 39.6% and 42.9% of total employment in 2008 respectively (ASEAN, 2010: 58). The persistent informalisation of labour is based both on the increasing population working in the informal sector and informalising formal sector employment. The former is a result of the limited capacity of the urban and rural industries to absorb young population entering the labour market in mass, approximately about 300,000 every year (Kem et al., 2011: 111). The urban informal sector expands with the continuous inflow of migrant workers from impoverished rural communities where households are suffering from increasing debts, dubious land titles and increasing land grabs by few powerful players of national and local economy often in collaboration with strong political figures (Arnold, 2008). Those who are lucky and capable enough to get jobs in the urban formal sector are also subjected to increasing informalisation as informal work arrangement is emerging from within the formal sector mostly due to the increasing popularity

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[5] Based on World Bank Database.

of 'Fixed Duration Contracts' (FDCs), raging from 3 to 6 months, among employers in manufacturing in general and the garment industry in particular (Arnold, 2009; Arnold and Shih, 2010).

In fact Cambodia's urban economy cannot survive without a large variety of informal workers such as street vendors, small restaurant keepers, roadside barbers, motor-taxi and tuktuk drivers, street gasoline sellers, construction workers, garbage collectors, sex workers and other 'entertainers', shoe-shiners and many others (Arnold, 2009). These informal workers in Cambodia do not have clear employment relations with those they are working for and their workplaces are not registered. Consequently, they are not regarded as workers by law and they also share the idea that workers are those who work at factories. Naturally, these informal workers are not protected by any labour-related legislation. To make matters worse, they are always exposed to occupational hazards as well as daily harassment by the authority collecting 'informal taxes'. It was in this context that the Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA) was born.

The IDEA began in 2005 with 130 founding members to organise a trade union for self-employed transportation workers driving tuktuks and motor-taxis. However, the Ministry of Labour refused the registration of the IDEA as a union because IDEA members did not have employment relations. The IDEA had to register with the Ministry of Interior as an association in 2006. Nevertheless, the IDEA expanded quickly to include about 3,800 members as of June 2011 (Interview with General Secretary 6 August 2011). The majority of IDEA members includes tuktuk drivers, motor taxi drivers and street vendors. However, the IDEA also organises cart-pullers, small restaurant workers and home-based workers. Members are mostly male aged from 25 to 35, reflecting the major occupation of members - drivers. Most of IDEA members are in major cities such as Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville and Kandal. However, most of the members are migrant workers from rural provinces. These workers go back to their hometown in the farming season to help out their relatives and family. Most of them make a real income of about US $100-150 per month. Given Cambodia's wage level, this is not the lowest income in urban areas, however their income fluctuates severely according to the season. Members' education level varies but most of them are secondary school graduates. Drivers in their middle ages are particularly poorly educated while there are even university graduates among younger drivers. Street vendors and cart-pullers are perhaps among the most poorly educated groups and it is not rare for them to be illiterate.

The IDEA's major activities include 'social bargaining', campaigns, various education programmes and welfare services all of which are then used to organise members. The IDEA constantly monitors and tries to address difficulties informal economy workers are facing. For example, the authority often forbids tuktuk or motors from parking their vehicles close to big buildings or high-class hotels. The IDEA negotiates with the local authority to allow those drivers to park in those areas. In this way, the association can widen contact

with informal economy workers and earn credibility. The IDEA's biggest campaign was about the customary behaviour of the transportation authority to ask for extra money when drivers paid road tax or renewed their licenses. When drivers refused to pay extra charge, the authority responded with longer waiting time or even refused to renew their licenses. IDEA organisers often had to accompany workers when they renewed their licenses or paid road tax to prevent this. Later the IDEA investigated and monitored these illegal taxing closely and identified 90 government officers heavily involved in this business. The IDEA produced a report and sent it to National Anti-Corruption Committee. Phnom Penh city had to dismiss 30 officers and suspended 60 officers (Interview with General Secretary 6 August 2011). The IDEA is also campaigning to stop the police from overcharging traffic violators. This extra money, which became an important income source of traffic police officers in cities, can cost the entire daily income for tuktuk and motor taxi drivers. The authority often threatens the drivers with cancellation of license. Campaigns against such problems and subsequent bargaining with the authority on behalf of members are essentially public, not only benefiting IDEA members but also worker in informal economy and general population. Public campaign and social bargaining emerged as major tools for the IDEA. It is an innovative way to turn around the difficult conditions of informal economy workers who do not have a direct counterpart for collective bargaining.

The IDEA also provides useful services to its members, which can be turned into effective tools to organise members. For instance, the IDEA rents 2 hours airtime per week from a radio channel. In this programme, members of the IDEA talk about the problems of informal economy workers, offer some legal advice and problem-solving tips. They often invite workers to the radio station and share their problems with the audience. This programme is available in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. The IDEA also has education programme on freedom of association. The association also arranges free education on traffic laws in collaboration with the traffic law school. Another service the association provides is a mutual-help fund. About 20% of their membership fees goes to this to support mostly accident victims and their families (interview with General Secretary 6 August 2011).

What is more important regarding the IDEA's development is that the association has been nurtured and assisted by unions in the most well established industry – the garment industry. The IDEA's birth in 2005 was largely an initiative of the Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Unions (CCAWDU), which is, contrary to other 'political unions' in Cambodia, led by a leadership elected from 30,000 rank and file workers and perhaps the most independent and progressive trade union (Arnold, 2009: 119). The IDEA was set up to organise former garment workers who had become tuktuk and motor-taxi drivers. The founding members of the IDEA already knew CCAWDU organisers from their experience in garment factories. The CCAWDU helped put those workers together as 'organising teams' and started from there mobilising more members among the drivers. Organising informal workers needed a different approach as they were extremely mobile. Organisers set up 'small units

of informal workers who happened to have same spare time for meetings and discussion' (Sri, 2011: 15-16). Organisers often visited workers communities whenever they were available to talk. The IDEA then joined the CCAWDU, the Cambodian Food and Service Workers Federation (CFSWF) and the Cambodia Independent Civil Servant Association (CICA) to establish the Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC) in 2006. By incorporating two major industrial unions organising informal workers, the CLC became an effective vehicle to organise informal workers and formal workers together. The CLC later also invited the Cambodian Tourism and Service Workers Federation (CTSWF), the Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia (BWTUC) and the Farmers Association for Peace and Development (FAPD) all of which have members in the informal economy. Rather than competing for territories, individual federations under the CLC leadership work together to organise informal workers whose works are often difficult to be clearly defined by occupations or industries (Arnold, 2009: 119).

6. Toward social movements of labour

The cases discussed above show the contradiction of capitalist labour and its social mediation expands and so did the struggles of value-subjects. These new value-subjects are not merely passive victims of the neoliberal rise of East Asia but actively participating in shaping the future of East Asia despite all external constraints they have to handle. Perhaps the most important point they demonstrate is that the struggles of value-subjects can cut across different classes of labour and occur both in and against the expanding circuit of capital. The AOP in Thailand demonstrates how struggles against the expanding circuit of capital in rural areas can expand to incorporate the urban informal working classes who struggle within the circuit of capital while Cambodian case shows perhaps the most encouraging picture of emerging solidarity between the classes of informal labour in the formal and informal sector. The emerging movement of Korea's irregular worker and Chinese migrant workers' struggle show that these new value-subjects are capable of building power from the margins.

However, the newly emerging vibrant and dynamic movements of the new value-subjects are far from creating an extensive basis for a unified social movement. While turning people into value-subjects, the neoliberal rise of East Asia at the same time builds and strengthens hierarchy within value-subjects. The segmentation of value-subjects can create a situation that the immanent power of different subversive subjects and their movements would not be automatically turning into a powerful movement for alternative development. While it is the capacity of cutting across different classes of labour and spaces of capital accumulation that can make these movements strong, it is also the incapacity of doing so that can contain these movements as isolated incidents. When these struggles at different points of the expanding circuit of capital 'fail to circulate and combine, the movement decomposes, throwing off fragmentary, and incompatible responses to problems of capitalist globalization' (Dyer-

Witheford, 2006: 23). The biggest barrier against the possible creation of a unified movement is the disjuncture between traditional working class organisations and new movements. More often than not, these emerging movements of value-subjects develop without being articulated with the existing trade union movement of the industrial working class. The further development of the working poor's movement in Thailand displays the magnitude of this common challenge in a striking way.

Although the new movement of the rural poor successfully expanded to incorporate the most marginal class of urban informal labour and built an alliance with the SOE trade unions against neoliberal globalisation, the alliance was a short-lived one as a severe political division between them emerged amid rising power struggles between the two powerful groups of Thai elites, loosely defined as royalists and Thaksin supporters. It was the SOE union leaders who were not capable enough to mobilise independent political force against Thaksin's plan for privatisation and eventually joined the royalist People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) established by a media tycoon Sonthi Limthongkul in Feb 2006. In doing so, they relinquished themselves to the existing power relations of elite politics. The PAD at the beginning appeared to be an effective additional platform for Thai social movements to escalate the anti-globalisation movement against the Thaksin government (Chanyapate and Chomthongdi, 2008: 1). However, many in Thai social movements who had rendered their power to the PAD soon had to give their power to someone else again, the military. The military coup in September 2006 faced surprisingly little resistance from the traditional players in Thai social movements. Only a few NGOs activists, workers and farmers with strong determination for democracy marched in protest to the military. In the mean time, middle class citizens of Bangkok, a PAD stronghold, rather welcomed the military who did the job 'on behalf of' them. This showed backward development, featured by collusion between established labour unions and the conservative wing of the ruling class. Even then, this alliance was not strong enough to defeat Thaksin's cohorts who now formed the People Power Party (PPP). The PPP won a landslide victory in 2008 election. In defiance to this 'democratic' result, the PAD finally launched indefinite sit-in strike in the government house from May 2008, calling for a 'Thai model' of democracy which effectively excludes ordinary people, particularly the uneducated in rural areas. In support to the PAD, the SOE unions called for a general strike. Now actors in the social movements had to decide which was the least bad choice and joined the year-long yellow-red conflicts in which people's democratic aspiration was consumed for political gains of different segments of the ruling elites.

The AOP failed to avoid being caught in this emerging power struggle and got into trouble with different factions supporting Thaksin or the King's idea of sufficient economy. The network-like organisational structure and 'political strategy of diversity and autonomy', which once functioned to keep internal diversity alive within the AOP, seems to have had a dismal impact on the organisation. Some of AOP members from the North joined the 'Caravan of the Poor for Democracy' in protest to the PAD that threatened Thaksin's pro-poor

policies such as access to loans from the one million baht village funds, land title deeds for some occupiers of degraded forest reserves, and the thirty-baht universal healthcare scheme (Chanyapate and Chomthongdi, 2008: 1). Later, the AOP became an important element of the Red-shirt movement which was certainly dedicated to defend Thai democracy however with a dubious relation with Thaksin. On the other hand, the AOP's most influential adviser and supporter, Somkiat Pongpaibun became a member of the PAD. This division worsened later as King's concept of 'sufficient economy', which is based on the image of non-capitalist rural Thai villages, attracted some more AOP members. Thai experience shows a complete disjuncture between the emerging movements of underprivileged value-subjects and the established trade union movement. The distance between the two leading organisations of each segment of value-subjects in Thailand — the AOP and SOE unions - was a very large one as the AOP, despite its urban expansion, remained to be a rural movement of people at the edge of the expanding circuit of capital while SOE unions were located at the centre of the circuit. The AOP could not cut across these two segmented classes of labour.

Migrant workers' struggles in China show a huge gap between existing labour unions and the emerging movement of new value-subjects, on the one hand, and workers' attempts to directly address the problem of the disjuncture, on the other. The importance of the 2010 strikes and particularly the HAPM workers' strike is that they demonstrated in a dramatic way the reluctance of the existing trade union to be part of the workers movements and began to question directly the legitimacy of the union. Indeed, it was not the first time that the ACFTU's legitimacy was questioned seriously and workers seek for an alternative to the ACFTU. The ACFTU has become a target of both local and international criticism since the beginning of the capitalist transformation of China largely due to their subornation to the party-state, decreasing representativeness in shrinking SOEs and absence of its influence in the growing private sector. Calling for an independent union movement, autonomous unionism emerged during the Tiananmen uprising and continues to exist despite remaining small (Lee, 2010: 73-74). Disbelief in the ACFTU leadership has been expressed also in large-scale workers' protests in Liaoyang and Daqing between 2001 and 2002, where local workers elected their own representatives and formed temporary unions throughout a series of coordinated actions for fairer severance package and solution for unemployment (Lee, 2010: 70-71; Lee, 2007a: 26-32). However, this is first time that migrant workers collectively and publically demanded the reform of the ACFTU. When this demand of ACFTU reform was presented repeatedly by migrant workers in the wave of strikes after HAPM strike, the ACFTU had to recognise the magnitude of the problem and acted upon it.

The ACFTU urged local unions to strive to establish unions in FIEs and private enterprises. It also urged enterprise unions to promote collective wage negotiation and make use of the collective contract system at the enterprise level (China Labour Bulletin, 2011: 39-40), aiming to introduce systematic collective wage negotiation in up to 60 % of all enterprises with a trade union by the end of 2011 (China Labour Bulletin, 2011: 40). However, it is quite doubtful that

these new tactics will bring a real reform of the ACFTU. It seems that the ACFTU has no intention to change its priority in acting as a mediator between management and workers rather than as representative of the workers. Enterprise unions are expected to 'harmoniously' mediate labour relations in private firms and create corporatism with 'Chinese characteristics'. The mediating role of enterprise unions will be enhanced by 'professionalization of trade union officers' who will be sent by higher level ACFTU offices, rather than by ensuring workplace democracy (IHLO, 2010). From the vantage point of the ACFTU, it is perhaps a reasonable response to the criticism of the party-state as the party's criticism of union is most of all about the lack of union's contribution to stable and harmonious development rather than about its failure to represent workers. With the ACFTU as the only institutional basis of the workers' movement and ACFTU reform being the only organisational achievement of the struggle of new value-subjects, the creation of an extensive basis and inclusive organisation for the diverse classes of labour seems quite far from being reality. It is also problematic that the ACFTU is standing in the middle between the on-going struggles of local workers in SOEs and newly emerging struggles of the new generation migrant workers in private and foreign-invested firms, making the movements of two groups develop in parallel rather than in unity.

Irregular workers' struggles in Korea also show that they are capable of cutting across the diverse classes of informal labour through innovative organising campaigns. It also shows that organising at the margin pushed the established trade union movement to recognise the urgency to organise the new and underprivileged value-subjects. However, it is too early to say that the existing union movement and irregular workers' movements are truly connected and integrated. The barrier between regular and irregular workers, represented by the persisting protectionism of regular workers, is still firmly in place. This contributes to making organising informal labour extremely slow - only 2% of informal workers are organised by trade unions. Although the KCTU repeatedly emphasises the importance of organising the unorganised, the democratic trade union movement is still largely, if not exclusively, based on the power of the large-scale enterprise unions of regular workers and solidarity between them. Unions have been stubbornly sticking to the methods of earning concessions from individual employers and thereby satisfying union members within the enterprises. Sluggish development in organising irregular workers makes the union movement into a 'league of their own', creating a crisis of representativeness of the existing unions for the working class as a whole (Yang, 2007).

It is important to notice that, in all above-mentioned cases except the Cambodian one, these movements of new value-subjects did *not* expand through physical extension of the existing trade union movement but by building their own power through their own organisations. This demonstrates the capacity of new value-subjects, on the one hand, and a serious problem with the capacity and strategy of the existing trade unions in East Asia, on the other hand, calling for a serious reconsideration of theories, strategies and practice of the labour movement. Overcoming the increasingly narrowing focuses of the

trade union movement and dislocation of trade unions from diverse social justice movements has been a major concern of theories and practices of social movement trade unionism (SMU). SMU emerged from critiques of the impotent reaction of the institutionalised labour movement to the decreasing social power of labour. SMU relies on inspiration from the newly emerging militant labour movements in late-developing countries (Moody, 1997; Lambert, 1998; Scipe, 1993; Seidman, 1994), as well as the global social justice movement and new social movement theories (Waterman, 2004). Contrary to various union renewal projects from the traditional left, which tended to defend, rather than rethink, the traditional labour movement, SMU called for a more 'thorough reorientation' of union practices. SMU aimed to revitalise the social power of trade unions not by 'technically' repairing the existing trade unions but by getting back movement orientation, radically changing union structures, developing new methods of organising and reforming union leadership. SMU is also an aggressive and outward strategy in the sense that it emphasises the significance of mobilising the unorganised and 'unions' alliances with other community and social organisations in order to achieve union goals' (Moody, 1997: 59). SMU, according to Moody, 'implies an active strategic orientation that uses the strongest of society's oppressed and exploited, generally organized workers, to mobilize those who are less able to sustain self-mobilization: the poor, the unemployed, the casualized workers, the neighbourhood organizations' (Moody, 1997: 59). However, despite emphasis on solidarity with 'other movements', its view of the working class largely remains to be monolithic and centred on the traditional industrial working class. Major theories of SMU still have a strong tendency to identify the waged working class as the vanguard of labour and the existing union form as the major if not sole vehicle of the emancipatory struggles of value-subjects and therefore not free from the old theories and practices of the labour movement (Waterman, 2004). Newly emerging struggles take a 'but-also' status in this framework as it retains the industrial working class centralism in social progress.

This is perhaps understandable as SMU was originally a strategy for the established union movement, calling for a proper response from the existing union movement to global neoliberalism. However, this is precisely the reason why the emerging movements of new value-subjects need a lot more than SMU. What we need urgently is perhaps not a strategy for existing unions to expand but a theory and strategy to integrate the union movement back into the wider movements of value-subjects, the driving force of which is the emerging struggles of new value-subjects. This does not mean the labour movement should be considered irrelevant vis-à-vis the emerging movements of new value-subjects. Rather it is to see the labour movement as a part of the wider social movements of labour. The labour movement in the advanced capitalist countries developed by turning the area of immediate production into a frontline of struggles of value-subjects and succeeded in turning the industrial workforce into a social force. However, it is no longer justifiable to prioritise a particular frontline of struggles, such as workplaces, against the expanding circuit of capital. The social movements of labour cannot be only about a group

of industrial workers demanding justice to industrial capitalists. The social consequence of the majority of population becoming value-subjects with the expanding circuit of capital was that the 'traditional locus of exploitation between capital and labour in the workplace has not been transcended, but expanded' (Dyer-Witheford, 2002: 8). Concomitantly, class 'can no longer be discussed in terms solely of the division between owners and workers at the point of production' (Dyer-Witheford, 2002: 9).

While the established labour movement was staying within its comfort zones, the basis of the social movement of labour has widened with the expanding circuit of capital. The union movement is to be placed and considered as a part of an integrated process of struggles against the expanding circuit of capital, i.e. of *the social movements of labour.* '*The social movements of labour*' reasserts the recognition of the important and central role played by capitalist labour not only as a productive activity and means of subsistence but also as a social substance that mediates the reproduction of social relations, however without singularising a particular moment of the circuit of capital. It is important to recognise that the relations between the contradiction of capital relations and 'other' contradictions are not external but internal ones. The good news is that we are not starting from scratch, as there are ample examples of attempts to transform the diverse struggles of value-subjects into a unified front of the social movements of labour. But this political project is not to be a revival or uncritical acceptance of old labour politics that would cut off the subversive voices from below by imposing an orthodoxy onto the diversified actors of the social movements of labour. Contemporary struggles against global neoliberalism in East Asia illustrate the multiplying social movements of labour as well as the urgency for better articulation between the movements of old and new value-subjects.

Conclusion

The East Asian miracle is nothing but a result of the neoliberal rise of East Asia in which the expanding circuit of capital turned the vast majority of population into value-subjects living, working and reproducing at different moments of the circuit of capital. Neoliberal development also brought a particular social form of labour to which these newly created value-subjects relate for reproduction. Increasingly insecure and informal labour has become the backbone of development in East Asia, turning it into a workshop of the world. Although this particular working class composition was central to East Asian development, labour has been completely missing in all these feverish discussions about the alternative supposedly created by rising East Asia. If East Asia is creating any alternative to neoliberal development, it would be created not by peculiar interventionist states or Confucian work ethic and entrepreneurship or mysterious 'oriental' propensity toward harmonious development but by the continuing struggles of value-subjects in East Asia. We investigated four different moments of these struggles. Challenges of value-subjects against the neoliberal rise of East Asia take extremely diverse forms. The poor's movement

in Thailand, emerging movement of migrant workers in China, irregular workers' unions in Korea and informal economy association in Cambodia all demonstrate that these new value-subjects are capable of cutting across the diverse classes of informal labour. However, as most dramatically demonstrated in the further development of the poor movement in Thailand, the disjuncture between the social movements of new value-subjects and the established movement of the core industrial working class is not easy to overcome. These struggles outside the organised labour movement will encourage the union movement to reconsider its strategy. However, what we need urgently is perhaps not a strategy for existing unions to expand but a theory and strategy to integrate the union movement back into the wider social movements of labour, the driving force of which is the emerging struggles of new value-subjects.

Acknowledgement

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About the author

Dae-oup Chang is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Development Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London (SOAS). His research interests include labour relations and movements in East Asia and the political economy of East Asian development. His recent publications include *Capitalist Development in Korea: Labour, Capital and the Myth of the Developmental State* (2009, Routledge) and 'Informalising Labour in Asia's Global Factory' (2009, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 39, No. 2). His contact is dc13 AT soas.ac.uk.

Labour movements in the global South: a prominent role in struggles against neoliberal globalisation?

Joe Sutcliffe

Abstract

The age of global neoliberalism has created a crisis for traditional unionism, yet the belief that labour movements have been fundamentally undermined is spurious. Neoliberal globalisation has created a new operating context for labour, yet scholarship has commonly either emphasised the vast challenges this new context has created for labour movements or posited new social movements as the standard bearers of anti-neoliberal struggles – setting aside labour movements as the remnants of a bygone era. This action note questions such perspectives by evidencing the extent to which labour movements in the global south remain prominent forces in anti-neoliberal struggles, exploring how they have adapted to the challenges of informalisation and the rise of new social movements engaging in progressive causes beyond traditional union concerns. In doing so, this note outlines some general principles for southern union engagement with informal workers, new social movements and actors in the global north, which create opportunities for mutual benefits and the strengthening of shared struggles against neoliberal globalisation.[1]

Neoliberal globalisation and contemporary struggle

The wave of global neoliberalism that emerged in the 1980s has been described by Harvey as 'creative destruction', in that state sovereignty, 'divisions of labour, social relations, welfare provisions...ways of thought, and the like' (2007: 23) have been destroyed in order to create a neoliberal world of capital mobility, free trade, flexible labour and the market-compliant economic governance of the minimal state and international financial institutions (Munck 2004: 253). The recent financial crisis points to the failure of neoliberal globalisation as a strategy for economic growth (Harvey 2007: 34), and increasing inequalities and poverty reveal the subjugation of labour in recent decades, particularly within the global south (Chang and Grabel 2004). Yet despite this reality seeming ripe for labour discontent, neoliberal globalisation appears to have strongly undermined the labour movement. Neo-Gramscian scholars emphasise the existence of a transnational capitalist class, or 'historical bloc' (Stephen 2011: 213) which underlies the hegemonic power of global capital in its neoliberal guise, and is often considered a 'unitary, absolute power against which counter-movements are helpless' (Stephen 2011: 210). The neoliberal

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[1] An earlier version of this item was published at e-ir.info.

project has certainly had a strong impact upon labour, with de-unionisation and government hostility towards unionism, the casualisation of employment through flexible labour relations and the promulgation of the informal sector a ubiquitous phenomenon across the global south (Lindell 2010). In this reading, capital has 'outmanoeuvred' (Lambert 2001: 341) and fundamentally overpowered labour (Boswell and Dimitris 1997) and it is certainly undeniable that workers in the global south face immense difficulties in attempting to confront neoliberal globalisation (Lopez 2005).

The growth of the informal sector is of particular concern for labour movements in the global south, and its growing importance is argued to be undermining their resistance capacity. Informal workers engage in economic activities outside of formal employment, often avoiding or circumventing state regulations, and they account for a huge percentage of the workforce in the global south; the figure for India stands at around 95% (O'Brien 2000). Informal workers are therefore not unionised, and the number of people engaged in the sector has increased dramatically under neoliberal globalisation as public sector employment has contracted (Agarwala 2007). Equally, labour conditions have become more flexible and casualised, with many workers in the formal sector now also unable to be unionised (Barchiesi 2010). A clear example of casualised labour is provided by Export Processing Zones (EPZs); highly de-regulated enclaves of export manufacturing in which labour rights and unionism are actively suppressed. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has now included these casualised workers within its working definition of informal workers (Barchiesi 2011). The dominance of informality in the global south makes effective labour movements appear unlikely, as the wide variety of employment relations makes for a 'multiplicity of class formations' (Lindell 2010: 209) - purportedly delaying the creation of a unified class consciousness - and governments actively curtail unionism under the panoptic eye of global capital. These realities of neoliberal hegemony have led scholars to question the ability of trade unions (TUs) to function within a world of growing informality and, indeed, many have questioned the ability of the growing number of informal sector workers to organise themselves at all in the struggle against neoliberal globalisation (Bayat 2000).

However, the idea that growing informalisation has fatally undermined the resistance capacity of workers in the global south is misleading, as resistance is clearly evident and frequently organised. Agarwala's (2007) research considers a plethora of informal worker organisations in India, and reveals how they have forced the state to enact welfare reforms and make employers recognise them as legitimate workers. Organisations emerging from and defending the rights of informal sector workers are evident across Asia, Africa and Latin America (Agarwala 2007; Lindell 2010), and their organisational scope has reached all the way to the international stage. StreetNet International is one example among many, representing thirty national organisations acting to protect the rights of informal street vendors (StreetNet International n.d.). Such agencies now engage with the ILO in order to put informal worker's issues onto the international agenda (Lindell 2010). It is evident that depictions of a

monolithic neoliberal hegemony are misleading, as collective forms of worker resistance are apparent even in the informal economy - the very phenomenon suggested to have undermined organised resistance. This reveals how neoliberal globalisation has both acted to undermine labour resistance, yet created new sites of struggle and new forms of resistance to its hegemony. It is therefore important to not conceptualise neoliberal globalisation 'as a monolith but as a complex, contingent and hybrid set of shifting social relations' (Munck 2004: 258).

Once the organised resistance capacity of an informalised global south is accepted, questions still remain regarding the utility of labour movements under neoliberal hegemony. TUs in the global south have suffered declining membership as the informal sector grows, and the new forms of resistance that have emerged often do so around issues and causes beyond the workplace, such as land, social and political rights, and even welfare demands (Agarwala 2007). The heterogeneity of the actors involved and the specific ends pursued by these groups clearly differentiate them from traditional labour movements, and a large number are considered new social movements which are reflective of, and better suited to, the heterogeneous class and employment relations of the informal sector. The Zapatista movement in Mexico, and the transnational peasants rights group La Via Campesina, are notable examples of dynamic and powerful social movements, engaged in struggles over issues which appear beyond the scope of labour movements (Khasnabish 2004; La Via Campesina, n.d.). Equally, the Egyptian Revolution represents perhaps the most resonant example of a mass social movement – or more accurately a conglomeration of social movements – struggling against not just political authoritarianism but also the disastrous consequences of neoliberalism for the Egyptian people (Joya 2011). All this has led some scholars (Castells 1997) to suggest that within the new context of global neoliberalism, it is these new social movements which represent the new core of resistance, with labour movements witnessing terminal decline as they are historically superseded by forms of resistance more suited to fighting the contemporary nature of global capital.

Whilst struggles against neoliberal globalisation are evident in the global south, it can be argued that labour movements will no longer play a significant role in these struggles. However, these claims do not appear well grounded. Whilst some social movements have proven themselves powerful centres of organisation and action these are exceptional cases, with social movements in general facing numerous problems and often lacking the capacity for sustained mass action (Friedman 2012; Moody 1997). South Africa is an example of a country in which the union movement retains a larger membership base than is found among the social movements, and the majority of the latter have failed to achieve concrete progress towards their goals (Friedman 2012). Equally, evidence from the Philippines suggests that labour movements have emerged within informal settings, even under the watchful gaze of vehemently anti-union governments, and provide a leading challenge to neoliberal globalisation in these contexts (McKay 2006). Importantly, labour organising in the EPZs of the Philippines indicates a labour movement evolving and adapting to the new

realities of the neoliberal hegemony and the emergence of new social movements. More established labour movements in countries as diverse as South Africa, South Korea and Brazil are also credited with laying the groundwork for a potential solution to the problems faced by both labour and social movements - Social Movement Unionism (SMU). Central to the idea of Social Movement Unionism (Moody 1997) is a labour movement that spreads union involvement beyond the immediate workplace, including civil society groups and social movements as part of a broad-church movement. This form of organisation is posited as being mutually beneficial for the parties involved, offering social movements access to the 'economic leverage and organisational resources' of the TUs, whilst providing unions with greater numbers and access to 'less well organised or positioned sections of the working class' (Moody 1997: 60). SMU also emphasises the need to forge cooperative networks from the local to the international level, enabling a multi-spatial response to the pervasive neoliberal hegemony (Moody 1997). SMU therefore offers the possibility of an anti-neoliberal movement that crosses numerous hitherto uncrossed boundaries, between labour and civil society, the formal and informal sectors, local/national/regional/international spaces and the global north and south, and offers a clear blueprint for the continued vitality of the labour movement in struggles against neoliberal globalisation (Waterman and Wills 2001).

Social movement unionism: problems and emergent solutions

Unfortunately, Moody's specification of SMU is problematic both theoretically and practically. Moody frequently refers to TUs as central to mobilising and organising other sections of the working class deemed 'less able to sustain self-mobilisation' (1997: 59). Yet unions in South Africa have proven themselves ineffective in facilitating organisation in the varied class realities of the informal sector (Friedman 2012: 96) and TUs have tended to view social movements active within the sector largely as recruiting grounds; simply offering access to increased membership (Gallin 2001). Zambia provides an example how some TUs have aimed predominantly at the formalisation of the informal economy, attempting to co-opt informal workers and organisations into union structures and formal labour concerns (Heidenreich 2007). Union engagement with social movements and the informal sector thus appears geared towards amassing support for the union's agenda of formal workplace issues, to the detriment of social movement grievances beyond the shop floor (Amoore and Langley 2004). Furthermore, Bandy (2004) suggests that labour's focus on unionisation when working within broad civil society coalitions has led to a diminished emphasis on women's economic concerns, environmental problems and other issues which transcend those of the workplace. The minimisation of women's economic concerns is a particularly pressing problem for southern unions, as women constitute the majority of workers in the informal sector and EPZs; the very spaces in which traditional unionism is at its weakest (Gallin 2001).

Attempts by labour to encourage SMU across spatial levels have also encountered problems. The globalising tendency of neoliberal hegemony has created opportunities for transnational modes of resistance, but 'transnational civil society is home to great inequalities of material, political, and cultural capital' (Bandy 2004: 426). Ties between unions, social movements and NGOs in the global south and north can result in an unhealthy dependency, whereby the financial endowments of northern organisations allow them to impose their views on southern organisations, and hold a more powerful voice in joint decisions which undermines democratic principles and the voices of the poorest (Bandy 2004). Southern TUs themselves have endured financial reliance upon international, and largely northern-based, TU federations – raising accusations of northern agenda setting and subsequent lack of internal democracy (Moyo and Yeros 2007). It is apparent that in their attempts to transcend the divides between labour and social movements, formal and informal sectors and global north and south, labour movements have exhibited behaviours and structural weakness which suggest they may be ill-suited to forwarding the needs of the poor in the contemporary socio-economic landscape of the global south.

However, whilst the problems and challenges of resistance should not be downplayed, labour movements have also proven themselves adept at navigating these challenges and finding solutions; offering guidelines for a prominent and effective role for labour movements in anti-neoliberal struggles. Whilst some unions have attempted to co-opt social movements and informal sector organisations, others have established far more cooperative relationships with groups and movements whose aims coincide, if not mirror, those of labour. An example is the cooperation seen between the independent labour movement and the Zapatista movement in Mexico, in which 'neither movement becomes subordinated to the other...rather, their linkage and solidarity is a product of conjunction and coincidence as each sees the other as engaged in a similar, though by no means identical, struggle' (Khasnabish 2004: 273). Cooperation between labour and social movements, and an attempted 'synergy between organising styles and strategies' can provide mutual benefits for both parties, with labour movements in particular becoming 'more aware of the importance of organising outside the workplace, the difficulties which this presents and the approaches necessary to build strength in the society beyond the formal labour market' (Friedman 2012: 96). An acceptance of internal differences within shared struggles must therefore inform labour movement strategy, moving beyond rigid and homogenising understandings of a unified working class body, in order to gain from the benefits of mutual organisation. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has made noticeable progress in this regard, avoiding the failures of many union movements to engage with informal workers by facilitating the establishment of the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations (ZCIEA) as a cooperative yet independent body (Chinguno 2011). ZCIEA has full access to ZCTU's research and lobbying apparatus and with a current membership of approximately 2 million informal workers, demonstrates the promising potential of formal-informal worker cooperation (Chinguno 2011).

Cooperative engagement with social movements and informal workers also helps ensure that broader political/social concerns are not subsumed under the agenda of formal labour. Commentators are cautiously optimistic that ZCIEA is acting to empower the women who make up the majority of informal sector workers, facilitating activism on the vital issues that concern them as part of a broader anti-neoliberal activism affiliated with the labour movement (Wilson 2010). Organisations for informal sector women are increasingly evident, and transnational organising assisted by WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising) has seen informal sector women connected with unions, NGOs and researchers to advance their cause on multiple spatial levels (WIEGO N/D). This is reflective of the vitality of labour activism among women in certain parts of the global south, pushing acceptance of their issues into the labour movement and civil society more broadly. The greater integration of the problems facing informal sector women into the labour movement agenda is indicative of TUs moving beyond formal, shopfloor concerns and embracing the wider debates of social movement allies. Despite the potential problems noted, the increasing prominence of women's economic concerns demonstrates why this trend should continue to be encouraged and pursued.

Finally, it is apparent that to avoid the power inequalities and anti-democratic consequences seen when crossing the global north/south divide, labour and social movements in the south should seek strategic partnerships in the north whilst retaining a strong basis in local organisation. McKay's (2006) study of informal labour movements in the EPZs of the Philippines reveals the efficacy of this strategy, with a locally directed labour movement forging effective ties with particular international research bodies and NGOs, allowing them to play a strong role in a transnational civil society campaign that put pressure on European companies responsible for the mistreatment of workers in the Philippines. Benefiting from organisational synthesis with social movements and the informal sector, and pursuing strategically placed partners in the global north, labour movements can play a leading role in forwarding a resistance strategy that targets specific shared goals through both traditional union strategies of withdrawing labour and through connecting producers in the informal sector with consumers in the north, thus encouraging an ethical consumerism. Such a strategy serves to impact upon global neoliberalism from its necessities of both supply (through withdrawal of labour) and demand (through transnational civil society campaigns and ethical consumerism in the north).

Conclusion

The neoliberal hegemony poses serious challenges to labour movements in the global south, yet through a brief analysis of informalisation and EPZs, the neoliberal hegemony has been found to be a far from monolithic power. Neoliberal globalisation creates opportunities for new forms of organisation and resistance, even as it attempts to undermine existing strategies. It is in this context that labour movements now operate, and with the emergence of new

social movements, SMU has come to represent the most viable strategy through which labour movements can retain their role in struggles against the neoliberal hegemony. Labour movements in the global south still face many challenges, not least of all the continued tide of informalisation, yet contemporary instances of labour movement practice offer the potential means with which to address these challenges. No suggestions of an emergent, counter-hegemonic bloc have been offered, as this action note has attempted to address the realities of internal division and inequality which face labour movements and the anti-neoliberal cause. Nevertheless, the adaptive and transformative power of labour movements has been emphasised, and through evidence of cooperative engagement and organisational synergy, the forging of shared aims whilst accepting difference, the increasing prominence of women and their particular economic grievances into the labour agenda, and through strong local organisation forging strategic networks and alliances across multiple spatial levels, labour movements in the global south exhibit why they may continue to play a prominent role in struggles against neoliberal globalisation.

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About the author

Joe Sutcliffe has an MA in Global Development from the University of Leeds (UK) and is an Associate Editor of e-International Relations (e-ir.info). His research interests include international development, labour and social movements, and critical/postcolonial theory. He can be reached at jjsooty AT btinternet.com.

On working-class environmentalism:
a historical and transnational overview

Stefania Barca

Abstract

The article reviews some of the available literature, in English, Italian and Portuguese, on work/environment relationships in historical perspective. I discuss the Environmental Justice (EJ) movement as the one most promising for pushing both the research agenda and public policy towards a better understanding of the connections between work and the environment. At the same time, I argue for the need to creatively re-work the EJ paradigm in a sense that allows to better incorporate labor issues and to elaborate a political ecology of work, in order to build a coherent platform of analysis and public action which could be adopted by both environmental and labor advocates.

Introduction

Trade unions have had a fundamental role in the struggle for better work conditions in industry, but with several ecological limitations. Generally speaking, this struggle has been conducted within the factory, with a weak questioning of the political ecology of industrial production and pollution in society, both at the local and at the global level. Second, insufficient connections have been posed between union's health and safety grievances and more general social struggles for safe and healthy environments. Third, productivism and the paradigm of economic growth have generally not been questioned by larger unions, which continue to this day advocating for faster growth rates in order to either exit the current crisis, or to address social problems.

The current ecological crisis, combined with the financial and economic crisis in so called 'first world' countries, represents a unique opportunity for rethinking the economy in a way which leads to both socially and ecologically sustainable ways of work; it is also an opportunity to imagine (and practice) forms of political action that may be able to connect the defense of people and nature at the same time.

This article will review some of the available literature on work/environment relationships in three different contexts: the US, Italy and Brazil. The choice of these three contexts is due to personal research experiences which, for various reasons, led me to explore them in more detail. This review is thus not intended as a comprehensive survey on the subject, but as a personal contribution to further reflections on the possibilities for a broader articulation of work and environmental justice research and action. In order to do that, I argue, we need to intersect research into occupational, environmental, and public health within a comprehensive conceptual framework, which be able to build upon the concept of social costs as elaborated by non-orthodox economist William Kapp

in his *The Social Costs of Private Enterprise* (Kapp 1971 [1950]).

I will discuss the Environmental Justice (EJ) movement as the one most promising for pushing both the research agenda and public policy towards a better understanding of the connections between work and the environment. In order to make sense of the historical evidence coming from the three countries, I will propose a discussion of 'working-class environmentalism' as a distinctive category within the broader definition of 'environmentalism of the poor' (Martinez Alier 2002). By 'environmentalism of the poor', Alier meant to draw attention to the existence of social struggles in defense of the environment coming from subaltern social groups – contradicting common sense and sociological assumptions about environmentalism as a post-materialist struggle. Though Alier's 'poor' were mostly peasant communities from the global South, he did not exclude the possibility that first world people could also be included in the category – and in fact he theorized a basic equivalence between environmentalism of the poor and environmental justice.

I propose a socio-ecological definition of 'working class' as those people who make a living out of physical work performed in agriculture, industry or service, typically occupying the bottoms of the labor hierarchy, i.e. the lowest paying, highest risk jobs. This definition is consistent with reflections coming from African American sociologist Robert Bullard, generally recognized as the initiator of EJ research and action (Bullard 2000). My definition of 'working class' does not draw any significant distinction between agriculture, industry or service work (including women's unsalaried domestic work), in so far as they are all assumed to be driven by imperatives of productivity, profit and patriarchate which lie outside the sphere of workers' control and are dangerous for their well being and that of their families/communities.

My point of departure is the idea that, since the political consciousness of social costs as environmental and health damage caused by industrialization begins in the work environment, and is physically embodied by working people in their daily interaction with the hazards of production, a reconsideration is needed of the active role that workers have played in shaping modern ecological consciousness and regulation, both within and outside (even, sometimes, against) their organizations.

I will conclude by drawing attention on the important role that working class people can and should have in setting the agenda for sustainability politics.

Labor and the environment as social costs

An excellent point of departure for a theory (and social practice) of linkages between labor and environmental movements can be found in a book called *The Social Costs of Private Enterprise*, written by non-orthodox economist Karl William Kapp (1910-1976) and first published in 1950. The book described in detail various types of social costs, most of which concerned human and environmental health: damage to workers' health (what the author called the 'impairment of labor'), air and water pollution, depletion of animals, depletion

of energy resources, soil erosion and deforestation. The core idea of the book was that social costs are produced by the internal logic of private business, that is the principle of investment for profit at the individual unit level. In order to maximize profit on a given investment, entrepreneurs need to minimize relative costs: in the existing legal and political structure of the US economy, Kapp observed, entrepreneurs found it possible and profitable to shift the real cost of human and environmental health and safety on third parties, namely the workers and society as a whole. This socially accepted entrepreneurial behavior translates, in economic theory, in the concept of 'negative externalities' – that is to say, in the idea that human suffering and environmental degradation be the unavoidable price to be paid to economic growth. Written about seventy years ago, and referring to the US economy and society of the early post-war period, Kapp's book retains its theoretical validity as the most significant example of a tentative economic paradigm internalizing occupational, environmental and public health as interlinked aspects of the same problem, that of the social costs of production in the capitalistic system.

Although his ideas were in advance on his times, Kapp has become a fundamental reference for a new branch of Economics that was born roughly two decades later – when, not coincidentally, his book was reprinted in second edition – and that eventually came to be defined Ecological Economics (EE). What made EE a radically non-orthodox discipline was its refusal of the idea – implicitly accepted by both neo-classical and Marxist economists – that *unlimited economic growth* be the ultimate end of economic policies, and the only possible answer to poverty and inequality. Economic growth, ecological economists point out, implies ecological costs that are not accounted for in current cost-benefit analyses, as they fall outside the sphere of entrepreneurial interest. Ecological economists are able to measure such costs by introducing concepts and analytical instruments that come from the natural sciences, such as, for example, the entropy law: this shows that each additional unit of GDP implies a waste of energy and materials that will never again be available for other uses (Roegen 1971, Rifkin 1980, Daly 1991). Thus far, EE has developed a whole series of such new, interdisciplinary analytical instruments, which are used to describe the ecological costs of economic activities, both in terms of energy and material use and in terms of waste production and environmental degradation.

However, the human costs of production for both industrial and 'meta-industrial' workers (Salleh 2010) as well as for public health in general, are not specifically addressed by ecological economists, who seem to consider them alien to their sphere of interest and competence.

While EE has failed to formally incorporate labor and social inequalities into its own analytical realm, it is also true that its existence has encouraged, inspired, and/or interacted with new approaches to ecology within the social sciences, which in turn have allowed an advancement of our understanding of work/environment relationships. Theoretically, an important contribution in this direction has come from the area of Political Ecology, which can be broadly

understood as the study of nature/power relationships. Starting from a Marxist perspective, political ecologists have elaborated on what James O'Connor calls the second contradiction of capitalism, that between capital and nature (O'Connor 1998). Scholars in this field have also conducted an important scrutiny of Marx's and Engels' work, demonstrating how these were much more consistent with ecological thinking than was commonly reputed. In Marx's view, to begin with, the alienation of 'man' from nature was a social phenomenon which preceded and allowed the alienation from labor, and as such it required a historical explanation (Foster 2000). Engels's writings on the conditions of the English working class during the industrial revolution, and Marx's own observations on the same subject, are the best example of how the link between the deterioration of working and living environments under capitalism was clearly perceived by the two thinkers as a crucial aspect of the new regime of production (Foster 2000, Merchant 2005, Parsons 1977, Benton 1996).

The eco-Marxist perspective has indeed been an important contribution given by Political Ecology to our understanding of work/environment relationships. It may help to overcome, from a theoretical and even ideological point of view, the classical opposition between Marxism and environmentalism, which has formed a serious impediment to possible alliances and coalitions between the two movements at the political level. A crucial contribution to the ecological critique of capitalism (and partly of Marxian politics) has been given by what Carolyn Merchant calls 'socialist eco-feminism', based as it is on the centrality of reproduction, instead of production, so effectively showing the way out of modernist and productivist paradigms of social relations (Merchant 2005).

Another important step in this direction, however, has also come from the study of the environmental movement itself, which has demonstrated how this is a plural social movement, made up of different and at times contrasting instances coming from different social sectors and economic interests. Environmentalism, in other words, is a misleading unifying label, that tends to hide the existence of non mainstream varieties of environmental struggle, which are the object of various forms of cultural, social and political silencing (Guha and Martinez Alier 1998, Gottlieb 1993).

The quest for environmental justice

Among such 'radical' environmental movements, the one that has been considered the most significant novelty of the last twenty years, both in terms of new possibilities for social mobilization and as a source of fresh perspectives for the social sciences, is the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM).

In its first theorization, by African-American sociologist Robert Bullard, Environmental Justice (EJ) is a social struggle arising from the awareness of how the social costs produced by a history of 'uneven development' in the capitalist system have unequally affected different social groups, especially

along lines of racial discrimination. Resting on political-economic analysis, the EJ approach has developed as a way to acknowledge and contrast the social inequality of environmental costs, and is characterized by mixing, explicitly and intentionally, scientific and civil rights discourses. The term was first used in the US in 1992 on the occasion of a conference of new social movements that fought against urban pollution, but which did not feel represented by mainstream environmentalism. Basically, Environmental Justice is concerned with the unequal distribution of social costs between different human groups according to distinctions of class, race/ethnicity, and spatial placement. Environmental injustice is strongly related to space, i.e. to the unequal distribution of pollution and environmental degradation at local, national or transnational level: distinctions such as urban/rural, center-periphery or north-south are of primary relevance for the understanding of environmental injustice (Bullard 2000, Schlosberg 2007, Faber 1998, Sandler and Pezzullo 2007).

Thus, as a research program, EJ is the analysis of social inequality face to the environmental costs of economic activities. As a social struggle, EJ constitutes a challenge to legal and political systems in the sense of recognizing the protection of the environment as a civil right, crucially affecting marginalized and discriminated social groups. But what most characterizes EJ, both as a research program and as a program of collective action, is the concern for public health.

This concern binds EJ strongly to Kapp's concept of social costs: threats to the health of workers, of specific groups of population, of the nation and even of other species, through the deterioration of working and environmental conditions in general, caused by economic activities. As in Kapp's approach, so in what we may term the EJ paradigm occupational, environmental and public health are indissolubly linked to each other.

The EJ movement (EJM) has had a far greater influence within social science studies of the environment than in the sole US context. In the course of the last two decades, inspired by EJ concerns for social inequalities and discrimination, a number of scholars worldwide have contrasted the idea that the environment is a luxury that becomes socially appealing after a country, or a particular human group, has achieved material wealth. Empirical research has demonstrated how the subaltern classes, manual workers, indigenous peoples and the poor in general are often the first to defend the environment in which they work and live, or from which they get their livelihood. The Catalan scholar Joan Martinez Alier has elaborated a unifying definition for these subaltern environmental struggles as 'environmentalism of the poor', highlighting how they are tied to material issues of primary importance to the groups most vulnerable to environmental degradation in terms of human health, livelihoods and well-being. Basing on empirical evidence on the 'environmentalism of the poor' from Latin America, Southern Europe and Eastern Asia, Martinez Alier has come up with a theory of Ecological Distribution Conflicts (EDCs), that is conflicts for the social distribution of environmental costs and benefits deriving from the material interchange between societies and nature, and thus from the

social manipulation of environmental resources under different regimes of accumulation (corporate, State, agrarian, industrial, colonial or post-colonial, etc.). (Martinez Alier 2002)

EDCs and the 'environmentalism of the poor' are intended by Martinez Alier as varieties of EJ struggles. They define social struggles that arise outside the sphere of mainstream environmental politics, and that are the object of harsh, often violent, repression on the part of State, corporate, and even criminal powers. EDCs are usually brought up by people who are targeted by processes of environmental devastation caused by development projects, which seriously compromise or destroy their living environments, and so their communities' health and safety, cultural integrity, and livelihoods. This is not only an 'indigenous people' issue (although it is largely so): the numerous struggles of local communities against high speed trains, incinerators, nuclear plants and the like in so-called 'First-World' countries are all EDCs, in which people defend the integrity of their territory and lifestyle against the pervasive and oppressive logic of 'development'.

Even though livelihood struggles do not typically qualify as labor struggles – at least not in academic thinking – work is intrinsically involved in EDCs. Most development projects, in fact, bring about a thorough restructuring of job opportunities in the region, and have important repercussions on both labor relations and work conditions. The new projects usually have a destructive impact on preexisting forms of work, such as fisheries, agriculture, hunting and wild-fruit collecting or local tourism, because they thoroughly alter the local landscape, contaminate vital resources such as water, air and soil, compromise the reproduction of living things. Labor relations tend also to become more exploitative, following either the factory or the plantation discipline, with its inception of landless, indentured, and sometimes slave labor, often coming from outside the region. Work conditions may in fact reach unprecedented levels of risk and un-healthiness, as in the case of oil extraction and other mining activities, or industrial cultivations with intensive use of agro-chemicals, such as sugarcane or soy (Wright 1990 [2005], Santiago 2006, Sellers and Melling 2012).

All EDCs are, or can potentially become, struggles for Environmental Justice. In the next section, I will give some detailed examples, and suggest some lines of interpretation, about the intersection between EJ and labor struggles.

Working-class environmentalism: stories across three countries

With 'environmentalism of the working class' I intend to label the day-to-day struggles that workers at the bottom of the agriculture, industry and service sectors lead, both individually and in organized form, to defend the integrity and safety of their working environment and of the environment where their families and communities live. In 'working-class environmentalism', ecology is understood as a set of connections between the spheres of production and

reproduction: ecology is therefore the system of relationships between what is used to produce, what is produced, the waste of production, the bodies of those who produce, and the environment in which production, reproduction and waste take place. An ecological vision of work should in fact include both male and female workers, and production as well as re-production processes (Merchant 2010). In sum, to use the language of scientific ecology, 'working-class environmentalism' is concerned with a particular population, manual workers (and their communities), and with its 'natural' habitat.

Unlike other species, this 'population' is endowed with self-consciousness and capacity for political action. Indeed, the awareness of the organic connections existing between labor, environment and health is capable of producing a radical critique of the economic system and a new emancipatory discourse, which is potentially very dangerous for the political-economic order. Working-class environmental struggles do not have as a primary objective the protection of nature as such or of other living species for their own sake, because they are focused on what are typically a mix of 'class' and 'gender' issues, i.e. the defense of the living conditions of the working class. Nevertheless, they can and should be defined as environmental struggles, because they are an expression of a type of environmentalism alternative to that of the upper-middle class and of national and international regulations.

A historical sign of the new possibilities opened by these 'dangerous liaisons' between labor and environmentalism was the alliance between environmentalists and trade unionists that arose spontaneously in the streets of Seattle, with the slogan 'Teamsters and Turtles', during the 1999 protests against the WTO (Rose 2000, Silverman 2004). This was neither the first nor the last such fact, and witnesses the emergence of a new form of intra-organizational solidarity, which in turn reflects a new political consciousness of the connections between environmental and social costs in the neo-liberal era. In the next section, I will offer a comparative overview of historical linkages between labor, women and environmental movements in three different contexts – the US, Italy and Brazil – all testifying to the concrete possibilities which may be opened up by the overcoming of existing divisions between the three movements at the political level.

The US

During the 1960s and 1970s, the US witnessed a fascinating, though little known story of coalition between oil, chemical, atomic, steel and farm workers unions with some environmental organizations, in order to protect workers and the national community against the risks of industrial production and waste disposal. These links between environmentalism and unionism led to passage of some major pieces of environmental regulations, such as the Clean Air Act of 1970 and the Clean Water Act of 1972 (Gottlieb 1993).

Starting with a series of accidents (such as the 'killer smog' which seriously affected 6,000 persons in Donora, Pennsylvania, in 1948), during the post-war

years the awareness of potential health risks from pollution became quite advanced in US working class people in comparison to that of their fellow citizens' (Dewey 1998: 48). During the fifties, the United AutoWorkers, through their president Walter Reuther and vice president Olga Madar, pressed the government for the regulation of gasoline emissions, even if this meant losing a number of jobs. In Madar's opinion, workers were first and foremost American citizens, 'neither they nor their children develop any immunity to automobile exhaust pollutants or any other' (Dewey 1998: 52).

According to Robert Gottlieb, author of a well documented history of the US environmental movement after World War II, the first step in the direction of labor/environmental alliances was played by a number of independent physicians who, in the early 1960s, had begun examining unions' welfare and retirement records, in order to build their counter-arguments against corporate science. The first and most striking example was the black lung movement, which led to the first of a series of health and environmental acts, all passed between the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s: the Mines Safety and Health Act (1969), the Occupational Safety and Health Act/Administration (1970), the Environmental Protection Act/Agency (1970). The role of health professionals, coming from the ranks of the students, feminist, environmental and radical left movements, in soliciting those reforms and supporting the labor movement in their implementation, was crucial in the US case, where they formed the COSH groups (Committees on Occupational Safety and Health), as well as it was determining in the Italian case (the SMALs experience, as we will see in the next section). In both contexts, those 'new' physicians shared a common methodological revolution that put workers at the core of the knowledge producing process. Also, in both cases they shared this methodology with sectors of the labor movement particularly active in the process of empowerment concerning health/environment related reforms. As a leader of the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers union, Anthony Mazzocchi, 'the most influential figure within the new occupational health movement' in the seventies, emphasized 'the importance of worker-generated activity and the potential links that could be established between workers and public interest and professional groups' (Gottlieb 1993: 365). Mazzocchi had also been instrumental in the passage of environmental reforms such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Act. Another obvious example of a strict relationship between labor and environmental struggle is represented by the experience of the United Farm Workers of Cesar Chavez, which, in the early 1960s, first raised the issue of pesticide poisoning as a unified struggle in defense of both workers and consumers' health (Gottlieb 1993, Montrie 2008).

While grassroots health organizations were not always welcomed by union leadership – because of their influence as rank and file activists – at the local level the alliance between labor and environmental activists was strong, and the labor hegemony was not under discussion, as many unions' officials served as COSH directors, and some unions funded them. The seventies also offered plenty of evidence of a labor/environmental alliance, such as the EFFE groups (Environmentalists for Full Employment), the Urban Environmental

Conference, Ralph Nader's and Barry Commoner's networks, etc. Nevertheless, Gottlieb remarks, for the environmental movement workplace and social justice issues remained external to their mission, as well as the labor movement 'remained bound by union acceptance of the structure of industry decision making' (Gottlieb 1993: 366). The conflictual relationships between labor and the environmental movement only developed during the eighties, and was a historical artifact due to the political turnover of the Reagan era (Gordon 1998). Looking for the relationship of US working class people with nature, as distinct from that of the upper and middle classes, environmental historians have defined them as 'expedient' or 'subaltern' environmentalism. In his study of coal mining in Appalachia, for example, Chad Montrie proposed an explanation of how 'farmers and workers formulated their own versions of conservationism and environmentalism, grounded in their experiences tilling fields and working in factories'. Encompassing a broader category of issues concerning class, race and gender versions of environmental conflicts, the history of this working-class environmentalism seemed a new way to look at the issue of social inequalities and justice within environmental history (Montrie 2000, Dewey 1998, Gordon 1998, Hurley 1995).

The most complete examination of the jobs-vs.-the environment discourse in the United States, however, comes from a study in political science. In *Labor and the Environmental Movement: The Quest for Common Ground* (2004), Brian Obach observes how 'workers are not typically the lead opponents of environmental measures. [...] It is when industry seeks allies in opposition to environmental measures that workers are drawn into the fray'. It is a communication strategy: since a threat to corporate profits will not move the public –he notes – 'a more sympathetic victim is necessary, and workers are the obvious group to serve this purpose'. The goal is to 'shape the perception that environmental protection is antithetical to economic expansion' (Obach 2004: 10). This discourse, however, clashes with the growing evidence that 'the working class bears a disproportionate share of the harm due to environmental destruction', while environmentalists 'bear a disproportionate share of the blame' for the actual loss of jobs in the US, which is due to environmental regulation only in 3% of cases. The rationale for this corporate discourse is the aim at keeping the two most powerful social movements in the country separated, for their alliance holds a potential for radical reforms (Faber 2008).

The alienation between labor and environmental movements, so frequently experienced – in the US and elsewhere – to have become an unquestioned commonsense assumption is in fact the result of a political battle taking place historically and therefore needs a historical explanation. The 'jobs-vs.-the-environment' discourse has been construed in connection with the international business cycle, and with the imposition of neo-liberal politics: in 'mature industrialized countries', such as the US, that discourse evolved and acquired social hegemony between the end of the 1970s and the first 1990s, when it has been finally opposed by a recovery of social movements struggling for environmental justice and ecological democracy.

That rise and fall of the labor/environmental alliance in the US also reflects the international dimension of the economic system. While 'mature economies' have begun to give a green façade to their industrial apparatus, by also shifting the most polluting industries and the dirtiest wastes to the 'developing' countries, those countries have been experiencing the worst forms of exploitation of both labor and the environment. There, again, the promises of modernization, the lack of alternatives, and the 'job blackmail', that had shaped the terms of the 'jobs-vs.-the-environment' discourse in the western world, have gained momentum and contributed to a new cycle of high toxicity and the spread of industrial risk worldwide (Martinez Alier 2002).

Italy

The story of labor-environmental coalitions in Italy is very similar to that which occurred in the United States. It started as an alliance between workers' organizations and 'militant' scientists in the struggle for the recognition and regulation of industrial hazards, eventually producing important social reforms such as the Labor Statute (1970) and the Public Health System (1978) (Barca 2012). Focusing on the work environment, that peculiar type of environmentalism was based on the recognition of the centrality of the industrial manipulation of nature in determining the deterioration of both occupational and public health. Such new ecological consciousness arose from the totally new "conditions" of production and reproduction that were formed in the country's tumultuous economic boom of the late 1950s, during which Italians experienced such a rapid and massive industrialization that all aspects of social life were revolutionized. Due to the rapid industrialization of the preceding decade, the 1970s were also a time of significantly increased environmental degradation, affecting not only the workforce, but the Italian population at large, through widespread and largely uncontrolled pollution (Di Luzio 2003, Luzzi 2009).

Spurring from the 'economic miracle', the Italian experience of 'working class environmentalism' was generated in the cultural context of the 1960s and 1970s, marked by a strong cultural hegemony of the Left parties and the labor movement, but also by student protests and new political movements pressing for radical changes in the organization of social life. This new Italian environmentalism was also crucially influenced by the spread of a new international environmental movement (Luzzi 2009), much less devoted to conservation than in the past and more concerned with the toxicity of industrial production, especially petrochemicals (Gottlieb 1993). What marked the Italian experience, however, was the much stricter link existing between the new environmentalists and the labor movement, unions in particular, which makes appropriate to speak of a very 'labor environmentalism'. This movement began to take shape since the early 1960s, when a group of sociologists at the University of Turin formulated what was to become the new methodology of research into occupational health, based on the direct production of knowledge on the part of workers. Having been successfully experimented with in 1961 at

the Farmitalia plant, a subsidiary of the powerful petrochemical group Montedison, those methodologies were accepted by the Italian labor movement and became the core principles of labor environmentalism. Courses and lectures on the ecology of the work environment were organized throughout the country by the union confederations. In 1970, with the passing of the new Labor Statute, the principle of direct control over the work environment on the part of workers became law (Calavita 1986, Tonelli 2007).

A landmark event in the formation of an Italian 'working-class environmentalism' was, in the fall of 1971, a national meeting on the theme 'Man, Nature, Society' held by the Italian Communist Party at its yearly cadres' school in Frattocchie. Opening the conference, physician and leading party member, Giovanni Berlinguer, admitted the need to update Marxist orthodoxy in order to take into account the concept of natural limits; he also highlighted how toxicity had become the existential condition of global capital. Berlinguer, and other top-ranking cadres and 'organic intellectuals', compared ecology to socialist planning, and emphasized the need for the party to consider the environment a working class priority (Hardenberg and Pelizzari 2008, Luzzi 2009). In a sense, the whole experience of labor environmentalism in Italy can be considered a product of that meeting, which had encouraged Communist activists to link ecology and class struggle. In 1972, one year after Frattocchie, a national conference of the union confederation was held in Rimini on the theme 'Industry and Health'. Many other signals throughout the 1970s testify to both intellectual and activist ferment in linking Marxism and ecology. The publisher Gian Giacomo Feltrinelli, for example (himself also one of the most prominent leftist intellectuals and political activists of the period) initiated a book series dedicated to 'Medicine and Power', including books on health risks in industrial societies. Even more radical was the position of another leftist intellectual, the journalist Dario Paccino, author of a book entitled *The Ecological Trick* (Paccino 1972) that exposed nature conservation as an elitist concern and – by contrast – put workers' bodies firmly at the centre stage of a true environmentalism.

Probably the most formative readings, for a generation of Italian leftist environmentalists, were two books that were published in 1976 and 1977, in the aftermath of the Seveso industrial disaster, both resulting from the authors' active militancy in the local struggles for damage recognition and repair, as well as from political activity within and/or alongside the Communist Party and other radical left organizations. The first book, titled *Ecology and Society. Environment, Population, Pollution* was co-authored by the Italian urban ecologist Virginio Bettini with the American biologist Barry Commoner: it explicitly connected environmental struggles to a class perspective, theorizing the need for a 'class ecology' as opposed to the 'ecology of power' advocated by mainstream organizations and reflected in the existing legislation on nature conservation in the country. The second book, named *What is Ecology. Capital, Labor and the Environment*, was written by Laura Conti, one of the most significant figures of the Italian environmental movement: as a deputy in the Communist Party, a labor physician and an ecologist, Conti embodied the very

essence of the class alliances which stood at the basis of the Italian 'labor environmentalism'. Moreover, her book can be considered a foundational moment in the birth of an Italian Political Ecology (Bettini and Commoner 1976; Conti 1977; Barca 2011).

All this militant-intellectual debate on Marxism and ecology resulted in the creation of a series of more or less durable organizations and local movements. The alliance between unions and environmentalists was epitomized in the experience of the SMAL, Medical Services for the Work Environment, a union-led institution formally recognized by the Lombardy regional government in 1972, and devoted to supporting workers' claims for independent control over the work environment (CGIL-CISL-UIL 1976). A few years later, in 1976, the grassroots-experts' organization *Medicina Democratica* (MD) was established, becoming the most active in supporting social struggles for the defense of occupational, environmental and public health at the community level. MD was founded and led by the medical doctor Giulio Maccacaro, who also directed the journal *Sapere*, the country's most significant expression of 'militant science', which mostly addressed issues of industrial pollution and its effects upon human health and the environment. The *Lega per l'Ambiente* (today *Legambiente*, probably the most popular Italian environmental organization), was born as a sub-section of the Communist Party's cultural/recreational activities. It was mainly concerned with the problems originating from industrialization – from energy to pollution and food contamination, from the impact of automobiles to waste management. Laura Conti and Virginio Bettini, together with the Communist deputy and ecologist Giorgio Nebbia and – again – Barry Commoner, were among the founding members of the organization (Della Seta 2000).

The awareness of environmental health connections as a shared bodily experience among factory workers and local people – the many women who experience breast cancer and those who are faced with fetal malformations, the parents of children with asthma, the fishermen and farmers who become aware of unusual death and illness in the non-human living world – is a common feature of Italian working class communities, and a leading thread throughout the period 1970s-2000s. In the petrochemical area of Augusta, Sicily, massive fish deaths and the birth of malformed children in the late 1970s were clearly perceived by the population as interconnected facts and easily traced to mercury discharges from the nearby ENI refinery: this led to massive social uprising, involving other communities along the coast between Augusta and Priolo, where many polluting industries were clustered together to take advantage of cheap power and other infrastructures. What is most remarkable about that experience is that, despite the serious economic and occupational crisis occurring in the petrochemical sector after 1973, factory workers and the local population found themselves on the same front of what soon became an Environmental Justice struggle, leading to a far reaching investigation and several court trials, reaching before the European court in 2005 (Adorno 2009). Other similar cases show how that early season of 'class ecology' had a durable legacy, that, starting from the 1990s, spurred a number of Environmental

Justice struggles, i.e. major lawsuits against large industrial groups, especially the chemical, petrochemical and asbestos industry. One of the earliest and most relevant court case concerned the country's largest petrochemical complex, that of Enichem in Porto Marghera, near Venice (Allen 2012). Interestingly enough, it was a former Enichem worker, Gabriele Bortolozzo, who initiated the process of popular epidemiology and environmental data collection which eventually brought what was probably Italy's most powerful industrial corporation, a State company, to court in 1998. Working at the Enichem plant from 1956 to 1990, Bortolozzo was an environmental activist engaged in the protection of the lagoon; in the mid 1980s, and with the help of *Medicina Democratica*, he started a public campaign to collect data and information exposing the company's negligent policy in both occupational and environmental health protection (Bettin 1998, Rabitti 1998). A similar story happened again in the petrochemical town of Manfredonia, Apulia, where the investigation was based on a popular epidemiology initiative promoted in 1998 by the former worker Nicola Lovecchio, again with the support of *Medicina Democratica* (Di Luzio 2003).

In conclusion, despite an intellectual project which heavily rested on the organizational support of the Communist Party, and also partially constrained by ideology, the Italian 'class ecology' paradigm introduced into the environmental debate and political scenario a perception of ecology as something having to do with the human body and its *situatedness* within the configuration of power relationships, both inside the factory and in the local space. Moreover, consciousness of the political link between occupational, environmental and public health was not a philosophical speculation for a few militant scientists: in fact, it was largely shared within the Left, and in the union confederations, and led to a series of social struggles both at the workshop and at the community level. The time has come perhaps to tell the story of these struggles, tracing their material and ideal connections with each other and with the history of the Italian 'working class environmentalism'.

Brazil

As in the Italian and in the US case, 'militant medicine' played a crucial role in the formation of a working-class centered environmental consciousness in Brazil. An unsuspected link exists, in fact, between the Italian and the Brazilian experience of 'working-class environmentalism', through the exchanges that the Brazilian Left established with the Italian, involving visits to the country by Giovanni Berlinguer and the translation of Laura Conti's book in the mid 1980s (Porto 2005).

What differentiates the Brazilian experience in respect to the other two countries is the relevant role played by rural workers in the formation of a popular environmental consciousness, bringing up its own vision of ecology and of environmental policies. The two most striking examples are: 1) the struggles of Chico Mendes' rubber tappers against the deforestation of the Amazon during

the 1980s, and 2) the landless workers' movement MST (Movimento Trabalhadores Sem Terra) of the 1990s and 2000s. In the rubber tappers' movement – still very much alive in memory and local activism in the area – social justice was inextricably linked to environmental protection as a fundamental support for the life and work of the Amazonian communities. This organic link between labor and environmental justice as envisaged by the movement eventually found expression in the concept of – and political struggle for – the 'extractive reserve', i.e. the idea that land be maintained as public (state property), while rural communities retain the right to work natural resources collectively, in order to avoid the exhaustion of resources by capitalist appropriation with subsequent impoverishment of the rural population. The concept of 'extractive reserve' was a major contribution that this movement gave to develop anti-deforestation policies on a socially just base (Rodriguez 2007).

The landless workers' movement MST is another clear example of the existence of a working-class vision of ecology and of nature/society relationships, based on rural community struggles for land and livelihoods, as well as on farm-workers' experience of health damage caused by pesticides and industrial agriculture in general (Wolford and Wright 2003). Along with its general battle for agrarian reform, the MST promotes and/or is actively involved in struggles for forest preservation and against GMOs and agrochemicals.

A landmark in the relationship between labor and environmental movements in Brazil was the global Earth Summit promoted by the UN in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In that occasion, the major union centre (CUT, Central Única dos Trabalhadores) played an important role in coordinating civil society initiatives, by actively participating in the executive board of the Brazilian NGOs Forum and in the elaboration of its documents and deliberations. Afterwards, a permanent Environment Commission was created within the CUT and ecology and sustainability entered CUT's official language and positions as regards the country's economic development process (Martins 2004). The Commission came to complement the activities of a preexisting Health, Labor and Environment Committee, which – as with the Italian Union Federations of the mid 1970s – was already battling on issues of work conditions in terms of health and safety of the work environment, as well as training a new generation of health and safety activists. As in the US case, the Brazilian unions thus played an important role in the passage of the country's environmental legislation (Neto 2004).

With the rapidly intensifying industrialization process started in the 1990s, environmental struggles in Brazil began to be more and more connected with the urban environment and the factory as a place where the socio-ecological contradictions typical of industrial development were literally exploding. Subsequently, an EJ movement started to take root, both in society and in academia, in the early 2000s. The starting point for a process of self-reflection of Brazilian EJ was a book series entitled 'Unionism and EJ' (*Sindicalismo e Justiça Ambiental*) published in 2000 by CUT in conjunction with research centers in the area of social-economic analysis and urban and regional planning

(IBASE and IPPUR) of the University of Rio de Janeiro (Acselrad, Herculano and Pádua 2004). The book collected several stories of industrial contamination and environmental justice struggles that were developing from severe cases of workers' poisoning and crucially involved local communities; the struggles were actively promoted by unions such as the Chemical, Petrochemical, Petroleum and Farm-Workers, all of which ended up participating in the formation of the Brazilian EJ Network RBJA (Rede Brasileira de Justiça Ambiental) in 2001.

The Network was created after an international meeting on 'Environmental justice, work and citizenship', held at the University of Niteroi with the participation of EJ movements and scholars from the US, Chile and Uruguay. The promoting group included social and environmental movements, unions, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous communities and individual scientists. Among the most relevant activities, the RBJA has developed a virtual archive, collecting documentation from hundreds of EJ struggles and/or EDCs in waste disposal, agriculture, extractive industry, water and biodiversity conservation, energy production and other infrastructures, including also judicial and governmental documents. With its participatory action-research methodology, the Brazilian EJ Movement reflects a clear perception of occupational, environmental, and public health as interconnected social costs of the country's economic growth, seriously affecting the Brazilian working class and disenfranchised groups (landless peasants, indigenous and non-white communities in general).

Conclusions

As William Kapp had argued, environmental and health costs represent a large part of the social costs of production in advanced industrial societies. The historical evidence demonstrates how these costs are paid in the first place by workers through the labor process itself and by the most vulnerable social groups. Not surprisingly, being the most affected by the negative effects of pollution and environmental destruction, the working class has developed an active role of primary importance in the formation of a modern ecological consciousness of social costs. In order to formulate more inclusive and strategic coalitions for Environmental Justice, articulated around the diversity and complexities of people's experience of environmental problems – e.g. including rural communities, or meta-industrial jobs such as the, mostly women and non-white, cleaning workers – it has become essential to recognize such a historical role, and analyze its limitations and potentialities.

To conclude, I propose four basic points for a work-centered theory of Environmental Justice:

1) as a primary agent of energy and matter transformation through the labor process, workers – broadly defined as those performing physical labor, including non-paid housekeeping and life-supporting work – are the primary interface between society and nature: therefore, sustainability policies should

always be centered on the workers' subjectivity and on the sustainability of work in the first place;

2) working-class people are the most threatened by the destruction of the environment because they work in hazardous environments, live in the most polluted neighborhoods, and have fewer possibilities to move to some uncontaminated area or buy healthy food. Therefore, they hold the greatest vested interest in developing sustainability policies. It is in the interest of the dominant social order to obscure this fact and prevent the formation of alliances between the social movements;

3) environmental policies should build sustainability from work and around it: this means reorganizing production on the basis of a sustainable work, and not simply introduce technical solutions such as incineration of waste or nuclear energy, which only allow the continuation of accumulation and economic growth, while introducing new threats to workers and their communities;

4) incorporating workers and the labor process within the standard theory of environmental justice would require a comprehensive revision of both research and activism methods and scope, involving collective discussions with labor as well as environmental activists and experts in various areas related to technology, work organization, health and ecology.

The history of 'working class environmentalism' has shown how, though contrasted by dominant political and economic forces, the alliance between unions and environmentalism is not only necessary, but indeed possible.

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About the author

Stefania Barca is a senior researcher at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, Portugal, where she coordinates a research group on social policies, labor and inequalities. She also co-directs the PhD program in Democracy in the 21st Century of the University of Coimbra. She got a PhD in Economic History in Italy and then completed her studies in Environmental History and Political Ecology at Yale and Berkeley. Visit her webpage at http://www.ces.uc.pt/investigadores/cv/stefania_barca.php?id_lingua=2. She can be contacted at sbarca AT ces.uc.pt.

Mending the breach between labour and nature: environmental engagements of trade unions and the North-South divide[1]

Nora Räthzel and David Uzzell

Abstract

In the past, environmental movements and labour movements have seen each other as opponents. Where labour movements have taken an interest in nature – in the first half of the 20th century - it was in the context of campaigning for spaces of recreation, and later as a necessary condition for a healthy life. In both cases nature has been constructed as 'the Other' of labour. The same can be said for environmental movements, which have aimed to defend, if not protect nature 'against labour'. This opposition has been mirrored in the academic field such that environmental studies have taken little account of labour; likewise, labour studies have largely ignored the environment. The authors argue that these oppositions are starting to be addressed within both the labour movement and academic research, largely as a response to the crisis of climate change which makes clear that both labour and the environment are threatened. Since environmental degradation and climate change are global issues the power relations between unions of the global North and South need to be tackled.

Conflicts between environmentalists and labour: nature as labour's "other"

Over the past forty years the relationship between environmentalists on the one hand and labour on the other has largely vacillated between distrust and suspicion at best through to rancour and open hostility at worse. Environmental movements have accused trade unions of defending jobs at any cost to nature, while trade unions have accused environmentalists of putting nature before workers' needs for jobs, and indeed, for survival.

If we look at the two movements historically there is evidence that labour movements in industrialised countries have viewed nature predominantly in two ways. In the early years, trade unions organised their response in the way we think that social movements act today. They founded "organisations to advocate and develop gender equality, consumers' interests (the cooperative movement), popular health and welfare, housing, culture in all its aspects,

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[1]This is a revised and extended version of chapter one in our book: Räthzel, N., Uzzell, D. (eds.) (2012) *Trade Unions and the Green Economy. Working for the Environment.* Oxford/New York: Earthscan/Routledge, published October 2012.

education, leisure activities, and human rights (including anti-colonial movements)" (Gallin, 2000: 4). For instance, the *International Friends of Nature* were founded 1895 in Vienna by a group of socialists, coming together through an advertisement in the *Arbeiter Zeitung* ("*Newspaper for Workers*", see: International Friends of Nature). In the UK, workers and "environmentalists" joined together on 24 April 1932 for an act of mass trespass when they walked across the grouse moors of Kinder Scout (owned by the landed gentry and wealthy industrialists) to protest at the lack of access to green spaces around the industrial cities of the north of England. The "right to roam" was initiated by the British Workers' Sports Federation (BWSF), largely made up of members and supporters of the Communist Party, and which enjoyed significant working class support. For these groups nature was a space for recreation and leisure that needed to be preserved and enjoyed.

The second way in which labour organisations have dealt with nature, has been in the context of the health and safety concerns for their members. They have fought against the pollution of water, air and soil when this constituted a threat to the health of workers and their families. Most of the time though, health and safety issues were and are dealt with within the workplace, where unions see to it that workers are protected from the hazards of the production process. Here, one could argue, they care for nature in the form of workers' bodies, although they may not formulate it this way. They see their work as caring for the social needs of workers of which health is an important part. In the image of nature as a space of recreation or an environment that needs to be protected from pollution, nature becomes labour*'s* "other". It is constructed as a place external to society and to the labour process (Smith 1996: 41). It may be a place that is pristine and completely different – the obverse of those places where work occurs or which society occupies. In neither case is nature seen as an integral part of the production process, as a source of wealth, as labour*'s* ally. This omission was already apparent in the first programme of the German Social Democratic Party, the Gotha Programme, where the first paragraph read: "Labour is the source of wealth and all culture, and since useful labour is possible only in society and through society, the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society." (cited in Marx 1875). In his critique, Marx argued, "Labour is *not the source* of all wealth. *Nature* is just as much the source of use values (...) as labour, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labour power" (Marx 1875). Both dimensions - nature as a source of use value, and human labour power as a part of nature - have been neglected in the history of the labour movement.

For environmental movements nature needs to be defended against uncontrolled and thoughtless industrialisation, and the productivism of capital and labour alike. Their point of departure is that there is a fundamental contradiction between production and ecology. In one of her influential publications, Carolyn Merchant formulates it in the following way: "The particular forms of production in modern society – industrial production, both capitalist and state socialist – creates accumulating ecological stresses on air,

water, soil, and biota (including human beings) and on society's ability to maintain and reproduce itself over time." (Merchant 1992: 9)

There are many environmental movements (just as there are many different forms of trade unionism), from nature conservationists, to environmental NGOs with considerable financial resources (WWF-UK income in 2011 was £57m (WWF-UK 2011)), to environmental justice movements, socialist ecologists, ecofeminists, and deep ecologists. One cannot do them justice with one definition. It is safe to say though, that when it comes to conflicts between industry and environmental protection they will put environmental protection first – after all, protecting the environment is their raison d'être. What they have in common with the labour movement though, is a construction of nature as labour's "other". In this case labour is the antithesis of nature; it is not part of the "natural world" but is a human construction that is removed from natural processes. Neither labour movements nor environmental movements see labour and nature as allies, needing each other to produce the material resources necessary for human survival.

The difficulty of seeing labour and nature as inseparable elements for the production of life (since without production there is no human life), is a result of their separation historically. In a process that accelerated with the industrial revolution, nature has become a private asset, just like the products of labour and nature, tools, machines, and buildings (Smith 2008, Castree 2010). For workers, privatised nature, nature that has become a "natural resource", stands on the other side of the capital-labour relationship, it is capital. Workers experience the protection of nature as a threat, not only to their jobs, but also to their identities as producers. From the point of view of environmentalists, workers are seen to be on the side of capital who regard nature only as an exploitable "natural resource", a means to an end for production. Both are caught in a contradictory structure that involves a trialectical relationship (Soja 1996) between labour, capital and nature. When unions defend their jobs at the expense of nature, they are at the same time defending the relations of production (the private appropriation of nature) under which they are themselves subordinated. Sweeney (2012) describes the paradoxical effects this can have, when unions defend the economic activities of politicians who act in an anti-labour fashion. The same can be said for environmentalists who criticise unions for defending their jobs without suggesting any alternatives that would allow workers a living without being at the mercy of those who own nature and control labour. What is lived as a conflict between environmental and labour movements is mirrored by academic disciplines' mutual disregard.

Where's the environment in labour studies, where's labour in environmental studies?

The fact that labour studies and environmental studies are separate spheres of research serves to reinforce the failure of researchers to appreciate the importance of their reciprocal significance and contribution. This shortcoming

has been carried through to the lecture theatre. While attention may be paid to production processes such as the impact of new technologies on labour, climate-motivated labour and production changes such as government regulations, changes in markets, the migration of production, are rarely discussed. Equally, there is little discussion as to how labour is responding to these changes. For example, what impacts will climate change motivated regulations have on the working lives of those who are employed in high carbon and consequently high risk industries? Work for many, as we know, is more than just bringing in a wage. It provides dignity, identity, and solidarity (Collinson 1992, Räthzel and Uzzell 2011). When industries are attacked (i.e. because they are seen to be damaging to the environment), those who work in those industries will also feel attacked.

It is striking that if one attends conferences on the human dimensions of climate change, very few papers focus on the workplace. With some confidence one can say that even less address labour issues in general or the position and role of trade unions towards climate change, whether in terms of their policy response or how climate mitigation and adaptation are affecting jobs or workers' rights. Likewise, conferences in the area of labour studies are silent on these issues. In the social environmental sciences – psychology, sociology, or economics - the focus of research, and what is carried across into the lecture theatre, is on changing consumer behaviour and largely comes under the heading of "behaviour change strategies" (e.g. Darnton 2008). These draw on theories from psychology and behavioural economics that are often individualistic and reductionist because they reduce people to de-socialised monads, taking decisions on their own (cf. Institute for Government 2009). To add "influences" from other people does not solve the problem because it only multiplies the number of monads conceived as meeting in a void. The societal relations (relations of production, relations of consumption, political and power relations (Uzzell and Räthzel 2009) that shape practices are neglected together with the "hardware" of such practices, infrastructures and technologies. Such research tends to concentrate on individual action in the home, in the supermarket, on holiday and through various transport means used to move between these locations. The closest these studies come to the workplace is the car that takes the commuter to work. Sustainable behaviour strategies in the workplace mirror those advocated for the consumers in general, such that research has focussed on how companies can implement, for example, "green travel plans" or encourage their workforce to recycle waste and turn lights off (Bartlett 2011). While these are valuable measures, they do not get to the heart of the matter, namely the production process itself and its impact on the environment. Environmental social scientists in turn have almost entirely ignored the impact of climate change on the psychology and sociology of workers, and their potential for collective as opposed to individual action.

The separation between environmental studies, focusing on the effects of production processes on nature, and labour studies focusing on the effects of production processes on workers can be traced back to the separation between natural sciences and social sciences. Bruno Latour (1993) argues that this

separation has its origins in the debate between Hobbes and Boyle, the latter arguing on the basis of experimentally created facts, the former on the basis of theories of the social (1993: 29f). Latour maintains that "things" and the "social" co-constitute each other and thus have to be studied in relation to each other. In a similar vein we suggest that production processes have to be studied as a relationship between humans and nature evolving within specific societal relations.

Some scholars have taken up the challenge to theorise this relationship. Predominantly, they come from a Marxist tradition (e.g., Vorst et al. 1993, Harvey 1996, Layfield 2008). O'Connor (1998) develops a theory of "human interaction with nature" and Foster (2000) re-constructs what he calls "Marx' Ecology", bringing together the writings of materialists and of Marx on nature and the human-nature metabolism, while Harvey theorises the social relations of nature from the perspective of a Marxist geography. While ecologists have criticised Marx and Marxists (Goldblatt 1996, Bramwell 1989, Smith 2001) for neglecting nature or conceptualising it only as a means to an end of human reproduction, others, like Pepper (1993), Gare (1995), Merchant (1992) have linked the ecological to Marxist theory. There is a lively debate around a Marxist or socialist ecology, especially in the journals *Capital, Nature, Socialism* and *Monthly Review*, but it has not been taken up in the fields of labour or environmental studies, with a view of providing a theoretical framework for empirical research.

New movements in the trade union movements

We use the plural of movement in this title because there is no such thing as a unitary labour or trade union movement. Differences and often conflicts exist on all levels, between sectors, within and between countries, and between and within unions of the global North and the global South. Nevertheless, while academic research remains largely corralled in its disciplines and sub-disciplines, union movements across the world have been moving fast to incorporate a concern for nature by taking on climate change as an issue of trade union policies (see Olsen and Kemter 2012).

This process has accelerated since the first international Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment (UNEP 2006), In the same year the ITUC was founded as a merger between the former International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the World Confederation of Labour. This was also the time when the first programme on climate change was agreed by an international union (see Murillo 2012). Since then, there has been a growing interest among trade union officials to incorporate the environment as an issue of climate change into trade union programmes. In many national and international unions special positions have been created for unionists to take responsibility for environmental issues and to formulate union positions on climate change.

Placing climate change issues on the trade union agenda requires a transformation of trade unions as organisations that are solely concerned with

workers' lives inside, or immediately around the factory walls. A transformation of unions would mean that they do not merely react to the capitalist crises, trying to defend the achievements of their past struggles, but would instead embark on new struggles in which they seek to become the inventors of new forms of production (see Henriksson 2012). Comprehensive union policies that merge the protection of workers and the protection of nature have several implications for trade union policies. They require that unions reinvent themselves as social movements, aiming not only to improve their members' lives but to take part in transforming societies and the present economic system. This implies a need to build alliances with environmental movements. Indeed, such alliances are forming in countries around the globe.

In the USA, the BlueGreen Alliance started with collaboration between the Sierra Club and the United Steelworkers union (Stevis 2012, Sweeney 2012, Gingrich 2012). In South Africa, Earthlife is organising courses on environmental issues for unionists and collaborating with COSATU and NUMSA in the "One Million Climate Jobs Campaign" (Cock and Lambert 2012); in Brazil, the umbrella organisations for environmental organisations (Forum Brasileiro de ONGs e Movimentos Sociais para o Meio Ambiente e o Desenvolvimento, FBOMS) includes the national trade union CUT as a board member. Some unions, like the STTR (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores y Trabalhadoras Rurais de Santarem) in the Amazonian region, have not only allied themselves with environmental movements, but are themselves a grassroots environmental movement (Cândia Veiga and Martin 2012).

Here, as in many areas of the global South, the close connection between defending work and defending nature is evident and was exemplified by the work and commitment of the famous trade union leader Chico Mendes, who was both a unionist of the rubber tappers and an environmentalist. He paid for his commitment and engagement with his life (Revkin 2004). This tradition of trade union environmentalism is alive in parts of the Brazilian trade union movement, predominantly among agricultural unions and in other organisations like the landless movement (MTS) and Via Campesina (an international network of such). In other countries an alliance between agricultural workers and unions, and rural communities has yet to be developed. Bennie (2012) suggests that South African industrial and mining unions need to understand that rural communities are not necessarily keen to exchange their ways of life for an opportunity to work in what others may perceive as a modern industry, even if they are promised what is conventionally regarded as a better life. The rural communities he researched refuse to accept the label of being poor.

In South Korea and Taiwan, two of the fastest industrialising countries of Asia, trade unions and environmental movements are coming together after they have both seen their support in society dwindle. Liu (2012) suggests that unions and environmental movements need to learn from each another in order to not only be able to work together, but also to improve the success of their own political campaigns. In Australia, unions and environmentalists have been

working together as early as the 1970s, forming associations like the "Environmentalists for Employment" (Burgmann 2012). Today, trade union environmental policies have diversified and so have their alliances with different environmental movements and political parties in Australia (Snell and Fairbrother 2012). In none of the countries mentioned here are alliances between unions and environmental movements free of friction, due to a history of different discourses and political priorities of the respective movements. These frictions demonstrate that the "job versus environment" dilemma is far from resolved, even though it is now considered a false dichotomy by many scholars, politicians and unionists who argue that a "green economy" will provide many more "green jobs" than might be lost through measures enabling a transformation into low carbon societies.

There are now a number of publications trying to calculate how many additional jobs can be created if the present system would change to a "green economy" (see for instance: ITUC: Growing Green and Decent Jobs: http://www.ituc-csi.org/summary.html?lang=en   accessed July 28, 2012). There are however a number of problems with the strategy of green jobs. First, such jobs are not necessarily well-paid, safe, and secure jobs, i.e., decent jobs. In order to not merely "greenwash" the existing economic system, it is necessary to examine the taken-for-granted growth perspective that underlies many green job strategies, to take the relationship between different production sectors within a country and globally into account, and to rethink the system of production that has led to climate change (Snell and Fairbrother 2012, Stevis 2012). The question is, whether a demand for green jobs leads to "shallow reforms" or whether it transcends the present forms of production and envisages an economic system beyond the growth paradigm (Cock and Lambert 2012, Barry 2012). For example, there is a view that "green jobs" and all other economic terms prefaced with the word "green" are an obfuscation — "a 'wolf in sheep's clothing", the wolf being a form of green capitalism which will deepen inequality and promote the further commodification of nature (Cock 2012: 1). Cock argues that attention should be given to creating "climate jobs". Notwithstanding this, it is important to remember that a radical trade union position that sees capitalism as the source of the global environmental destruction, does not necessarily lead to the formulation of radical positions on how to combat climate change (Bennie 2012).

If these questions are taken into account, the perspective of green jobs can overcome the jobs vs. environment dilemma by offering unions and workers a way to embrace climate change measures without fearing unemployment — at least theoretically. However, when a union is faced with the alternative of either supporting environmentally damaging production, which will create jobs immediately, or to oppose such a production for the sake of green jobs in an uncertain future, most will opt for the former (Räthzel and Uzzell 2011).

A radical agenda, fighting for "system change, not climate change" as demonstrators at the recent COP meetings in Copenhagen (2009) and Durban (2011) demanded, points to the root cause of climate change, namely profit and

therefore a growth-oriented production system. While such an agenda can provide a perspective to construct a long-term formulation of trade union policies, it will probably not be sufficient to convince unions at local levels who see their primary goal as fighting for their members' livelihood in the present. Strategies like the "One Million Climate Jobs Campaign" in South Africa (Alternative Information and Development Centre 2011) and the UK (Campaign against Climate Change 2010) are essential to develop awareness, arguments, and action for trade union policies at the local level and in the public domain. A shortcoming is that their demands are directed towards governments and only sometimes towards business. They involve unionists and workers as campaigners only, not as makers of their own futures. In our view, these campaigns need to be accompanied by strategies that involve workers directly in developing new forms of production that include a concern for nature and avoid its destruction. Such strategies would potentially transcend the existing capitalist system because they would necessarily challenge the existing private control over the means of production, the way in which goods are produced, as well as what kind or goods are produced for whom. One historic example of an attempt to involve workers into the transformation of production was the Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards Combine Committee's plan to transform the production of (largely) weapons into the production of "socially useful" products (Wainwright and Elliott 1981, Cooley 1980, Räthzel, Uzzell and Elliott 2010). While climate change was not at the forefront of the debate during those times, many of the suggestions the Combine Committee made implied the reduction of energy consumption.

Rosa Luxemburg (1999) coined the concept of "revolutionary reformism", meaning that labour movements have to present alternatives for the day-to-day political agendas with the aim of improving the situation for workers now. But such alternatives should at the same time make a transformative agenda visible and achievable. They should sow the seeds of alternative forms of working and living in practice. It seems to us that a strategy that links the "green jobs" campaigns with a trade union programme making use of workers' skills and knowledge to explore and design ways in which industries (and services for that matter) can be converted into sites producing "socially useful and environmentally sound" products, would constitute such a strategy of "revolutionary reformism".

In this context it is noteworthy that although official union documents, as well as the views of influential unionists, are occasionally discussed politically and in scholarly work, we have almost no reliable knowledge through either quantitative or qualitative research of what workers in factories and offices think about climate change. Apart from the LOCAW Study[2] which is being

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[2] LOCAW: Low Carbon at Work: Modelling agents and organisations to achieve transition to a low carbon Europe. In a study funded by the European Union, the authors, together with researchers in Romania, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and the UK, are investigating these questions in areas of small and heavy industry and public services. http://www.locaw-fp7.com/ (accessed March 20, 2012).

undertaken by the authors for the European Commission, we are only aware of the national surveys undertaken by the Labour Research Department, on behalf of the TUC in the UK. They survey union "Green Representatives" asking about trade union actions on environment and climate change in the workplace and the role of the trade union movement in those actions.

One of the major obstacles to the success of a global environmental trade union policy are the different perspective of unions due to their different national histories, the sector in which they organise, their strength in terms of membership, and their political convictions. Whether unions are closely related to government and political actors, or more flexible in choosing their allies, makes a difference in terms of whether they are willing and able to create new forms of cooperation with environmental movements. There is also a difference between international and national confederations and federations. While an international union may have the vision and resources to develop a broader perspective for environmental policies, a local union will be much more tied to the immediate, everyday interests of their members. This may act as a serious constraint on them not only envisaging but also practicing a broader social movement unionism that includes environmental concerns.

The North-South divide and climate change policies

Trade union histories and traditions do not only influence the ways in which unions formulate their interests within the societal context at large, they also shape their relations to the state and to labour parties in the respective countries. International solidarity has been a defining characteristic of trade unions since the 19th century (Waterman and Timms 2005), but it has usually meant unions supporting each other in their local struggles. The rise of the Internet has now made global protest possible but so far it is usually industry/sector specific. To incorporate a global phenomenon like climate change into the trade union agenda requires unions and their members to investigate the global effects of their local actions. In this respect, unions are a perfect example of "glocality" (Meyrowitz 2005), working on the local and the global level simultaneously.

However, there are numerous obstacles to a unified, glocal strategy of trade unions in the area of climate change (and not only there). Perhaps the most serious one is the divide between unions of the global North and unions of the global South. The history of colonialism continues to be reflected in North-South relations between unions. While there are also multiple differences between Southern unions on the one and Northern unions on the other hand, these are cross-cut by what Southern unionists experience as domination by Northern unions due to the latter's superior resources and organising power. While Northern unions practice solidarity in helping Southern unions with their resources and knowledge, this often comes at a price, namely a strategy of Northern unions to influence the political practices of their Southern colleagues. These power relationships thwart the possibilities of developing common

international environmental policies against climate change (Uzzell and Räthzel 2012).

This is apparent in the workings of the international manufacturing unions. As one unionist in the South put it bluntly: "The Northern unions have created the international unions a hundred years ago, they have the biggest resources, they own them. When the big boys want to do something it happens, no matter how much resistance there is from unions in the South". This was not a solitary statement. Talking to unionists in Brazil, South Africa, and India, we heard similar descriptions of the North-South relations within international unions from all our 13 interview partners in these countries, who belonged to 9 different unions. Some unionists in the North self-critically confirmed these perceptions.

With the strengthening of Southern Unions due to the relocation of manufacturing from the North to the South, these relationships might alter. For instance in Brazil we were told:

> After the creation of CUT in '83 and after the maturation process of CUT becoming strong as an institution and becoming more relevant in the society etc., during all those years the support of international cooperation was very important. But we realised, especially in the last four or five years, that that has changed. Because, as you know, when you have international support you have the international policies that come with that. And we realised more and more that the South-South cooperation is actually more suitable for us. Because – don't get me wrong here, but the perspective that comes from the international cooperation from Europe is very much like that, you know: "We have all the resources. We're going to help you and pay you and ... you should go in this direction and that direction." And we try to combine an agenda, but in most of the cases it's not what we want to, precisely, you know. And CUT as the main trade union confederation of Latin America is putting a lot of effort into South-South cooperation.

Our respondent is careful to appreciate the support they received from the North but it is clear that with their growing power and resources, Southern unions in the emerging economies will no longer want to subordinate themselves to Northern political strategies. One strategy is to work together to achieve more influence within international federations and confederations, another is to form South-South networks like SIGTUR. Yet another is to join a federation different from the ITUC. For instance, NUMSA and NUM in South Africa have recently joined the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which formerly comprised predominantly unions of the countries oriented towards the Soviet Union and today has members largely from countries of the global South. As one unionist in India explained: "the WFTU is for class struggle and the ITUC is for class cooperation". Joining the WFTU is not only a decision that reflects the unions' impatience with North-South relationships, it is also a political decision as the statement of the Indian unionist shows. Some of the big unions in South Africa and in Brazil and India are more radically anti-capitalist than the majority of unions in the global North. However, in terms of including

climate change and environmental protection into the trade union agenda the WFTU has certainly a much longer way to go than the ITUC.

The power relations between Northern and Southern unions affect the possibility to create global trade union policies against climate change. Unions in the South tend not only to see climate change but also some climate change mitigation policies as an imposition from the North. While aware of the threat that climate change poses especially to the survival of populations in the South, they warn that some policies devised in the North can become a new form of imperialism, namely "eco-imperialism" as one unionist in South Africa put it. He was referring to the threat of border adjustments in Northern countries that would prevent Southern goods produced with lower technology and thus higher emissions from entering Northern countries. In the absence of technological transfer and funding to enable Southern countries to develop similar technologies this would considerably weaken the economies of Southern countries. In India we were told (only half jokingly) that climate change is a conspiracy of Northern countries to prevent Southern countries to develop economically.

Such remarks become wholly understandable once one considers the living conditions of workers in the developing countries. It is the enormous economic and political inequalities between the countries of the North and the South that are at the heart of the disagreement between unions as well as states. As we know, while the North is the highest emitter per capita[3], the South suffers predominantly from its effects.

That does not mean, though that the industrial unions in the emergent economies of Brazil, South Africa, and India, respond in similar ways to the threat that climate change poses to their countries. In South Africa there are some passionate activists in the second biggest union, NUMSA, the union of metalworkers, who are pushing for a socially owned and democratically controlled "renewable energy sector", arguing that green jobs can be just as exploitative and hierarchical as brown jobs in the fossil fuel sector. While the character of the jobs is also discussed in Northern unions, who demand green AND decent jobs, social ownership and democratic control of the production process is generally not on the agenda of Northern Unions.

The largest Brazilian (and largest Latin American) national confederation, CUT, has had ups and downs in its engagement with environmental issues and climate change. It became engaged in the wake of the first Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. But after that its engagement receded and it was only through cooperation with the Spanish trade union Comisiones Obreras (CCOO), which

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[3] This is still true, even if China is included, since its emissions have only surpassed those of the USA due to the size of its population. According to Wikipedia, if we take the per capita emissions the USA ranks 7 and China 78. The first six highest emitters per capita are the Arab oil countries.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_carbon_dioxide_emissions_per_capita
(accessed July 27, 2012)

has a long history of support for environmental concerns, that the issue was addressed again. The theology of liberation, especially the book *Ecology, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Boff 1997) had a significant influence on environmentally engaged trade unionists. In the Brazilian movements there has been a close cooperation between environmental movements and parts of the trade union movements. As one leading member of the Brazilian FBOMS explained, this is due to the fact that the environmental movements in Brazil could not afford to disconnect the struggle against environmental degradation from the struggle against poverty. In fact, some of the most powerful workers' movements are simultaneously environmental movements like the MTS, the movement of landless workers.

Recently (July 2012), the CUT has elected a new secretary with an environmental portfolio, Jasseir Alves Fernandes. Like the former secretary, Carmen Foro, who was the first secretary elected in 2009, he comes from the agricultural union STTR. In her report from the *Rio+20* Carmen Foro declared: "*The crisis is not only economic, but civilisational as well, it is one that requires a struggle for food security, the preservation of life and of ecosystems. It shows that we need to develop immediate measures to address the social, environmental, political and economic questions, which all demand processes of profound transformation.*" (CUT n.d.) As with the South African NUMSA and COSATU, CUT calls for an alternative economic model of development. At *Rio+20* CUT took part in a demonstration against a "green capitalism", where the attack was not against the "green" but against the way in which capitalism appropriates the label in order to increase it profits. While the largest unions in South Africa and Brazil are developing policies against climate change and seeking to work together with environmental movements (in South Africa predominantly with Earthlife Africa), however complicated their relationships might be, the picture in India is altogether different.

In talking to leading trade unionists[4] what became clear through all their differences are two points: firstly, these leaders are all aware of the threat of climate change. Secondly, they see no way in which they can combine their struggle against appalling working conditions with the struggle against environmental degradation, except when the latter is linked directly to health and safety issues at work. As one of the unionists expressed it: "we have to start at the workplace, then broaden to the surroundings of the factories, fighting against pollution, and in a further step we might address issues of pollution of soil and earth happening in the community. That is all we can do, small steps." When asked how workers see that some work, like working with asbestos or in shipbreaking will kill them, one of the unionists answered: "the prospect of death is less of a threat to workers than going hungry and not being able to feed their families." An indication of this is the massive suicide rate amongst farmers

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[4] We spoke to leaders of seven national unions: The Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), Steel Workers Federation of India, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) and the Asian Office of the former IMF, now IndustriAll.

in India[5], largely due to debts as a consequence of having to buy genetically engineered seed from TNCs like Monsanto. This locks them into a dependency relationship with these companies because, as the seed is genetically sterile, they have to buy new seed every season (cf. http://articles.mercola. com/sites/articles/archive/2012/04/03/gmo-crops-affect-farmers.aspx, accessed August 10, 2012).

On the other hand (and this is of course no evidence, only an indication that must remains to be researched) when we asked workers at a truck factory in South India about environmental issues, they complained about the company cutting down trees without replacing them, about painting being conducted outdoors, about the killing of bees, which nested in the factory. Only one of these problems was directly connected to the workers' health. This is only one account yet it begs the question whether are workers are really not interested in environmental issues or whether trade union officials have not found ways to discuss environmental concerns with their members.

To develop an understanding of the differences between India on the one hand and Brazil and South Africa on the other, a few figures might be a good start. According to the World Bank, the percentage of people living under US$1.25 a day was 6.14% in Brazil (2009), 13.7% in South Africa (2009) and 32.67% in India (2010) (http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY accessed July 29, 2012).

Perhaps the most striking difference between the countries is the percentage of people working in the informal sector. In Brazil it is estimated that 39% of the workforce is in this sector, and in South Africa between 24% and 32%. In India, 92% of the working population can be found in the informal sector. This clearly leads to a low union density which is evident from the fact that unions organise a maximum of 10% of the workforce. To this one needs to add the deep fractures in the Indian trade union movement, which have created a multitude of national federations all more or less associated with different political parties. As Sharit Bhowmik writes, when the political party splits, its union splits as well (Bhowmik 2009). But Indian unions are now realising that they need to begin to organise the informal sector, since, as everywhere in the world, the "informal" is creeping into the "formal" sector through the employment of contract workers without or very little social protection and with contracts limited to less than a year. Therefore, as the CITU representative explained, all the unions would be coming together in 2012 to develop a common platform, despite their political differences.

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[5] Based on statistical material of the Indian government, several press releases have reported that around a quarter of a million farmers in India have been recorded to commit suicide over the past 15 years. That is, every 30 minutes a farmer commits suicide in India. See for instance: http://www.ipsnews.net/2011/12/india-more-suicides-than-reforms/ (accessed August 10, 2012), http://www.ipsnews.net/2011/01/suicides-rise-across-india/ (accessed August 11, 2012) and Nagaraj, 2008.

Possible perspectives?

Unions across the world are slowly appreciating that they cannot leave environmental issues to the environmental movements, as one German delegate argued at the COP 15 in Copenhagen. However, this statement was met with some resistance from a majority of the unionists present. At each international meeting on climate change (COP 16, COP 17, Rio+20) the number of unions represented and developing their specific environmental agendas has risen. On the national as well as the international level relationships between unions and environmental movements have improved and members in both bodies are becoming aware that they can only succeed if they work together. The ITUC events at international meetings usually feature important members of environmental movements on the discussion panels (for instance Friends of the Earth in Durban). Likewise, in Rio+20 trade unions were an integral and leading force at the People's Summit. This does not mean that differences and contradictions have disappeared, but we would say that the realisation of opportunities for collabouration between these two movements are increasing.

A more significant problem is that of integrating the struggle against poverty with the struggle against climate change. This is not an issue simply of awareness. The trade union documents make this link consistently. For example, the latest resolution of the ITUC, in which they declare the preconditions of their demands, states:

> Realising that our current profit-driven production and consumption model, identified as the source of rising social inequalities and environmental degradation, must be replaced if a truly sustainable development is to be achieved; (...) Deeply preoccupied with the data demonstrating that almost 60% of the world's workers are without secure employment and that 75% of the world's population is without social protection, as well as with the statistics on worker health and safety which indicate that, despite under-reporting, every 15 seconds a worker dies because of a work-related illness or accident, that every 15 seconds 160 workers fall victim to a work-place accident, worsened by the neoliberal model that has brought about changes in workplace relations (informal labour, outsourcing, subcontracting, export-processing zones (EPZ), among others), leading to ever-greater precariousness; (...) Preoccupied by the fact that twenty years after the Rio Summit of 1992, the environmental and social crises have worsened and sustainable development negotiations have not led to the compromises that could produce changes in production and consumption models, but are, rather, laying the regulatory foundations for the commodification and financialisation of the Commons, of nature and its functions; (...) Aware of the fact that the trade union movement is faced with a diversity of situations across the globe with respect to the right to associate, to organise as trade unions and to collective bargaining, to social dialogue and to decent work, and that in many countries the irresponsible behaviour of certain national and multinational businesses and irresponsible structural adjustment policies lead to the violation of worker and trade union rights. Furthermore, as a result of austerity policies, these rights, which used to be guaranteed, are currently under threat. Convinced, moreover, that combating social dumping is synonymous with protecting the planet; ... (Resolution - 2nd Trade Union Assembly on Labour and Environment, June 10-12, 2012, Rio de Janeiro, http://www.ituc-csi.org/resolution-2nd-trade-union.html accessed July 29, 2012).

But as the Indian example shows, the main problem is to translate these declarations into action. The tragic irony is that those countries which suffer most from the effects of climate change are the least able to connect the struggle for jobs and against poverty with the struggle against climate change because simply surviving is already an effort. Where farmers are committing suicide and workers are dying from diseases acquired through their work, the craving for any kind of work under any conditions is overwhelming and the possibility of connecting the need for work with the need to save the environment is understandably weak.

The trade union movement is pressing governments to implement legislation to improve working conditions and to save the environment. They are demanding from companies and TNCs to provide not only work, but decent work. International unions are campaigning to protect unionists and trade union activism across the globe and especially in countries of the Global South. However, the national and international trade union movement cannot afford to wait until governments and companies listen to their demands. As Rio+20 has depressingly shown, the so-called "leaders" are less than ever prepared, willing and able to lead.

As our research among unionists of the global North and the global South shows, one of the most important tasks for unions if they want to become an international force in times of globalisation is to order their own house. They need to address the continued anachronistic dominance of the North over the South. Northern unions need to use their resources not to subordinate Southern unions' interests to "Regional Reports", outvote the poorer Southern unions (because those with the highest amount of members pay the highest fees and therefore have the highest numbers of votes) and support only building "the trade union house" financially. They need to create a system that is based on solidarity and equality rather than resources. If trade unions cannot practice solidarity and democracy within their own organisations how can they hope to realise these values in society at large?

Coming back to Luxemburg*'s* suggestion of a revolutionary reformism and taking up the ideas of the Lucas Aerospace Combine Committee, as well as Henriksson's suggestion to convert the car industry into one that produces socially useful and environmentally sound products, one can add a further perspective to trade union environmentalism: Unionists need to use their expertise as workers, engineers and civil servants to develop alternative forms of production that can guarantee decent and environmentally sound production processes and products. While it is important to calculate how many green jobs could be created potentially if governments and capital would invest in them, it is equally necessary to develop concrete production alternatives in every country, in every sector, in every workplace. Unions in different countries and unionised as well as non-unionised workers in specific workplaces must see alternatives to the ways in which they are working where they are *now*. Such strategies would also create a "level playing field" allowing unions of the global

North and the global South to learn from each other, since they have different kinds of knowledge.

We are aware that these requirements may sound utopian, maybe even naïve. But if unions cannot overcome their differences and create production alternatives, there are few if any social actors left who can shoulder the burden of struggling for a world in which both labour and nature can be allies in securing the survival of life on earth.

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About the authors

Nora Räthzel is Professor of Sociology at the University of Umeå, Sweden. She can be contacted at nora.rathzel AT soc.umu.se. *Web*: http://www.soc.umu.se/om-institutionen/personal/nora-rathzel/

David Uzzell is Professor of Environmental Psychology at the University of Surrey, UK. He can be contacted at d.uzzell AT surrey.ac.uk.

They are co-editors of *Trade Unions in the Green Economy: Working for the Environment*. London, Routledge, 2012.

Coalitions of labor unions and NGOs:
The room for maneuver of the German
Clean Clothes Campaign

Melanie Kryst

Abstract

Labor unions are experimenting with new forms of struggle to secure labor standards. Transnational coalition building with NGOs offers a range of possible actions and targets. As can be derived from NGO and social movement research as well as from the approach of social movement unionism, union/NGO coalitions use a mix of actions. Empirically evident are movement actions, or public pressure from the outside, as well as interest group actions, or negotiations and mechanisms from the inside. When it comes to the demands of union/NGO coalitions, a variety of targets is possible, taking into account the mechanism of private governance established since the 1990s as findings of governance research and sociology of markets show. Co-operation efforts between labor unions and NGOs strive to protect labor standards not only with regard to public regulation through (supranational) state actors, but also through voluntary business instruments like codes of conduct. In this regard labor unions are traditionally ascribed to the political sphere and NGOs to the business sphere. An illustrative example, the German branch of the Clean Clothes Campaign (Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung) *shows how union/NGO coalitions use both movement actions and interest group actions after an intensive co-operation is built. A longitudinal analysis of the coalition's demands demonstrates how the CCC-G shifts its strategy from the establishment of a code of conduct and independent monitoring mechanisms to a hybrid approach of also targeting state actors. This is explained by the problems with voluntary self-regulation and rising political options. This hybrid approach of targeting private and state actors might be a more effective way of business regulation.*

Introduction

"Killer Jeans still being made" (CCC 2012) is the title of a current online action of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) which strives to secure a ban on sandblasting in the jeans production industry. The term Killer Jeans dramatically refers to a dangerous technique in the production process of jeans, specifically the use of sandblasting to fabricate fashionably worn-out-look jeans, which harms workers by causing lung diseases. "[G]arment workers are still being asked to risk their lives for fashion" (CCC 2012) judges the CCC referring

to unhealthy labor conditions. How does the CCC, a transnational network of labor unions and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), fight for the improvement of labor conditions? In this case, the CCC set up a campaign in 2010 targeting well-known brands like *Dolce & Gabbana* to stop the use of sandblasting during the production process. Trying to raise public attention, the CCC asks consumers to send protest letters to the selected corporations. It also has pleaded with national governments and the *European Union* (EU) to reach a ban of sandblasting products. This initiative is one of many examples where labor unions and NGOs use diverse paths to secure labor standards. Labor unions in co-operation with NGOs experiment with new forms of struggle that go beyond participation in industrial relations institutions and the spirit of an interest group fighting for the interest of their members. Instead they also include instruments of private governance and show actions characteristic of social movements. Thus, the room for maneuver for union/NGO coalitions is broad; however, the chosen strategies of union/NGO coalitions are understudied.

The importance of coalition building is widely acknowledged in research on social movements (Raschke 1988, Rucht 1994, Staggenborg 2010). The literature on Social Movement Unionism also discusses coalition building with social movement organizations (Fairbrother 2008, Waterman 2008). Coalition building is among other things meant to be a revitalization strategy of labor unions to tackle increasing problems of eroding mobilization capacity (Frege and Kelly 2003). Finally, research exists that deals explicitly with coalitions of labor unions and NGOs with regard to labor regulation[1] (Altvater 1999, Anner 2000, Gallin 2000, Krüger 2002, Scherrer 2002, Anner and Evans 2004, Connor 2004, Eade 2004, Hale 2004, Huyer 2004, Povey 2004, Roman 2004, Spooner 2004, Arenas, Lozano and Albreda 2009, Ford 2009, Sluiter 2009). So far the findings are mainly focused on the emergence of coalitions, but not on joint efforts to protect labor standards. However, the studies are instructive for the analysis of the coalition's strategic choices by showing similarities and differences between the actors as well as conflicts or strengthening factors; for example, long-term established ties, a common threat or opportunity, the demands based on the same ideology or comparative advantages such as the stance of labor unions in industrial relations institutions or the media affinity of NGOs. While the process of coalition building has been subject to some research, so far only a little attention has been devoted to the actions of these coalitions once they are established. Several studies, though, point to different possible strategic decisions within union/NGO coalitions regarding how labor standards should be implemented between the political and the economic

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[1] In the past, unions and NGOs often had a conflictual relationship, particularly with regard to questions of ecological sustainability, and efforts of co-operation often stopped at the level of common statements. Some investigations are conducted within the policy areas of environment and energy politics (Krüger 2002: 38f., Obach 2004, Mayer 2009, Frundt 2010) and in the health sector (Lethbridge 2004, 2009). During the 1990s, long-term coalitions also became visible in the field of labor regulation.

sphere (Braun and Gearhart 2004, Compa 2004, Egels-Zandén and Hyllman 2006, 2011). The strategies of union/NGO coalitions are therefore the focus of this study. What are the joint options for coalitions of labor unions and NGOs and how do they use them? This study conceptualizes different strategies of union/NGO coalitions to regulate labor standards by mapping the room for maneuver of these coalitions. Furthermore, it illustrates in a longitudinal case study how these coalitions can take advantage of these different options.

To map the room for maneuver of union/NGO coalitions, I differentiate various actions and targets. As can be derived from NGO or social movement research and the approach of social movement unionism, union/NGO coalitions use a mix of actions. Empirically evident are both movement actions, as public pressure from the outside, and interest group actions, namely negotiations and mechanisms from the inside (Krüger 2002, Fairbrother and Webster 2008). When it comes to the demands of union/NGO coalitions, a variety of targets is possible, taking into account the mechanism of private governance established since the 1990s as findings of governance research and sociology of markets show (Bartley 2003, King and Pearce 2010). Co-operation efforts of labor unions and NGOs strive for protection of labor standards not only with regard to public regulation through (supranational) state actors, but also through voluntary business instruments like codes of conduct. As findings of union/NGO coalition research show labor unions are traditionally ascribed to the political sphere and NGOs to the business sphere of global labor governance, even though they are not limited to one dimension (Egels-Zandén and Hyllman 2011). Thus, the coalition's options for action range between public and private governance attempts, as well as their interplay.

In the following section, after a definition of coalitions of labor unions and NGOs, I provide an overview of possible actions and targets of union/NGO coalitions. Later in the article, the German branch of the CCC, the *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung* (CCC-G), serves as an illustrative case for the use of different actions and targets. The investigated coalition has existed for some years, meaning that a potential development is visible. As a result, a mix of movement and interest group actions is visible, based on an intensive co-operation. In addition to the mobilization for private governance, the CCC-G developed an attempt to public regulation respectively a hybrid strategy, due to the lack of successful voluntary self-regulation of corporations and upcoming political options.

Coalitions of labor unions and NGOs

Defining union/NGO coalitions

Within the context of changing patterns of transnational regulation of labor standards new coalitions have been established between labor unions and NGOs. A coalition is defined as a coordinated co-operation of independent but convergent political forces. Important elements are the autonomy of the actors, the link of the co-operation to a purpose and at least a partial harmonization

(Raschke 1988: 339). Such a broad definition of coalition allows several motives of coalition building such as strategic interests as well as common norms and values or shared beliefs (Dobusch and Quack 2010: 8).

Coalitions of labor unions and NGOs can be diverse. A helpful starting point to organize empirical findings is the definition of ideal types of union/NGO networks classified from the highest to the lowest intensity of co-operation (Krüger 2002). Rhodes and Heclo make a first differentiation between so-called policy communities and less intensive co-operations referred to as issue networks (Rhodes and Heclo in Krüger 2002: 226ff.). Additionally, through the research of NGO networks Walk and Brunnengräber develop a temporary network type so-called ad hoc network[2] (Walk and Brunnengräber 2000: 247f.). Krüger presents a weaker type, the so-called discursive network and the precursor presentation, based on the empirical examination of union/NGO coalitions (Krüger 2002: 219ff.). Accordingly, co-operation efforts can range from only non-binding declarations, joint conferences and temporary projects, to long-term campaigns, a common secretariat, joint problem definition and planning processes or even to a continuous exchange and joint proposals for the policy process. For example, as the following case study shows, a coalition might also develop in longitudinal section towards a more intensive coalition form. Since the organizational structure lays the foundation for any further actions, it can also hinder or facilitate certain forms of action (Jones et al. 2001). For union/NGO coalitions this applies to the engagement in interest group politics which seem to need an intensive form of co-operation (Krüger 2002: 226ff.).

A mix of social movement and interest group actions

How does a union/NGO coalition act? On the one side, labor unions represent the interest of their members in the political decision-making process and are actors of self-regulation in the field of labor regulation (Koch-Baumgarten 2006). This applies to political systems where labor unions are able to take part in collective bargaining, as is the case in this study, but has also in mind other labor unions that try to reach this status. On the other side of the co-operation are NGOs, defined as voluntary organizations, which build the structure of social movements and rely on supporters (Walk and Brunnengräber 2000). Since the range of NGOs is broad, in this study only NGOs that explicitly deal with labor standards, elsewhere referred to as labor-NGOs (Ford 2009), are taken into account because no additional conflict lines shall be examined, for instance conflicts over environmental issues (Obach 2004). As social movement and NGO as well as labor union research shows, the line between NGOs and labor unions blur with regard to the actions carried out. The joint actions of the

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[2] Walk and Brunnengräber (2000) name this type of coalition a *campaign network*. But the term campaign is used in this context as a concrete form of action, not as a definition for the network itself.

coalition will be differentiated in social movement actions and interest group actions.

To begin with, social movement research and NGO research looks for the development of interest group characteristics within social movements. NGOs experiment with diverse forms of collective practice as well as with informal and non-hierarchical organization structures. NGOs rely on a pool of supporters that they need to mobilize. However, to reach an influential position in politics, NGOs build more and more centralized structures and mechanisms for negotiation (Lahusen 1996, Walk and Brunnengräber 2000: 194ff.). To capture these characteristics, adopted from social movement research, Krüger makes a difference between the logic of problematization and the logic of effectiveness (Hjelmar in Krüger 2002: 35f.). The former describes strategies that build up pressure through agenda setting, whereby the state is not addressed exclusively. Actions with high publicity draw attention to an issue and help to raise public awareness. Alternatively, the latter actions aim to reach influence through lobbying, legal proceedings, negotiations and collaboration with others. At best, the result is effective interest politics. One can broaden this approach to market actors, where a distinction of NGO-actions can be made between public confrontation and dialogue far from the media (Reiß 2007).

Additionally, this difference in the characteristics of actions can be expounded through labor unions research. Unions first of all represent the material interest of workers; the elected representatives are committed to a definite number of members. Even though strikes are a main confrontational instrument of unions, the work of labor unions is shaped by bureaucratization and centralization of power, where they are established actors in the national context of interest group politics and lobby aside from the media. However, new types of actions, such as online campaigns, also make up a part of the instruments used by unions (Gallin 2000, Della Porta 2006, Koch-Baumgarten 2006: 211ff.). The social movement unionism approach shows the movement character of labor unions. Social Movement Unionism describes and in part argues for the coalition of the old labor movement with new social movements or community organizations (Fairbrother 2008, Fairbrother and Webster 2008, Waterman 2008). This approach not only shows a broadened selection of issues and coalitions of labor unions, but also identifies new ways of protests, which are similar to those of new social movements (Lethbridge 2009). Fairbrother and Webster also differentiate between a movement dimension of unions, or mobilization, and an institutional dimension, namely the participation in industrial relations institutions (2008: 311).

In sum, these logics of action in the following sections will be referred to as *social movement and interest group action.* Both groups of actors might show characteristics of these logics; in this regard the borders between the two actors blur. Therefore it can be assumed that in coalitions both logics of actions are empirically evident. Furthermore, a change within the coalition between movement and interest group action is possible over time.

Targets of public and private governance instruments

Who are the coalitions targeting with their demands? Working conditions with regard to working hours, salaries, health security, labor union rights, environmental consequences and others are points of conflict not only in (supra-)national political decision-making processes and collective negotiations, but also in street protests, online campaigns, stakeholder meetings, the consumption of labeled products and in many other arenas. As already mentioned, the targets of the coalitions' actions can be diverse. Several instruments from public to private governance can be favored to secure labor standards.

On the one hand, transnational non-state networks address state actors (Keck and Sikkink 1998), such as governments and government organizations, as well as international organizations. However, nation states are confronted with regulation problems due to cross-border economic interdependencies and they act upon the maxim of international competition (Streeck 1996: 180ff.). On a supranational level an effective regulation through, amongst others, the *International Labour Organization* (ILO) or social clauses in trade agreements by the *World Trade Organization* (WTO) seems unlikely (Koch-Baumgarten 2006: 206ff.). Additionally, national industrial relations are becoming weaker and national labor unions loose bargaining power (Avdagić and Crouch 2006: 206). Cross-border interdependencies, liberalization, new exit options of transnational corporations and growing national competitiveness characterizes the macroeconomic situation (Altvater and Mahnkopf 1993: 80ff., Young 2000) and are challenges for labor unions and social movements which try to reduce the worldwide currency of workers (Bieler and Lindberg 2011). The problem of labor unions to build global working structures is well known (Koch-Baumgarten 1999: 11ff.).

Therefore, new options of transnational governance arise through various instruments of (self-)regulation which range from campaigns of blaming and shaming (Lahusen 1997: 175) to seals of quality and codes of conduct (Greven 2001: 178), or even to international framework agreements (Koch-Baumgarten 2006: 211ff.). Even political consumerism (Stolle and Micheletti 2005), carried out on an individual basis, is an effort to regulate labor standards, and is visible through increasing label and certification systems. Campaigns by labor unions and NGOs can provide information for political consumerism and can give political meaning to this activity (Balsiger 2010: 315).

This complex struggle regarding the regulation of labor, or the formulation and enforcement of rules of labor conditions (Ehmke and Simon and Simon 2009: 13), is discussed with regard to the private or public governance of labor. Thus, there is evidence of a possible shift from public to private regulation, and from the traditional influence of interest groups towards instruments of consumer power (Altvater 1999: 329ff., Koch-Baumgarten 2006: 205ff., 2011, Bartley 2007, Hassel 2008, Vogel 2008, Ehmke/Simon/Simon 2009: 14). In this regard it makes sense to use approaches that treat market actors as political actors (O'Rourke 2008, Dobusch/Quack 2010, King/Pearce 2010), so that all relevant

actors, instruments and arenas are taken into account. Furthermore, instruments of private governance and public regulation can interact and build up a complementary governance structure (Weil/Mallo 2007, Amengual 2010, Overdevest 2010).

This study concentrates on how the coalitions react to these opportunities and difficulties. As the findings of union/NGO coalition research show, labor unions are traditionally ascribed to the political sphere and NGOs to the business sphere of global labor regulation, even though they are not limited to one dimension (Braun/Gearhart 2004, Compa 2004, Egels-Zandén/Hyllman 2006, 2011). The coalitions' actions can therefore be related to state actors and/or market actors, whereas a change in strategies is possible. In sum, the functioning of union/NGO coalitions can be mapped in the context of the ongoing changes in the public and/or private regulation of labor on a global level. This can be done by analyzing next to the movement or interest group characteristic of the chosen actions, also the targets. In the next section, the Clean Clothes Campaign is analyzed based on these concepts.

The Clean Clothes Campaign in Germany

The beginning of a transnational union/NGO network

The *Clean Clothes Campaign* (CCC) is a transnational network of labor unions and NGOs that has existed since 1990 and strives for labor (and environmental) standards in the textile and garment industry. From its start the coalition expanded its membership and presently consists of a European network of national campaigns or contact points in 16 countries as well as a European secretariat based in Amsterdam. The European organizations work together with national organizations in the main countries of textile production, namely in Asia and Latin America.

In the following paragraphs, the German branch of the CCC, *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung* (CCC-G) is analyzed (detailed in Kryst 2010, shorter version in German language in Kryst 2012 submitted). First, I will shortly outline the beginning of the CCC-G. Then, the structure of the coalition is analyzed which lay the foundation for the actions of the coalition which are shown afterwards in detail. While throughout the actions both movement and interest group characteristics are mixed, the targets change over time. Originally, the strategy focuses on the establishment of a code of conduct for which the coalition pushes through consumer protest and negotiations with corporations. Later this strategy is complemented with actions that address legal regulations and the state as consumer. Thus, the coalition's demands provide evidence for a hybrid strategy of public and private governance.

Therefore, a qualitative case study of the long-lasting coalition is carried out using internal documents and materials of the CCC-G. A structured analysis of documents is supplemented by interviews with the coordinators of the CCC-G secretariat and the urgent appeals co-ordinator of the CCC-G as well as with one representative of an NGO and a labor union that are part of the network. Of

particular importance for the document analysis are, on the one hand, minutes of internal meetings of the CCC-G and meetings on European level as well as formal papers within which the coalition defines its form of organization[3]. On the other hand, the regularly released newsletters of the CCC-G are subject to analysis. The actions are amongst others apparent through the newsletter of the CCC-G (CCC-G 1999b – CCC-G 2012a). Additionally, other existing investigations of the CCC are taken into account (Altvater 1999, Ascoly/Zeldenrust 1999, Rimml 2003, Hale/Wills 2007, Krüger 2002: 139ff., Sluiter 2009, Balsiger 2010, Egels-Zandén/Hyllmann 2006, 2011, Merk 2009).

The roots of the CCC can be traced back to street protests in solidarity with Filipino textile workers in the Netherlands in 1989. In a so-called Free Exporting Zone in the Philippines, women occupied the entrance of a textile manufactory which had been shut down after the workers claimed they were not getting paid the statutory minimum wage. After protests in front of textile sellers in the Netherlands, Dutch NGOs carried out continuative public actions and research of labor conditions in the sector. Finally, the CCC was officially founded in 1990 (Altvater 1999, Ascoly/Zeldenrust 1999: 14, Hale/Wills 2007, Krüger 2002: 139ff., Sluiter 2009: 9ff.).

Originating in the Netherlands the concept of the CCC was transferred, amongst others, to some German NGOs, which became involved in the CCC in 1995 and brought in one by one other NGOs and labor unions. In co-operation with other European organizations they compiled publications, carried out workshops and made contacts with non-European groups. Already at an early stage, the CCCs first contact with groups from Asia led to the organization of public tours of Asian textile workers through Europe. The period until 1998 can be described as the booster phase, in which the CCC-G developed its organization, strategy and course of action (CCC-G 1996a). In the beginning, the CCC-G existed as a loose structure of member organizations (CCC-G 1996a). In June 1996, five organizations built the so-called core group, which dealt with the financial and strategic aspects. Members of this core group were four moderate NGOs with a churchy background that are engaged amongst others in human rights issues and development issues, namely the *Christliche Initiative Romero*, the *Südwind Institut für Ökonomie und Ökumene*, the *Ökumenisches Netz Rhein-Mosel-Saar* and the group *Evangelische Frauenarbeit in Deutschland*, the last explicitly works on women rights. Additionally, the *Bildungswerk/Nord-Süd-Netz*, a branch of the German labor unions' umbrella organization *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB)* which deals with labor rights on a global level was part of this core group. Initially, the planning was laid out for three years, but it was not explicitly restricted to this time (CCC-G 1996a). Already in the booster phase, it was obvious that the co-operations taking place on a working level and the coalition was planned for a long-term co-operation and more action-

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[3] The material was generously provided by the union *IG Metall* in Frankfurt/Main, the NGO *Katholische Landjugendbewegung* in Bad Honnef and the *International Secretariat* of the CCC in Amsterdam.

orientated than for discursive exchange. Hence, the coalition goes beyond the above mentioned types of presentation and discursive network.

The working structure of the CCC-G

The network lays the foundation for any joint actions carried out by the coalition. When it comes to the internal co-operation of the CCC-G, the formal paper of structure (CCC-G 1998 – CCC-G 2010a) shows that the working structure of the CCC-G is a staggered organization structure (CCC-G 1996b), which consists of a central core surrounded by other groups in a loose network. In the center is a group of support organizations, which are the actors that hold the main responsibility in terms of programmatic, strategic and financial planning as well as the campaigning. At the moment it consists of 22 organizations (Table 1). Besides the DGB, three sector unions are members of the CCC-G. Since 1998 the *IG Metall*, which covers amongst others workers of the textile industry, and the service sector labor union *ver.di* have taken part in the campaign. In 2012, the *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft*, a labor union from the education sector, joined the group of support organizations. Most of the other active member organizations have a churchy background, which is occasionally also highlighted by the expression of a One World-idea stemming from Christian development co-operation. They advocate for human rights and women rights issues and deal with development politics, sometimes with a specific regional focus. Some assign themselves to the global justice movement, like the *INKOTA-Netzwerk*. Others, such as *FEMNET* and *Terre des Femmes,* are NGOs that fight for worldwide women rights. Also, *TIE Global* is a transnational network of workers initiatives.

Member organizations since 1998: (year) = joining the CCC-G [year] = leaving the CCC-G *=core group in the booster phase	Organizational structure
• *Christliche Initiative Romero • *DGB Bildungswerk/ Nord-Süd-Netz • *Evangelische Frauenarbeit in Deutschland • *Ökumenisches Netz Rhein-Mosel-Saar • *Südwind-Institut für Ökonomie und Ökumene • [Evangelische Frauenhilfe in Westfalen, - 2005] • IG Metall • [Informationsstelle El Salvador, - 2002] • Katholische Arbeitnehmerbewegung • Katholische Landjugendbewegung Deutschlands • Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund • [NRO-Frauenforum, - 2006] • Terre des Femmes • Ver.di • Vereinigte Evangelische Mission Wuppertal • Evangelische StudentInnengemeinde (1999) • INKOTA-Netzwerk (1999) • Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend (2000) • Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Evangelischen Jugend in Deutschland (2001) • TIE Internationales Bildungswerk (2005) • EIRENE-Lateinamerikareferat (2006) • Nordelbisches Frauenwerk (2006) • [Netz - Partnerschaft für Entwicklung und Gerechtigkeit (2007) – 2010] • Entwicklungspolitisches Netzwerk Sachsen (2009) • FEMNET-e.V. (2010) • Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (2012)	

Table 1 : member organizations and organizational structure of the CCC-G (CCC-G 1999b, CCC-G 2012a).

Alongside the group of support organizations, the coalition established a managing committee that is in charge of the campaign work in between the support group meetings. The duties of the managing committee include the preparation of the support organizations' meetings, the operative control and urgent decision-making related to public relations work. The managing committee consists of five members from the support organizations group that are designated in the beginning for one year and later for two years. The coalition decides on a well-balanced composition of labor unions, church-linked and other NGOs within the managing committee. Also at least half of the members need to be women. The executive institution of the CCC-G is the coordinating secretariat (CCC-G 2010b). This is where meetings of the network will be organized and actions are co-ordinated. The co-ordinating secretariat answers questions directed at the CCC-G and is responsible for the acquisition of finances. Since 2004, the coordinator also has taken care of its own thematic

focus, the public procurement. Besides, the thematic work takes place in several working groups. The co-ordinator of the secretariat stresses the fact that the CCC-G is a horizontal network, where member organizations try to decide in a consensual manner. Consensual decision-making is a guideline written down in the formal paper of structure. If this is not possible to realize, the organizations take decisions with a two-thirds majority (CCC-G 2010b). However, due to the short resources of some member organizations, the involvement of NGOs and unions in the network differs greatly; thus a core of member organizations works together more intensively than others (CCC-G 2010b).

Members of the coalition engage according to their specific thematic or regional foci, and they support the coalition voluntarily on an ideally political and financial basis (CCC-G 1998 – CCC-G 2010a). According to the CCC-G, withdrawals from the network took place due to a lack of resources, and because the coalition itself is struggling with financial problems from time to time (CCC-G 2010b). The CCC-G is financed by membership fees, donations and project funds. In the beginning the EU played an important role; later, the foundation *Stiftung Umwelt und Entwicklung Nordrhein-Westfalen* became important for the thematic area of the public procurement. The coalition strictly declines financial support from corporations of the garment sector. Finally, next to the core of member organizations, a so-called group of active people exists, which are loosely connected to the CCC-G and support actions on a local or regional level. Sometimes local CCC groups are established. These action groups are involved in the annual meeting of action as well. Thus, around the core of the coalition some loosely connected groups assort themselves, and they co-operate sporadically and the co-operation is limited in time and topics.

The case of the CCC-G depicts the functioning of an intensive co-operation between labor unions and NGOs on the basis of a common definition of problems and the joint elaboration of strategies for action. In addition, certain constraints in the work of the CCC-G, such as the lack of resources came to light. The coalition works on the basis of a division of labor and some member organizations collaborate on a regular and binding basis. Krüger identifies the CCC as an issue network (Krüger 2002: 229), while this case study shows that by now a differentiation according to the members of the coalition is necessary. Parts of the coalition are understood as an ad hoc network due to their temporary co-operation which is also limited in thematic scope. Regarding the core of the CCC-G, one can see a broadening of the thematic spectrum as well as an orientation towards the logic of interest group action combined with a more intensive co-operation. This is indicative of a development into the direction of a policy community.

A code of conduct to secure labor standards

The main goal of the CCC-G is the improvement of working conditions in the global garment industry with special attention to young women workers rights (CCC-G 1996a, 1996b). This goal is pursued through public awareness

campaigns. In particular, the retail business within the textile sector – which the CCC describes as powerful in the global value chain – should move to be in compliance with labor standards in the whole production process, including their contractors, sub-contractors, suppliers and license holders. Controls should be made by an independent observer. The CCC-G wants to establish a code of conduct on a voluntary basis through which they can hold corporations accountable (CCC-G 1996a, 1996b). As Merk points out, this accountability politics, a strategy that has already been identified by Keck and Sikkink (1998: 24f.), can be used by the CCC also with regard to other codes of conduct that corporations have already accepted (Merk 2009: 609). For the CCC-G, using a code of conduct is seen to complement, but not replace national laws, collective bargaining and the collaboration with governments (CCC-G 1996a, 1996b). This way, the code of conduct is acceptable for labor unions as well. However, this agreement is not self-evident. The example of the Swedish CCC shows how labor unions and NGOs take up different stances regarding codes of conducts (Egels-Zandén/Hyllmann 2006, 2011). In this case, labor unions rejected the instrument because they favored binding global collective agreements and negotiation on the ground through local and national unions in developing countries (Egels-Zandén/Hyllmann 2006: 307). As will be shown later, as it also occurred within the CCC-G, the member organizations put codes of conduct as an effective instrument for labor regulation at question.

The CCC-G took over the code of conduct of the European CCC (CCC-G 2012f). This collection of behavioral patterns consists of general regulations regarding the purpose and range of application of the code, the definition of labor standards, assignments of the corporations' accountability and of the monitoring system. The labor standards are based upon the core labor standards of the ILO and are defined in detail with regard to the following aspects: voluntary employment, no discrimination in terms of employment, no child labor, the respect for freedom of association and the right for collective bargaining, an adequate salary, no overlong working times, humane working conditions and a constant employment relationship (CCC-G 2012f: paragraph II). In sum, the objective of the CCC-G is connected to the standards of a supranational organization and the CCC refers to these norms. Nevertheless, the CCC originally planned to establish a code of conduct, thus, it relies on an instrument of the private governance of labor standards.

Using protests and consumer power to target corporations

The actions of the CCC-G are apparent from the newsletter of the CCC-G (CCC-G 1999b – CCC-G 2012a). Strategically, the CCC-G tries to secure labor standards through the power of consumers (CCC-G 1996a). Through public pressure, using the media, interest groups or politicians, the CCC-G tries to take advantage of the impending loss of image for corporations and the loss of consumer demand. Single German corporations from textile trade or textile production are exemplarily put into the focus of attention. The CCC-G criticizes labor rights violations of corporations that take advantage of worldwide

concurrency of labor and it claims a code of conduct in order to achieve more justice in the global economy:

> The brand companies are using the competition between the large numbers of manufacturers to procure cheaper. [...] There is probably room for a little global redistribution, says the Clean Clothes Campaign. We propose a 'code of labor practice' as a model for the enforcement and independent monitoring of a 'social charter for trade with clothes' (CCC-G 1999c, translated).

They take advantage from the vulnerability of brands:

> With the action Fit for Fair we want to touch the clean image of sports goods. In Germany, we focus on adidas. And our chances are not bad: Adidas & Co. fear nothing so much as to lose its positive reputation: Bad image - poor revenue... (CCC-G 2000, translated).

However, a request for a boycott is explicitly not planned (CCC-G 1996b). The CCC-G informs consumers about labor conditions in the specific corporations and distributes information on other labels or codes of conducts. Balsiger shows in the case of the Swiss CCC how the campaign can take the role of a watchdog and become a recognized expert that gains ownership: "[T]he CCC has achieved a position where it can speak *in the name of* political consumers nationwide" (Balsiger 2010: 317). The case of the CCC-G also shows that the coalition does not only want corporations to take care of the labor conditions in the production process, but also aims at raising awareness about labor conditions amongst consumers, so they act accordingly as political consumers. In consequence, the idea of consumerism as such is not criticized in general. As Balsiger sums up: "[T]he campaign's framing suggest that it is all right to rely on market mechanism in order to achieve political goals. [...] The general ideological framework is not one of rejection of consumer society" (Balsiger 2010: 324).

Thus, confrontational campaign work faces dialogue-oriented collaboration with corporations. The objective to build up consumer power is ranked first, and is followed by negotiations with corporations in order to achieve the commitment to the CCCs code of conduct. Subsequently, the building of control institutions is written in the agenda. That is why the coalition first tends to use diverse instruments of mobilization, such as seminars, collections of signatures, postcard actions, street actions in front of shops, speeches within the annual stockholders meetings or in the context of main events like the international Women's Day (CCC-G 1996a). On a regular basis, the member organizations evaluate the process of the campaign and adapt strategies according to changed conditions or perceived success. Thereby, the CCC-G notices that the necessary public pressure to start negotiations with corporations takes longer than

expected (CCC-G 1999a). Thus, for the time being, the CCC-G has intensified its public relations work.

In the case of labor rights violations the CCC-G starts so-called urgent actions in co-operation with other CCCs (Rimml 2003, Merk 2006). Since the beginning of the CCC, there have been hundreds of cases; from 2000 to 2007 there was around 30 and possibly even more (Merk 2006: 607). The evaluation of cases between 1999 and 2003, shows that more than half of the appeals dealt with complaints about freedom of association and the right to organize or with respect to collective bargaining (Merk 2006: 608). Again, this is an incentive for labor unions to take part in the work of the CCC since it complements what they do within industrial relations institutions. These urgent appeals are understood as a call for solidarity and address consumers with the appeal to complain to companies about labor rights violations. Therefore, prepared (online) letters are sent to the corporation agents in the places of production or to their customers in Germany, for instance to Adidas:

> A recent Urgent Action urges Adidas to work for laid-off union members. [...] Adidas has to act in accordance with its code of conduct for freedom of association and prevent discrimination against union members at their suppliers. Participate in the current Urgent Action under www.saubere-kleidung.de (CCC-G 2009, translated).

Some appeals also target governments or governmental organizations in selected states in the Global South to get them involved in order to secure labor standards (Rimml 2003). This depends on the responsibility in the specific case of a labor right violation, which can be reported from many organizations within the urgent appeal network: "The network consists in total of over 250 organizations and [...] any organization can, in principle, transport into the network a case of labor violation that occurs or that they hear about" (CCC-G 2012c). Regional focal points are Asia and Latin America. Protest letters are the main protest form of the CCC-G. They are usually centrally collected and then distributed to the targeted actor in good publicity.

Additionally, the CCC-G initiates so called days of action including panel discussions, information desks, learning opportunities, speeches, (street) theatre, fashion shows or movie screenings – coming from the hope of a bigger media exposure. Furthermore, members hold critical speeches at stockholder meetings as a means of protest. Actions take place in different contexts, for example on labor unions or church days. Thus, external events are used for their own publicity. Finally, a regularly used form of action is travelling guests who talk about their personal experiences with production conditions in the textile and garment industry. Balsiger, who concentrates mainly on these public actions in the case of the Swiss CCC, differentiates these actions into protests, conventional and consumer tactics (Balsiger 2010: 319f.), which can all be assigned to the confrontational style of movement actions.

Negotiations with corporations

For the duration of the coalition, the actions that are oriented towards collaboration and dialogue grow, but they are still flanked by actions with publicity effect. The building of an intensive network builds the foundation for the involvement in negotiations with corporations since a joint problem definition and common strategies are necessary for these activities. Research and contacts to NGOs and labor unions located at the production areas are important for the preparation of negotiations with corporations (CCC-G 1996a).

First, conversations took place with the corporations *Otto, Adidas, Puma* and *C&A* in 1996. In 2001 the CCC-G spoke for example with *Karstadt*:

> [A] delegation of the German Kampagne für 'Saubere' Kleidung (CCC) met for official talks with Karstadt (now Karstadt Quelle AG) for the second time. The company had reacted with sharp criticism of the veracity of the used sources in publications of the CCC, but also with an offer to talk. The CCC accepted the offer (CCC-G 2001, translated).

Since 2004, the CCC-G has negotiated as well with *Tchibo* and later, since 2008, with *Kik* and *Lidl.* However, for the time being, the coalition has not been able convince one of the corporations to sign the code of conduct. Initially, *Adidas* and *Puma* agreed to start a joint pilot project, but both projects failed. A successful project finally came about with the clothing company *Hess Natur.* In dialogue with the CCC-G subcontracting firms were contacted until 2005, audits through the FWF took place and ensuing meetings of a multi stakeholder committee on a yearly basis were called. Also in the case of sandblasting, the CCC-G states success in the promise of *Versace* to ban this practice in the production process. Besides the conversations with companies, the CCC-G is active through legal procedures and also targets monitoring institutions. In particular, the CCC-G complained to the *Social Accountability International (SAI)* about the certification of a certain factory and was successful two years later. After the factory was double checked, the CCC-G was informed that:

> this certification should not be awarded because of violations of labor union rights [...] SÜDWIND sees this case as the confirmation of the long-standing criticism of the Clean Clothes Campaign of the outstanding influence of commercial audit companies in the SAI system (CCC-G 2003, translated).

It further took action against unfair advertising practices and complained to the OECD together with the Austrian CCC because of a violation against the OECD-guidelines for multinational companies. In sum, these activities show characteristics of interest group actions and they become more important during the work of the coalition. Additionally, the targeted corporations are not only addressed directly, but the campaign tries to influence monitoring

institutions and they do not rely only on the mechanism of voluntary self-regulation of corporations based on consumer pressure.

Furthermore, the targets with regard to corporations broadened: Starting chronologically in the beginning, the actions concerning the eco-fair production of textiles started with a collection of signatures targeting the companies *Otto, adidas* and *C&A*. Since 2000, the activities of the CCC-G have concentrated primarily on the industry of sport textiles in the context of main sporting events. With the slogan *Fit For Fai*r the CCC-G carried out a collection of signatures and days of actions to build up consumer pressure on *Adidas* and *Puma*. On top of that, the coalition initiated actions with the focus on *Karstadt/Quelle* and protest actions took place with regard to *Triumph* and *Tchibo* during the time. Since 2007, the CCC-G has widened the spectrum of targeted corporations further and carries out activities that address discounters like *Aldi, Lidl* and *Kik*. These actions were later integrated into the European campaign *Better bargain*. Besides to protest postcards there are actions in front of or inside the stores. A recent development is a growing attention towards corporations selling outdoor clothing, and now several are voluntarily controlled by the multi stakeholder initiative *Fear Wear Foundation* (FWF). Furthermore, the CCC-G brings up the issue of the harmful sandblast practice within the jeans production industry and is targeting corporations like *Dolce & Gabbana* and others, as already mentioned in the beginning of the article. Recently, the CCC has asked for fire safety in factories, targeting corporations and governments for example in Pakistan. In sum, the coalition broadens the spectrum of topics within the existing areas, focuses additional corporations and aims a sector project (CCC-G 2004). At the moment, the CCC network discusses future strategies of campaigns that go beyond individual cases and might address whole countries where many labor rights violations are reported, as in Turkey (CCC-G 2012c) or even broaden the approach to other sectors (CCC 2011).

Addressing politicians and the state as consumer

Since the beginning of the 2000s the CCC-G is increasingly turning towards state actors. Attempts to influence norms and regulations through non-state activities are complemented over time through attempts to influence political decisions and address the state as a consumer in public procurement. A shift in targets of the coalition's demands can be seen in an overview of the actions that the coalition conducted from its beginning on. As a data basis I used the newsletter of the CCC-G from 1999 until 2012 (CCC-G 1999b – CCC-G 2012a) and analyzed the targets of the mentioned actions by the coalition (Table 2). Even though these mentioned actions are not all activities that the CCC-G carried out, it provides a good overview of the actions since the coalition itself portrays a representative overview of its current work. One article within the newsletter counts as one entry, due to the fact that the setup of the articles describes one action or several activities that belong to the same campaign. Only articles that mention actions of the CCC-G are taken into account while articles that describe for instance a new publication, the joining of a new member

organization or contain a call for donations are not part of the analysis. Finally, the mentioned demands within the articles are differentiated between demands on corporations only, demands on corporations and state actors, and demands on state actors only. Therefore within each article the actor(s) that is (are) hold responsible for reported problems and therefore asked by the CCC-G to adopt possible solutions to this problem is identified.
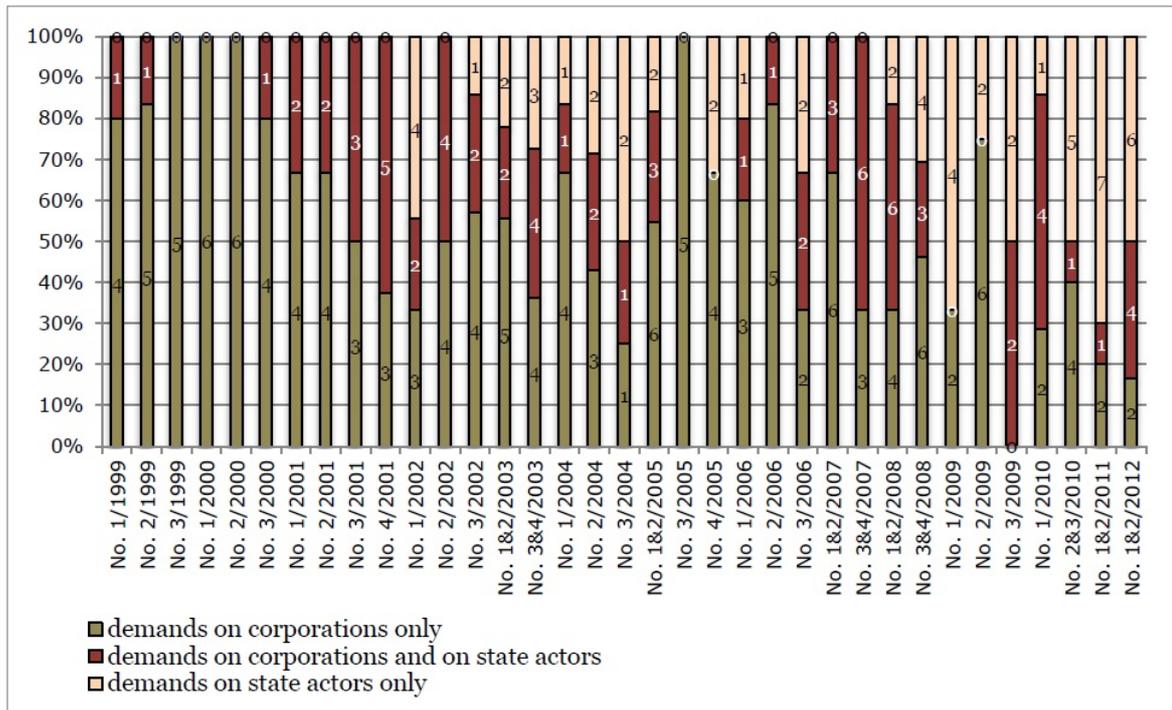

Table 2: Demands of the actions mentioned in the Newsletter of the CCC-G (CCC-G 1999b, CCC-G 2012a).

The table shows that actions which address only corporations dominate the beginning of the coalition's work. In the beginning governments and governmental organizations from the Global South are addressed in several cases, and from 20002 onwards, the German government and EU politicians are targeted increasingly by the CCC-G-campaigns. With some fluctuations, the overall picture provides evidence for the rise of actions that address state actors. In 2004 the CCC-G agreed on the decision that the coalition will orientate itself towards state regulation as a new pillar of their work (CCC-G 2004). Since then, activities concerning state regulation of labor and social rights have been a new working area of the CCC-G. Merk reports for the CCC in general as well that it is "exploring legal initiatives for improving working conditions [...] or to pressure public authorities to make them procure the goods they consume ethically" (Merk 2009: 607).

This tendency points towards the question of effective regulation through voluntary self-regulation of corporations in contrast to state influence on compliance of social and ecological standards. The coalition notices problems with voluntary self-regulation through codes of conducts, which are widely acknowledged in the literature (Braun/Gearhart 2004). The shift in strategies is due to the fact that during the years since its conception, the CCC-G has seen problems with voluntary self-regulation of corporations, as mentioned by all interview partners and reported in the newsletter:

> Past experiences show that companies act on a voluntary basis only on pressure, and make concessions only selectively. The situation of workers from the suppliers can be influenced only by long-term structural changes, which is why binding political regulations are more important than ever (CCC-G 2007, translated).

Problems that are mentioned are for example the potential green-washing of companies and the problem that consumers are only a minority and therefore not able to have a great impact. Furthermore, actors of the CCC-G do not want the results only be temporary, but they rather aim at sustainable change in work regulations. A campaign, however, would not have the power to effectively regulate financially strong corporations as states could via control instances. Next to these practical reasons, the NGO representative mentions the state as the responsible actor to implement workers' rights next to corporations:

> The Clean Clothes Campaign in total followed this voluntary approach, that through codes of conduct companies should meet certain social standards, and I think we think that is certainly a path one should tread, but it may not remain at the voluntariness. [...] That is why we turned to government regulation and also because we believe that these are also state functions that the state cares about where labor and human rights are respected and that the instruments are much broader. So, a state can establish bodies of supervision. We work as a campaign in voluntary structures after all (CCC-G 2012d, translated).

The representative of a labor union points to the responsibility of the state and to the need of binding agreements, too. At the same time, the mechanism of voluntary-self regulation are seen very critical and other mechanisms of implementing labor standards are understood as a better strategy with regard to the regulation of labor standards in general, not solely with respect to the CCC-G: "A code of conduct that is signed by the company and whomsoever cannot work. So, all these agencies which cavort there on the field, I think they are not credible" (CCC-G 2012 e, translated). The representative of a labor union sees the CCC as "politically important" (CCC-G 2012e, translated). From a labor unions point of view the representative stresses legislations and social clauses in trade agreements at the favored strategy of labor unions, and International

Framework Agreements at the second best solution. The representative says in this regard unions go kind of their "own way" (CCC-G 2012e, translated):

> We have International Framework Agreements, which we try quasi as second-best way [...]. But of course we continue to try to influence legislative initiatives, or bilateral trade agreements that we finally get social clauses there. [...] We think the legislative authority has the responsibility (CCC-G 2012e, translated).

When it comes to International Framework Agreements, the representative emphasizes that unions are politically and financially independent and legitimated to negotiate in the name of workers, and therefore binding agreements can only be signed with labor unions.

> We can agree to such a framework agreement only because we are present in the workplace. One failed at the problem of monitoring at the latest, if there is no one who controls it, so no one who is independent, let's say, financially and politically independent, and those are only the unions, those are not the NGOs. That needs to be said in plain language. And no NGO can sign any contracts or framework agreements. It is just not possible. (CCC-G 2012e, translated).

Thus, this indicates a difference of labor unions and NGOs to tend to different governance mechanism. The coalition CCC-G in total, has acted towards private governance as well as towards public regulation since the beginning of the 2000s.

The CCC-G's collaboration with state actors in Germany started in a round table of codes of conduct (*Runder Tische Verhaltenskodizes*) in 2002, in which members of the government, and representatives from NGOs, labor unions and corporations were involved. The goals of the round table were the exchange on specific topics and pilot projects dealing with codes of conducts. In 2003 the CCC-G pulled itself back from the round table after the group failed to agree on a pilot project. Furthermore, the CCC-G carried out activities that were related to the political action of the European Parliament concerning the social responsibility of corporations. Additionally, the CCC's focus was on German politicians who were active in the area of consumer protection. The CCC reacted to guidelines of a possible new consumer information law in Germany, and asked for further action:

> The German CCC considers that such a step can be an important part alongside other actions on the concrete implementation of a policy of corporate social responsibility [...] [we need] a) the legal obligation of a public company for regular reporting, [...] and b) the establishment of a state body for independent monitoring of compliance with the above mentioned labor standards (CCC-G 2002, translated).

Lately, the so called Ruggie-Framework especially serves as point of reference for the CCC. The Council of the EU expressed its support for the framework of John Ruggie, the UN Special Representative on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises, which names both the state's duty to protect against human rights violations and the responsibility of corporations to respect human and not only workers' rights. Currently, the CCC-G specifically demands the German government not to hinder the adoption of an EU directive that imposes higher transparency standards on enterprises, namely to report regularly on their actions' effects on the environment and human-beings in the whole value chain.

It is noteworthy that state function owners are not only activated in their role as lawmakers, but also in their position as consumers – not as individuals, but as actors responsible for the management of public procurements. Even though sometimes governments in the global south or in Europe are also targeted by the campaign, the introduction of the issue of public procurement is a stimulus for this direction of the campaign (CCC-G 2012b). The EU regulation on public procurement that needs to be implemented in national law, becomes a new options for the coalition, and other CCC-groups and government throughout Europe to engage in public procurement as well, thus transnational diffusion plays an important role.

Regarding the aim of an ecological-fair public procurement, the CCC-G negotiates together with local authorities, federal state governments and textile corporations like *Bierbaum & Proenen*. Additionally, citizens should put pressure on a local level, so that the public authorities consider social and ecological criteria in terms of acceptance of tender. Keeping in mind the enormous amount of money that is spent by the state authorities, this is meant to have a great impact. In the beginning the coalition set a focus on the federal state Nordrhein-Westfalen. At the same time several local authorities and federal states included social and ecological criteria in their laws regarding the awarding of contracts. Since 2007 the CCC-G has been a member of the *Netzwerk Corporate Accountability (CorA)*, a group of civil society organizations that works for ecological-fair public procurement. Thus, amongst others governments are held responsible:

> But without public pressure, the government does not seem to be ready to meet this responsibility. Therefore, the Corporate Accountability (CorA) network for corporate responsibility was founded [...]. The CCC is actively involved in this work. [...] Help us: In order to exert pressure on the public debate and the decision of the Bundestag, we urge the chairmen of the parliamentary groups connected to the government [...] to vote for the inclusion of social and environmental criteria into the German public procurement law (CCC-G 2007, translated).

Put it in a nutshell, the ongoing balancing act between confrontation and collaboration with regard to corporations is extended by the orientation towards

state actors due to problems with instruments of voluntary self-regulation and rising political options.

A more effective hybrid strategy?

The development of the CCC-G's actions show that they push for both, on the one side for private governance by corporations, but here additionally monitoring institutions are addressed and on the other side for public regulation through state actors on national and supranational level, whereas these are not only addressed in their function as lawmakers but also as a potentially political consumer. In sum, the CCC-G has developed a hybrid strategy between public and private governance. The approach of voluntary self-regulation of corporations is still used, but complemented with a new pillar.

As research on business governance shows, governance without the state is limited in its capabilities and results. Private governance instruments can function in interplay with state regulations and some results point to the effectiveness of complementary regulation instruments: Private governance can support state regulation and the state can serve as legitimizer, public monitor and influential buyer with regard private standard setting attempts (Weil/Mallo 2007, Amengual 2010, Overdevest 2010). Similarly, the hybrid strategy of the CCC-G, especially the connection of promoting transnational private standards with targeting the state as consumer, might be an effective approach. Of course, the success of the coalition is difficult to estimate in general. Even though several initiatives made a visible impact, the coalition helped to solve concrete labor condition issues through urgent actions (Rimml 2003) and works as an important influencing factor of political consumerism (Balsiger 2010), the results might be short-lived, activities might lead to a reaction at a later point in time or to learning and self-assurance effects within the activist groups themselves (Merk 2009: 610). Nevertheless, from the CCC-Gs point of view, the orientation towards state actors, particularly through the focus on public procurement, seems to make a growing impact on the national and local level, as the interview partners report. Thus, the possible shift of the coalition's strategy between public and private governance arenas and their interplay opens up a broad room for maneuver of coalitions of labor unions and NGOs where they can take advantage from.

Conclusion

Coalitions of labor unions and NGOs that try to secure labor standards in a globalized economy have been on the rise since the 1990s. For a better understanding of the room for maneuver of labor unions and NGOs in the worldwide struggle for labor regulation it is important to illustrate the possible coalition's strategies. So far, social movement and labor unions research, as well as research of union/NGO coalitions, mainly report findings on the emergence of coalitions, while the actions of these coalitions once they are established have been only scarcely conceptualized. Different ideal types of networks can provide

a heuristic to put empirical findings into order. The distinction between social movement actions and interest group actions helps to characterize the actions of union/NGO coalitions while at the same time the borders between the actors blur. Using the perspectives of business governance and the sociology of markets, diverse forms of regulation in the public and private arena can be taken into account when it comes to the targets of the coalitions.

The case study of the *Clean Clothes Campaign* in Germany, a network of labor unions and NGOs fighting for labor standards in the garment industry since 1998, shows the possible development of these coalitions in the context of global labor regulation. By now, the CCC-G shows a stable and intensive co-operation. This study presents in longitudinal form how unions and NGOs build up an intensive co-operation. The core members of the coalition are defined as an issue network with tendencies towards a policy community. The objective of the CCC-G was originally to establish a code of conduct for corporations. CCC-G states political consumerism as an appropriate instrument to secure labor standards. Thus, the union/NGO coalition regards private governance of labor as a possible addition to public regulation. In the beginning, the CCC-G mainly carried out movement actions like protests with the purpose of agenda setting. Now, these actions remain important activities for the coalition, but negotiations and collaboration with corporations and state function owners have become more relevant. Concerning the targets of the CCC-Gs actions, a shift is visible towards a hybrid strategy that addresses corporations and likewise state actors. This strategy originates from the limited success in endeavors that focused solely on private regulations and the rise of new political options within the EU. It is noteworthy that state actors are particularly addressed as consumers with regard to public procurement. Public regulation and originally private political consumerism are connected in this example.

The efforts of the CCC to secure labor standards is one of many non-state initiatives that deal with instruments of voluntary self-regulation of transnational corporations, but it also shows orientation towards public regulation. Hence, different strategies for non-state actors to integrate labor (and environmental) standards into a globalized economy exist and can be combined. As research on business governance shows, the interplay of public and private governance might also be a more effective strategy for these coalitions. For future research, additional case studies, preferably as comparisons, can help to gain insight into further drivers of different coalitions' strategies. This study for instance points at the need for further attention to learning aspects from other transnational non-state actors in order to understand how labor unions and NGOs take advantage from different strategies in the struggle about transnational labor regulation.

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About the author

Melanie Kryst is a doctoral student at Philipps-University of Marburg in Germany. Her background of political science and international relations has influenced her perspective on social movements. She is particularly interested in the global interplay of the current labor, environmental and women's rights movement. Her current research deals with several transnational networks of labor unions and NGOs that try to protect labor standards in a globalized economy. Amongst others she studies intensively the Clean Clothes Campaign, in the beginning with a focus on the network in Germany (Kryst, Melanie 2012. "Gewerkschaften und NGOs gemeinsam für soziologische und ökologische Nachhaltigkeit. Ein Analyserahmen zur Untersuchung des Bündnisses Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung" in *Proceedings Nachwuchsgruppe Umweltsoziologie 7th-8th October 2011, Lüneburg*, submitted). She dealt with struggles of European labor unions in transnational co-operation (Kryst, Melanie 2010. "Wenn sie doch schritten Seit' an Seit'. Europäische Gewerkschaften zwischen Standortwettbewerb und Integration." *360°. Das studentische Journal für Politik und Gesellschaft 1/10*: 101-111.) and is interested in the broader question of how non-state actors have an impact on institution building on a global level. Her doctoral studies are financed by the Heinrich Böll Foundation. She can be contacted at melanie.kryst AT gmx.de.

Trade Unions and the unemployed:
towards a dialectical approach

Jean Faniel

Abstract

The relationship between trade unions and the unemployed is complex and, to some extent, ambiguous. The article first presents the main features of such a relationship, synthesising evidence from various cases (historical and contemporary). Then, using a Marxist dialectical approach, it looks at the features that characterise trade unions in order to explain why they act as they do towards the unemployed. The author pays attention to union constituency, unions as bureaucratised organisations, the place of trade unions in the capitalist system and their relations with political parties.

Introduction

Alongside a 'core' of white, male, adult, skilled workers in large plants with secure jobs, other categories of workers lie on the 'margins': female workers, young workers, 'atypical' workers, immigrants... These people often face major difficulties to have their voice heard in the unions. Things are even more difficult for the unemployed as they have lost — at least temporarily — contact with work and its actors. At the same time, the unemployed occupy a peculiar position on the labor market as a high unemployment rate can have deleterious effects on the wages, on the working conditions and on the combativeness of the 'active' workers. Therefore the organisation of the unemployed by trade unions is an important issue, especially in periods of major crises such as the 1920s, the 1930s, the 1980s or the current years, since the consequences of unions' attitudes go far beyond protecting only the unemployed themselves. However, academic literature especially dedicated to the relationships between trade unions on the one hand and the unemployed on the other remain scarce.

The purpose of this article is to sketch a general explanatory framework so as to grasp this relationship. The approach used here focuses on the trade unions, in order to explain their attitudes towards the unemployed. I will refer only on some occasions to the viewpoint of the unemployed themselves, although I am well aware that their possible attitudes towards trade unions should be questioned as well.

In the first part, I present the main features of such a relationship. Synthesising evidence from various national cases (historical and contemporary), I try to offer a broad view of the various ways trade unions in the West feel concern about the situation of the unemployed, and also look at their attempts (or their reluctance) to integrate the jobless within their own preoccupations and actions. Then, I look at the features that characterise trade unions in order to explain

why they act as they do towards the unemployed. The approach used is deliberately generalising, in order to identify the roots of unions' attitudes beyond national or regional peculiarities and to draw a broad explanatory framework. Following Hyman's works (1971, 1975), I use a Marxist dialectical approach. In my view, such a perspective seems to be the most appropriate conceptual framework to do so, as I argue in the second part of this article. It enables me in the third part to stress four important features of trade unionism that influence the attitudes towards the unemployed. Two relate to the internal functioning of trade unions, and two are related to their position in the socio-political system. The combination of these four elements considered in a dynamic perspective offers key explanatory elements regarding the attitude of the trade unions towards the unemployed.

Trade unions and the unemployed: some empirical evidence

The relationship between trade unions and the unemployed is firstly determined by union views on unemployment. From the 19th century onwards, unions have been observing the damage joblessness involves, not only for those losing their jobs but also for the entire membership of a union or, from the viewpoint of more wide-ranging unions, for the whole working class. The effects of what Marx called the 'industrial reserve army' (Marx 1867, chap. XXV) were soon to be clear: a downward pressure on wages and working conditions.

Hence trade unions often pay close attention to the economic situation affecting the working class or, at least, their own members. Full employment is a major preoccupation one can find in union congress resolutions (Faniel 2009). In different countries, trade unions have also developed services in order to help the unemployed– or, at least, their jobless members– find new jobs: creation of Job Fairs, *viatiques* (aids to work mobility) in France or Belgium in the 19th century, involvement in the British Unemployed Worker Centres in the 1980s etc. (Forrester and Ward 1986, 1990, Lewis 1990).

In different countries, trade unions also started to organise collective forms of protection based on their members' subscriptions. As their members were made redundant, they received an indemnity (Scruggs 2002, Western 1997: 50-65). The unions' aim was twofold: help their members to avoid starvation and from having to accept badly paid jobs at the risk of dragging their colleagues' wages down. In some countries (Western 1997: 51 lists ten European countries, ranging from Italy to Norway, and from Britain to Switzerland), such benefits gave way to official unemployment schemes which, in certain cases, still exist today.

Nowadays, unions are involved in the management of unemployment schemes in various countries. This function gives them an overview of the benefit rules and is meant to enable them to improve the condition of the unemployed. However, trade unions are often prone to assume their managing role with a great 'sense of responsibility'. This can lead them to concede some sacrifices, especially in periods of crisis, and to accord more importance to financial

objectives rather than the improvement of the condition of the unemployed – for instance, the 'managing' attitude of the CFDT and FO was particularly criticised by the French unemployed protesting in winter 1997-98 (Royall 1998: 361).

Union involvement in unemployment schemes can take even more pronounced forms in the so-called 'Ghent system' countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and, in a different way, Belgium) where trade unions play a direct role in the payment of unemployment benefits. Based on historical developments, such systems greatly contribute to ensure high union density (Scruggs 2002, Vandaele 2006, Van Rie, Marx and Horemans 2011, Western 1997) while most unemployed people join a union or retain their former affiliation. Moreover, active workers are encouraged to join unions in order to receive some protection if they lose their jobs. Such systems induce a special relationship between unions and the unemployed. Given that the jobless form a sometimes significant proportion of union membership, unions are better informed of their situation, and – more than elsewhere – unions integrate the defence of the interests of the jobless in their strategies. But they hardly ever incorporate such interests in their top priorities (see Faniel 2006 and 2009 for Belgium and Linders and Kalander 2007 for Sweden).

Outside 'Ghent system' countries, the ties between trade unions and the unemployed are usually looser. Some union statutes simply forbid the affiliation of jobless workers. Other unions develop some strategies in order to retain those members losing their jobs (see e.g. British unions in the 1980s; Barker et al. 1984: 399 and Lewis 1989: 272-3). This is not always easy as the unemployed do not necessarily see what they get back in return for their subscriptions. Conversely, most unions are centred on their activists, and do not necessarily seek to affiliate unemployed people. This greatly influences the ways trade unions represent the unemployed and try to defend them.

Trade unions and the collective action of the unemployed

This complex and, to some extent ambiguous, attitude of trade unions towards the unemployed is even more pronounced in the field of collective action. Including the jobless in union protests raises different questions. How should unions organise the unemployed? Inside professional unions, together with the active rank-and-file? Or on a separate basis, gathering all the unemployed notwithstanding their professional skills? This alternative raised intense debates in unions as different as those of Belgium, Britain or France. When groups are specifically created for the unemployed, it seems they never have the same status and the same weight inside unions' decision bodies as the professional unions (Demazière and Pignoni 1998: 84-5, Faniel 2006: 36-7, Lewis 1990: 23).

Whatever solution is chosen, one can observe that trade unions, considered at the top levels, hardly hasten to organise their unemployed members in order to have them engage in disputes (Faniel 2009, Linders and Kalander 2010; Ness 1998, Richards 2000), even when union rank-and-file or local sections are more

open to help such mobilisations. Organising the jobless is often seen as difficult. However, throughout time and space jobless people have demonstrated their capacity to mobilise on their own (Chabanet & Faniel 2012, Flanagan 1991, Folsom 1991, Perry and Reiss 2011, Richards 2002). Unions can offer them resources to enable them to organise. But most often unions are quite reluctant to devote helpful resources to the organisation of the unemployed, with the exception of some local unions (see e.g. Reiss 2008 on local trades councils in 1930s Britain) or more radical ones (e.g. Cobas or Sincobas in Italy (Baglioni 2012: 146-147) or the CGT or SUD in France (Chabanet 2012)).

More broadly, one can wonder to what extent trade unions represent the unemployed. Richards (2000) and Royall (1997: 157) point out that trade unions often adopt a wide-ranging argument, focusing on class solidarity. However, building solidarity among the workers, especially between active workers, precarious workers and the unemployed is neither easy for the unions, nor always one of their main aims.

Nevertheless, unions generally prefer organising the jobless within their own structures rather than facing competition from self-organised jobless associations. On the one hand they wish to preserve class unity and avoid competition between active and unemployed workers. On the other hand they seek to keep mobilised groups of jobless people under their wing (Bagguley 1992: 455) and, if possible, to keep them under their control. When this is not possible, the relationship with non-union groups of unemployed people are most often very tense. Historical and contemporary examples provide evidence: the relationship between the TUC and the NUWM on the one hand, and the NLB on the other (Britain during the interwar period); the attitude of the French CGT or the Belgian union confederations towards their own unemployed committees and other organisations of the unemployed (since the 1970s)... (Croucher 1987: 69-71, Faniel 2006, Lewis 1990: 24-5, Maurer and Pierru 2001, 387, Reiss 2008, Richards 2000).

Union leaders see such external mobilisations as competing with their role of organisations of social movement (Ness 1998, XVI). Moreover, accepting the self-organisation of the unemployed outside the union structures would acknowledge a failure to organise them inside the union movement. Finally, non-union groups of the jobless often adopt very critical attitudes towards union practices, especially in the field of unemployment scheme management or regarding the relationships between the trade unions and the political parties whom they are close to, as evidence shows in France, Germany or Sweden (Baumgarten and Lahusen 2012: 68, 75-76, Linders and Kalander 2007: 433-4, Maurer and Pierru 2001: 387, Royall 1998: 361). Nevertheless, union rank-and-file members sometimes involve themselves, on a personal basis, in non-union groups of the unemployed. Some radical unions also helped in creating non-union groups amongst the unemployed (e.g. dissidents of the CFDT creating AC! and later SUD).

Hence, important questions can be raised regarding union movements of unemployed people: are such organisations set up *for* the jobless, in order to

offer them some services or even to control them, or *by* the jobless, in order to engage in disputes (Bagguley 1991: 117-39, Barker et al. 1984: 400-3, Forrester & Ward 1986: 49-55, 1990: 387-9)? Moreover, what freedom of manoeuvre can such groups expect from union leaders?

Unemployment and its consequences, as well as the situation of the unemployed themselves, can thus represent major issues for trade unions and for their 'active' members. However, organising the unemployed inside union bodies and defending their situation and priorities is not natural for unions and it can take various forms. This can lead to underrepresentation of the unemployed (in the unions and more broadly in the society), internal tensions or even conflictual relations (inside unions or with external organisations). Some of the examples presented above show that collaborations between unions and unemployed activists or organisations can nevertheless occur. In such cases, trade unions can provide important resources for the unemployed. But unions' attitudes are still driven by their own interests and strategies and can be strongly modified when circumstances change, as the attitude of the German DGB towards the protests of the unemployed showed in the end of the 1990s, when the SPD came back to power (Baumgarten and Lahusen 2012: 76). Such changes can have damaging consequences for the organisation and mobilisation of the unemployed.

A Marxist dialectical approach to trade unions

This overview of the relationship between trade unions and the unemployed sheds light on the different features of unionism. Setting aside the specific dynamics of the mobilisation of the unemployed (for recent collective works in this field, see Chabanet and Faniel 2012, Croucher et al. 2008, Perry and Reiss 2011), I will now focus on the features of unionism in order to identify the elements explaining their various attitudes towards the unemployed.

The approach developed hereafter adopts a Marxist dialectical viewpoint. In my view, this is essential in order to grasp every dimension of unionism and industrial relations. Pluralism has been widely criticised as being too static and conservative an approach (e.g. Hyman 1979: 420). The empirical evidence presented above has shown the conflictual dimension of the relationship between trade unions and the unemployed. Neo-corporatism does not sufficiently take into account the disruptive dimension of unionism and its role in social movement. On the contrary, perspectives centring on that dimension of unionism (e.g. Olson 1965, Crouch 1982) neglect to some extent the more institutionalised dimension of industrial relations. Touraine's works on the labour movement (1966; Touraine et al. 1984) separate workers' movements too much from trade unions, thereby neglecting to analyse unions *per se* (Hyman 1997: 10-1). By contrast, Rosanvallon (1988) focuses on trade unions' functions but fails to take into account the evolution of the internal dynamics of unionism, including the evolution of the workforce.

Marxism allows us to explain the relationship between trade unions and the unemployed in a dynamic perspective, taking into account the conflictual

dimension of unionism and industrial relations, and examining both the processes at stake *inside* trade unions and their actions *outside*: collective bargaining, disputes and socio-political roles in society. Such a view has to be balanced and can take into account union complexity and contradictions (Gagnon 2003, 15 and 29; Hyman 1975, 16-7 and 66).

Marx and Engels, followed by prominent Marxist authors, wrote about trade unions (Béroud and Mouriaux 2001, Hyman 1971, Kelly 1988). The former stressed the economic and the political roles of trade unions, organising workers and threatening capitalism as they develop class consciousness and form 'schools of war' against capitalism (Engels 1845, see also Hyman 1971: 4-7, 1997: 11, Marx 1847a). Marx and Engels in their later works, followed by Lenin, Luxemburg, Michels,[1] Gramsci and Trotsky, also analysed other aspects of unionism, such as the dominance of the 'labour aristocracy', setting-up of union bureaucracies, development of class consciousness, or the integration of trade unions and, under union guidance, of the workers into capitalist societies.

Moreover, Marxism provides some key concepts and analytical tools so as to observe industrial relations. Hyman (1975, 1979) explored them with very interesting results, and pointed to the limits of earlier Marxist analysis of industrial relations. His open-minded, scientific, pragmatic and non-dogmatic approach remains of acute relevance. It also responds to the need to adopt "a Marxism lined with uncertainties, recognising its deficiencies, searching for new paths open to a greater receptiveness to questioning and to the imagination" (Liebman 1983: 63).

Analysing industrial relations from a Marxist viewpoint, Hyman (1975) stresses the need to take into account four dimensions: "Totality, change, contradiction and practice"(4). This implies a dialectical approach (Gagnon 2003: 15 and 29). Ollman (2005) sees dialectic as "a way of thinking which directs our attention towards the whole palette of possible changes and interactions which are practised in reality"(23). "Dialectic restructures our thoughts on reality by replacing our notion of 'a thing' arising out of common sense, according to which a thing has a history and external relationships with other things, through the notion of 'process', which contains its own history and possible futures, and by that of 'relation', which contains as an integral part what are its links with other relations"(2005: 24). Hence, I propose to analyse, in a dynamic perspective, the contradictions at stake *within* trade unions and to relate them with the whole system *in which* unions are embedded. In my view, this is absolutely necessary in order to explain the relationship between trade unions and the unemployed described above. I will therefore explore:

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[1]   Michels cannot be fully considered as a Marxist author. Nevertheless he contributed to a Marxist critique of the bureaucratisation of labour organisations.

(1) The features of the constituency of trade unions, since they shape the physiognomy of unions themselves in a way that place the unemployed in a peculiar and uneasy position;

(2) The organisational characteristics of unions, in order to outline the balance of power within unions, and its effects on the various categories of members;

(3) Their relationship with capitalism, since this influences their perceptions of unemployment, of the situation of the unemployed and of the role they should play in the indemnification of unemployment, but also of their role in contesting or maintaining the existing economical and political system;

(4) Their relationship with political parties, since this can provide unions with major opportunities when defending interests of their members and/ or the unemployed, but as it also exerts a strong constraint on their strategies and freedom of manoeuvre.

Tensions and contradictions of trade unions

The four dimensions of trade unionism I examine must be considered together to allow for an analysis of the attitude of trade unions towards the question of unemployment and towards the unemployed. These four dimensions are intrinsically linked together. It is however simpler and clearer to examine each in turn.

Union 'core' constituency

"While trade unions unite workers, they also divide them" (Hyman 1989: 230). This first paradox is at the heart even of trade unionism. The appearance of trade unions is intrinsically linked to the development of capitalist production itself (Erd and Scherrer 1985: 116). The relationship which ensues between owners of the means of production and workers obliged to sell their labour force to survive is fundamentally uneven. Their disunity generates competition which can only benefit the employer and gives rise to a continual decline in their pay and working conditions. It is particularly in this regard, confirmed by their observations, that Marx (1847a, 1847b) and Engels (1845) developed their thoughts on trade unionism.

This inequality is felt very soon, and the aim of workers who organise themselves in trade unions from the 18th century on has been to present a united front to their employer with a view to modify the balance of power. Historically, this process involves first of all skilled workers. The latter identify closely with their profession, have close relationships at their place of work and benefit from a relatively stable work environment, which encourages their grouping together (Erd and Scherrer 1985: 118, Hyman 1998: 131-2, Robert et al. 1997). They seek in particular to keep to certain rules which favour them, and if need be prevent less qualified workers from joining their associations (Hyman 1975: 43-4).

This gathering together unites workers. Sharing the same profession allows for the growth of a feeling of belonging to a group whose members have common interests, encouraging the emergence of forms of solidarity between these workers and collective action. These workers likewise set up benefit funds designed to help their members in cases of illness, accident, unemployment etc. These funds were at the origin of the Ghent system unemployment scheme mentioned above. Those workers thus do not necessarily turn their back to their colleagues becoming unemployed. Nor do they automatically limit the scope of their action to their own conditions since some of those unions bear wider social or political claims.

But these structures likewise reflect and deepen certain divisions within the working class (Erd and Scherrer 1985: 118). These trade unions bring together workers coming from the same trade while excluding those coming from other trades. Subsequently, the growth of industry-wide unions, based on the sectoral activity and no longer on a trade, reflects this same process of 'divisive unification'. Lenin (1902) and Gramsci (1977) thereby underlined that the growth of trade unions followed the path of the division of labour imposed by the capitalist system itself (see Kelly 1988: 54-5).

Furthermore, the fact that the trade unions are mainly made up of what Engels (1892) and Lenin (1915, 1916) were to call the "labour aristocracy",[2] engenders another kind of division, in relation to the least favoured segments of the working class. The low qualified workers, amongst whom one again finds the majority of foreign workers or women workers, and the unemployed are either excluded from the first unions, or, when large-scale and/ or industry-wide unionism takes hold, excluded most of the time from the management bodies running these organisations.

From here on, one can suggest (Hyman 2001: 30-1) that most of the trade union organisations are essentially built on a kind of 'core' constituency (Hyman 1998: 132), are limited even, to the latter, making the skilled worker, adult, male, native, employed, with a full-time stable job, the typical trade unionist. This profile varies different times and places, corresponding more to miners, to metalworkers or/ and to civil servants etc.

This preponderance of members of the 'core' in trade union activities and decision-making does not necessarily mean that the trade union reasoning is solely centred on these workers and the defence of just their interests. Many trade union bodies adopted solidarity between the different grades of worker as one of the central virtues at the heart of their reasoning (Richards 2000). Not just from the willingness to use the collective force of some to protect others but also because this all-embracing notion fosters worker unity coming from different sectors around common values and concerns (Gagnon 2003: 25, Hyman 1998: 143). Moreover, solidarity towards the weakest amongst the wage earners so as to improve the pay and working conditions of the latter seems to

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[2]   However, the working class has never constituted a homogeneous group but has always been distinguished by a certain heterogeneity.

some trade unionists as necessary so as to limit the competition these workers might threaten with regard to the core workers and their own pay and working conditions.

It would however be naïve to take such reasoning as a true reflection of internal trade union relations. Most trade union organisations are basically built around workers from the core and led by people issuing from it (Hyman 1998: 142-3). Consequently, they generally tend towards defending in the first place — but not only — the interests of this dominant class of workers (Hyman 1998: 131-2, 2001: 30-1, Hyman and Fryer 1975: 164, Richards 2000). It is all the more so when these interests come into conflict with those of other groups of workers, less well organised and represented within the unions, or when the trade union struggle seems more difficult, for example because of economic or political circumstances (Richards 2000: 169-70). Women, immigrant workers, white collar workers, precarious or unemployed workers, are thus described as fitting less well in the world of trade unions, and their interests less or less well taken into account by the latter (Hyman 2001: 30-1, Kelly 1988: 55, Taylor 1989: 188). Even these groups are sometimes ostracised by the core workers and by their trade union organisations (Hyman 1975: 45-6). Sexism, racism or other forms of exclusionary behaviour are not exceptional inside trade unions.

The centrality of core workers in unions' structure makes it difficult for the unemployed to find their place in unions. In many unions, the model of organisation is based on the workplace and delegates are chosen at that level. This excludes *ipso facto* the unemployed from a major place of union activism and consequently from decision bodies. Moreover, internal divisions based on branches or professions shape the organisation of many unions, leaving few space for a specific organisation of the unemployed, which has an interprofessional character. Hence, creating such structures questions the traditional model of organisation of those unions, therefore engendering strong internal reluctances to such a structural change, without completely making it impossible to occur. Finally, the centrality of core workers also influences the unions' agenda setting. Union priorities are more likely determined by the situation of the 'active' workers and the claims they make. Whether these coincide or not with those of the unemployed is often of major importance to understand why the unions also defend the interests of the unemployed or prioritise those of the core workers.

Bureaucratised organisations

So as to consolidate and underpin their collective action, workers endow themselves with increasingly elaborate organisations. Amongst them, some are given the responsibility, at the professional level, of running these organisations, to structure them, to manage them and ensure they are protected. But these people eventually comprise a socially specific group, whose conditions for existence and self interest can diverge significantly from those of the body of members of the organisation. Mainly concerned with the

preservation of the organisation itself and, more broadly, its own interests, this union bureaucracy comes to increasingly defend this structure and its own concerns over the real and major working and living conditions of the whole of organised labour. Consequently, the union bureaucracy will of course contribute to protecting workers and improve their condition, but it is going to put a brake on their combativeness in those cases where collective action seems to it to challenge the stability of the organisation, as well as its own situation — which is linked to this stability — and its own interests.

The existence of organisations with a certain solidity is essential so as to underpin the union struggle (Hyman 1975: 162, Marx 1847a: II,5). But 19th century working conditions hardly allowed one to deal efficiently with the management and growth of trade unions (Mandel 1978: 5, Weber 1975: 272). For these organisations to be able to strengthen both themselves and their scope, it was imperative that certain militants concentrate on their management and their running (Michels 1911).

This structuring and professionalisation are indispensable to allow for the expansion of the trade union movement and obtaining concrete gains *by* and *for* the latter (Hyman 1971: 15). This consolidation also allows for going beyond the framework of single undertakings, to pursue broader and less corporate claims, which in return also reinforces the trade union movement (Hyman 1975: 162-9, Mandel 1978: 11). Max Weber saw in the bureaucracy the best means of developing specialised know-how as well as an efficient and continuous action (Béroud and Mouriaux 2001: 101-2).

In many cases, the workers thus seconded and remunerated to run the trade union organisation come from the 'core' (Hyman 1975: 72-8). Consequently, "this worker bureaucracy is the political spokesman of the worker aristocracy, and not of the main mass of the proletariat" (H. Weber 1975: 248). This can explain why many union representatives do not really know the reality the unemployed face, as they have not necessarily been confronted with such a situation in their personal story. But this is not the only characteristic of that bureaucracy.

Classical Marxist authors and union bureaucracy

From the second half of the 19th century, Marx and Engels note that the revolutionary struggle of the working class is held back by corruption — both material and ideological— of some of its leaders (Hyman 1971: 9). Lenin (1915) and Trotsky (1969), or even Michels (1911) underlined that by becoming professional militants, the staff of the workers' parties or the unions cut themselves off from their position as workers and the harshness of the latter (Béroud and Mouriaux 2001, 103-9; Hyman 1971: 15-20, Kelly 1988: 44-5, Mandel 1978: 21-2, Weber 1975: 248-9 and 276-7). Their material well being may likewise improve. Besides, their new workload activity, while not being an easy life brought them "a position of influence, a wide area of autonomy, a sense

of meaning and importance, a status in the community, which few trade unionists can expect from their ordinary employment" (Hyman 1975: 78).

As outlined by Luxemburg (1906), Gramsci (1977) and, to a lesser degree, Michels (1911), the ideological environment also influences the bureaucratisation of the unions (Béroud and Mouriaux 2001, 105; Hyman 1975: 90-1, Kelly 1988: 56-7 and 77, Weber 1975: 226-32 and 277). So as to speed up their immediate claims, the unions have to get themselves accepted as valid intermediaries by both employers and the state. For most of the time this puts constraints on the leaders to moderate and select amongst workers' demands so as to render them acceptable and workable.

At least four consequences arise:

1. The union representatives become intermediaries between the mass of the workers and the state or the employers. This role raises their standing and confers on them a key position.

2. This process brings with it a development of their skills and technical acumen necessary for the handling of their files. This contributes to the gap which separates them from the rest of the workers and their training levels and makes more difficult the latter's control over them, in the absence of the skills necessary to do so. These two aspects increase the authority of these representatives at the heart of the union body.

3. The union leaders are brought around to regularly rub shoulders with the employers or the state. Besides the material advantages this may bring them, this also shapes their view of things and strengthens their trend towards conciliation, class collaboration even.

4. The union representatives risk, bit by bit, regarding the acquired improvements obtained, although quite real ones, as decisive and sufficient progress. They arrive henceforth at losing sight, according to Luxemburg (1906) and Gramsci (1977), of the fact that these victories are relatively unreliable and in any case partial, and of considering negotiation and the stability of the union organisation as aims in themselves.

The tendency is for the staff members comprising the union bureaucracy to arrive progressively at collectively making the preservation of the union organisation a more important objective than that of the improvement, through the latter, of living and working conditions of the wage earners they are deemed to protect. The means gain the upper hand over the ends as a phenomenon of 'goal displacement' (Hyman and Fryer 1975: 156-7).

Little by little, the union leaders turn to defending primarily their own interests which depend closely on the stability of this structure they are running (Hyman 1975: 66, Hyman and Fryer 1975, 157). Consequently, the union bureaucracy sets up different ways of conserving and enlarging its power at the heart of the

trade union organisation (Hyman 1975: 78-9; Weber 1975: 273-4) and keeps an eye on the maximum preservation of this organisation so as to protect its own interests, to the point of putting a brake on workers' action if it judges that the latter risks challenging the stability of the organisation and its self interest. This process brings to the fore the deeply conservative character of the union bureaucracy as raised particularly by Luxemburg and Michels (Hyman 1971: 16, Weber 1975: 224-5). Very far off the positive character M. Weber ascribed to the bureaucracy, this aspect of the attitude of the union representatives constitutes the other side of the union bureaucratic coin.

These features of the unions reinforce the capacities of the core workers to impose their claims on union agenda, sometimes at the expenses of those of the unemployed. They also often bring union representatives to develop an attitude of 'good manager' of the unemployment scheme when they are involved in its management, since preserving that position can appear to be as important as using it to improve the situation of the unemployed. Involvement in the management of the unemployment scheme can give union representatives a prominent status as it gives them an official recognition. It can also give them more financial means as union unemployment funds are backed by the state. This serves both the reinforcement of the funds protecting the unemployed and the expansion of the union bureaucracy. But it can also deprive them from some resources as those management activities take much time and human resources that cannot be devoted to organising more combative actions, especially during periods of crisis, when lots of members are unemployed (see Vanthemsche 1994 for evidence from Belgium). Moreover, the importance of the bureaucracy and its strategic choices explain the tendency of many unions, especially at their top level, to prevent the unemployed from mobilising on too radical a manner or even more from organising themselves outside union structures, out of union control.

Union bureaucracy, internal democracy and unity

Generally, union organisations are built along democratic lines (Hyman 1975: 70-4, Hyman and Fryer 1975: 164). Trade unionism likewise emphasises the principle of unity. The collective weight that workers look for when they come together as a trade union body can only be reached on condition that the latter acts in a concerted and disciplined manner (Anderson 1967: 276, Hyman 1975: 65, 1998: 134). The bureaucratisation of trade unions is ill suited to a real internally democratic operation. To establish their control over their organisation, to preserve the latter and their own interests, the union representatives call upon the need for the unity and discipline of the workers, or even the principle of union democracy, so as to influence decision making, and stifle conflicting views. The skills and technical abilities their function has conferred upon them serve likewise to control the organisation. Moreover, emphasis on the technical aspects of the files reduces the practice of democracy within unions since the bureaucrats can claim to be the only ones capable of assessing all the implications of certain problematical situations and of taking

decisions (Béroud and Mouriaux 2001: 111, Gagnon 2003: 24, Hyman and Fryer 1975: 159-60, Weber 1975: 274).

Reduction of internal democracy often gives rise to apathy among rank-and-file members and their disinterest in the running of their trade union organisation, reinforcing the diminution of union internal democracy (Hyman 1971: 14-7, 1975: 92, Hyman and Fryer 1975: 165, Michels 1911). This increases the possibility of union representatives controlling the position taken by their union organisation. However, this passivity of members also undermines the union organisation itself, their weakness being paradoxically the exact opposite of the aim pursued by the union bureaucracy. Nevertheless, this tendency towards the reduction in the democratic character of union practices did not occur immediately, nor without resistance. It is not self-evident and is not inescapable (Hyman 1971: 32-3, 1975: 69-83).

Looking at the organisation of the unemployed inside Belgian unions, Faniel (2006: 58-62) points to the gap between, on the one hand, union officials and their experts involved in the management of the unemployment scheme, using official jargon and focusing on technical aspects of the rules governing that scheme, and on the other hand the small union groups of unemployed aiming at obtaining modifications of those rules in order to improve their daily situation. The lack of communication between the two groups, their misunderstanding even, and the ascendancy of the former on the latter inside union structures and in union policy making often lead those few unemployed involved in union activism to disappointment and feeling of ineffectiveness, with potential demobilising consequences.

Disciplining the working class

Hyman (1975: 26-7 and 65) distinguishes 'power for' and 'power over'. By uniting together, the workers acquire collective force which confers on them a power *for* them, so as to defend their interests faced with other actors (employers, the state etc.) But in taking control of the trade union organisation and restraining its internal democratic working, the union bureaucracy diverts the strength of organised labour in a unified and disciplined way so as to establish power *over* the latter, which risks overriding the power *for* the latter (Hyman 1975: 195).

Mills (1948) clearly underlined the wholly dialectical tension to which a union leader is subjected. "Yet even as the labor leader rebels, he holds back rebellion. He organises discontent and then he sits on it, exploiting it in order to maintain a continuous organisation; the labor leader is a manager of discontent. He makes regular what might otherwise be disruptive, both within the industrial routine and within the union which he seeks to establish and maintain" (8-9). This famous quote stresses the double-sided face of union bureaucracy: strengthening and leading union action but maintaining it in 'reasonable' proportions.

According to Gramsci (1977), the bourgeoisie and the state have well understood all the gain they could derive from the stabilising and conservative magnitude of the union bureaucracy. This is why the repression of the burgeoning union movement gave way bit by bit to the creation of negotiating structures, constraining union representatives to moderate the demands they bring, and end by stifling the radicality of the workers' movement and reinforce the union bureaucracy itself (Kelly 1988: 77). Mills (1948: 119) emphasises that the union leaders have also fully understood the advantage they could gain from this collaboration with the employers or the state bureaucracy so as to safeguard the organisation and defend their interests. Trotsky goes further when he adds "the perspective of an *active* and *deliberate* strategy by government and industry to emasculate the threat inherent in unionism" (Hyman 1971: 17), made possible by the use of the bureaucracy. For him, "trade unions can either transform themselves into revolutionary organisations or become lieutenants of capital in the intensified exploitation of the workers. The trade union bureaucracy, which has satisfactorily solved its own social problem, took the second path. It turned all the accumulated authority of the trade unions against the socialist revolution and even against any attempts of the workers to resist the attacks of capital and reaction" (Trotsky 1969: 54). In other words, the union bureaucracy has thus transformed the power *for* the workers into a power *over* the latter.

In periods of crisis, unions involved in the management of unemployment schemes often accept restrictions in the levels and conditions of indemnification provided the whole system be maintained and/ or the role of the unions remain unchanged (see Faniel 2006 for Belgium or Veil 2010: 74-75 for Germany). Consequently, union top leaders try to avoid uncontrolled mobilisations by the unemployed that could challenge their position. However, local union activists and officials or radical unions are more likely to mobilise against such reforms as they can feel less bound by the system. At the same time, this can also explain why union leaders can oppose strong reforms of unemployment scheme if such reforms endanger the position of their organisations in the management of the scheme, as shown by LO's attitude against proposals of the rightist Swedish government in the second part of the 2000s (Jolivet and Mantz 2010: 145).

"Dialectic of partial conquests"

So why do workers accept to remain members of such organisations and continue to give their support to these leaders? To improve their situation in concrete terms, these workers have to act collectively, and they need a solid organisation which underpins and furthers their collective action. Union representatives gain skills that make them necessary to the workers' battle. Consequently, and the workers are very mindful of it, it is through their union organisation and thanks to the organisational work on the collective struggle led by (or sometimes despite) the union bureaucracy that improvements in their situation can be obtained.

Nevertheless, the acquisition of these improvements is likewise at the root of the conservatism of the union bureaucracy. Mandel (1978) talks in this respect of a "dialectic of partial conquests"(6-7). The union bureaucracy channels "all the weight of the collective force of the working class"(21) and guides it so as to obtain improvements in the living and working conditions of the latter. But it equally puts a brake on new struggles and limits workers' action to partial conquests when the consequences of a new demand seem to endanger the workers' former gains, the stability of the organisation and/ or the situation and own interests it derives from its position at the heart of this organisation. In some cases, the union bureaucracy will negotiate what constitutes objective steps back for some of the wage earners, provided it does not affect a priori the union organisation itself, its own interests and those of its leaders. It develops this attitude all the more so faced with a revolutionary prospect, considered too adventurous and risky.

These findings broaden the understanding of the attitude of unions faced with the unemployed. On the one hand, the unions are sturdy organisations which can bring precious resources to bear for the unemployed so as to organise themselves and lead collective action. On the other hand in some countries, the unions are involved in the management of unemployment schemes. This leads them to appear 'responsible', as being invited to do so by employers and the public authorities. The demands of the unemployed very often appear too radical. Besides, not belonging to the union 'core', the unemployed have more trouble especially in getting themselves organised within the union structures and having their interests taken on board by the latter. Delegation democracy which is the foundation of union organisation is built on the worker collective, from which the unemployed are excluded. Moreover, union democracy is somewhat diverted by the union bureaucracy which is itself comprised of people coming from certain proportions of the wage-earners from which the unemployed are likewise excluded.

Trade unionism and capitalist system

> From a Marxist perspective, obviously, no serious analysis of industrial relations is possible without a central emphasis on the determining role of capital (Hyman 1975: 97).

The existence of trade unions in the West is closely linked to the birth and growth of the capitalist production method. It is in opposition to this or, at least to some of its consequences, and with the aim of fighting the latter or to alleviate them that workers organise themselves in trade unions. It is also, however, the capitalist system and the actors who dominate it which determine the framework in which the unions evolve. Consequently, while it is the disappearance of the capitalist production method which would most surely allow the unions to achieve their objectives in a decisive rather than temporary

manner,[3] this same capitalist context contributes to divert their action from such a radical struggle.

Threat to the capitalist system

The growth of trade unions allows workers to struggle with a degree of efficiency against their employers, whose aim is to increase profit levels by further exploitation of wage earners by lowering earnings, increasing productivity, reducing the number of employed workers, etc. Since Marx (1865) and Engels (1881), the Marxist analysis of trade unionism has emphasised the economically important, but limited, role of the unions. Marxist authors therefore emphasised the need for workers to also develop political action so as to end the capitalist system. However, the economic demands of the unions already by themselves endanger that system (Hyman 1971: 37-8, 1975: 87).

The first reaction of the owners of the means of production, supported in this by the state control institutions, is to prevent the setting up of trade unions, by violence if need be. This repression emphasised the early shakiness of the first unions. But it also contributed to foster the combativeness of organised labour and to radicalise them, hardening as a consequence employer and state repression itself (Hyman and Fryer 1975: 158).

Progressively, some employers preferred to start up negotiations with certain unions in order to make more controllable the conflictual situations they had to face up to. They are akin in this respect to certain union leaders and militants who were themselves seeking this recognition and the advantages that negotiation allows (Hyman 1975: 157-8).

But the acceptance of negotiation by some bosses is conditional on the moderation of the workers' demands and restricting them to certain precise fields. This trend is backed up by a more ideological pressure that the capitalist system exerts not only on union leaders (see above), but as well on the whole of the wage earners. The dominant ideology hammers out the need for workers and their organisations to be 'responsible' and "encourage trade unionists to disavow as 'subversive', 'irresponsible' or 'economically disastrous' any but the most modest of objectives" (Hyman 1975: 88). For the trade unions involved in the management of the unemployment scheme, this adds to the pressure to behave as 'good managers' already mentioned above and hinders union representatives from adopting more a disruptive attitude in that field.

Role of the state

The state is not neutral. In a capitalist system, it ensures the domination of the bourgeoisie over the other social classes, above all the working class. The state

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[3]   This does not mean that trade unions themselves necessarily pursue such a goal, as the diversity of ideological and strategic positions of the trade unions illustrates.

can be used to repress the organised labour movement, whether through the law, or by the use of force. The 19th century provides numerous examples across Europe, but more contemporary cases also illustrate this statement, on occasions of strikes or demonstrations framed or even repressed by state power.

Progressively, bearing in mind the stabilising role that trade unionism could assume for the capitalist system, the dominant elites of the European states recognised little by little the fact of trade unionism and legitimised it by way of transforming it into a "means of integrating the working class into capitalist society, thus serving as a mechanism of social control" (Hyman 1975: 143).

States thus created collective bargaining bodies and called on unions and employers, by force if necessary, to get involved (Hyman 1989: 224). Coupled with the workers' struggle, this integration of the latter and of their organisations with capitalist society allowed workers to garner significant and unquestionable improvements in their circumstances. The growth of welfare state systems is the clearest illustration of this. But this integration into the system, the inclusion of union leaders in decision making procedures, and constant ideological pressures by the state, brought the union representatives to feel more and more concerned with safeguarding the system in which they are involved and to emphasise demands considered acceptable by the system itself (Hyman 1975: 89-91). This phenomenon also applies to the relationship between the unions and the unemployed. Major unions, whose philosophy is centred on work, can defend the improvement of the unemployment benefits (rather in good economic circumstances than during crises), but they are completely opposed to supporting groups promoting the right to laziness, like the German 'Happy Unemployed' (Baumgarten and Lahusen 2012), or are in conflicting positions inside some groups of unemployed, like AC! in France, with activists defending the right to a basic income (Cohen forthcoming).

Consequences for union action

From being protesting movements, trade unions became "dialectically both an opposition to capitalism and a component of it" (Anderson 1967: 264). We touch here on "the central contradiction of trade unionism [...]: at the same time as it makes possible the consolidation and increased effectiveness of workers' resistance to capitalism, it also makes this resistance more manageable and predictable and can even serve to suppress struggle" (Hyman 1989: 230). This influences the union strategy: "Struggle tends to be channelled into conflicts over issues on which compromise is possible through collective bargaining; hence 'economic' demands are encouraged and 'control' demands discouraged" (idem). Recognition as interlocutor by employers and by the state implies not only a certain moderation on the part of a trade union, but likewise reinforces it (Valenzuela 1992: 57). All the same, such moderation is not automatic and the unions have regularly drawn up much wider and radical demands (Hyman 1975: 87).

Not all trade unions are inspired by the same political philosophy and by the same conception of the world. However, Hyman (2001, 38-65) considers that the Christian-democrat, social-democrat and – more recently – communist inspired practices of the unions tended to converge after WWII in the ambiguous framework of 'social partnership'. The search for negotiation and the preservation of it as a means of action will tend therefore not only to restrain union demands, but equally to get them to converge, globally.

If negotiation can effectively bring some progress, the moderation to which unions are constrained allows for restraint in union demands within the limits acceptable to the capitalist system. In a period of recession the unions which had made of social partnership a favoured practice risk being brought to negotiate setbacks rather than improvements for the workers (Hyman 1971: 19-27). In any case, the unions allow the demands of workers to be brought forward (or at least *some* demands of *some* workers) and to try and get them settled but they tend also to get workers to accept the reality of the capitalist system which creates the wage and working conditions against which, precisely, they are battling. Hence, even more radical unions can somehow have stabilising effects for the capitalist system.

In several European countries the unions play a role in the management of the unemployment scheme. Consequently, beside the fact they care somewhat less about the demands of the unemployed than those of the 'core' workers, union leaders tend to set aside the demands of those without work when they seem too radical for the capitalist system (e.g. the right to laziness), and more broadly, when they could jeopardise the position gained by the trade union organisations, particularly that of managers of the unemployment scheme.

Unions and political parties

Many unions have become aware of the need to supplement and reinforce their economic struggle with political action. Many workers' parties have likewise looked to organise and raise the level of workers' consciousness through those trade union organisations closest to them. More or less close alliances have been built up between union organisations and already existing supporters or created at the instigation of one or the other. Such links allow unions to move forward on some of their demands and, in some cases to strengthen their structure and position in society. But this type of relationship also compels them towards certain concessions, sometimes to the detriment of (some of) their members. Hence, the links established between unions and political parties tend sometimes to encourage the workers' struggle resulting in real gains, sometimes putting a brake on it, to the point of damaging the interests of (some) wage earners.

Need for political action

The need to link political and economic action appeared quite early. Marx (1866) emphasises the need for unions to commit themselves clearly to social and political struggles. Nonetheless, "the texts of Marx say nothing more than the necessary, the indispensable transformation of economic struggles into political struggles, the responsibility of the trade union movement in the setting up of a distinct workers' party. They do not specify the methods of achieving cohesion between economic conflict and political battle" (Mouriaux 1985: 38-9).

A certain variety became clear regarding the ideological conceptions which permeated the unions. Simplifying somewhat, a first demarcation line can be drawn between the trade union organisations of the reformist kind and unions with revolutionary designs such as, at the outset at least, communist movements and anarcho-syndicalists. Another division can be identified between the unions (communists, anarcho-syndicalists and, at the outset at least, social democrats and socialists) convinced of the necessity of implementing a change in society so as to truly improve workers' conditions, and organisations such as the Christian unions or those practising 'business unionism', which consider that the conversion of the capitalist society and harmony between employers and workers will allow for an improvement in the well being of the latter.

Link between political parties and trade unions

The political philosophy of the different unions gives rise to an equally differentiated relation to the political parties. Some unions thus contemplated with suspicion parliamentary action and the organisations which put it forward and considered that direct action by workers organised in unions would suffice to lead the political struggle of the workers. Consequently, revolutionary unionism and anarcho-syndicalism refused to link up with political parties (Hyman 2001: 23, Mouriaux 1985: 34-6).

Other trends sought, by contrast, to develop solid links between unions and political parties, based particularly on the idea that the political weakness of the unions compelled the latter to such alliances to prolong their combat in the political realm (Taylor 1989: 47 and 70). According to the different leanings (communist, Christian democrat, socialist or social democrat), the links created took on a different countenance, were concluded at a different pace (Valenzuela 1992: 61-3) and this at the behest of one actor or the other. These different 'models' of relations between unions and political parties share in common the point of establishing the separation between economic and political struggle, reserving to the trade union actors the care of leading the first and to the partisan bodies that of leading the second. In this way, likewise, these trends differ from anarcho-syndicalism.

"Political exchange"

At the heart of the relations uniting social democratic or Christian democrat parties and unions one finds the notion of 'political exchange'. Such a relationship implies that both types of actor give each other mutual help so as to gather up benefits for the other. By so doing, they intend to strengthen their own situation in return (Taylor 1989: 45-9 and 70-1, Valenzuela 1992: 60).

In this transaction, each brings certain resources to the other. The union actor offers the party the strength of the mass of organised labor under its aegis and the financial support, in the struggles and at the ballot box. Some political leaders arise from the union ranks. On its side, the party hands over the demands (or at least some of them) drawn up by its union ally and tries to get them to succeed through its political action. More widely, it tries to strengthen the situation of the unions (or at least those to whom they are closest) with the aim of increasing the strength of the latter and to make sure of the support.

Ghent system countries clearly illustrate this relationship: political parties historically played a key role in the establishment of subsidies reinforcing union funds against unemployment, enabling unions to attract new members likely to support those parties (see Faniel 2009 for Belgium or Rothstein 1990 for Sweden). In the social democratic model, the party also draws up the political doctrine making up the ideological framework from which the unions will draw inspiration more or less directly. The development of an inclusive vision of the world can encourage militant commitment, including at union level, and induce the unions to go beyond the strictly corporate defence, thus furthering their growth.

If at the outset the relationship was sometimes very close between the parties and social democratic or Christian democratic unions, their links quite clearly loosened, each actor going their own way in relation to others to varying degrees according to the countries and the era (Hyman 2001: 19-21, Taylor 1989: 45-9, 70-2 and 94-5). Generally, this process happened only progressively, over the long term, and these actors often preserved their privileged links.

Consequences of the political exchange for the unions

Thanks to these privileged relations, the unions can secure improvements for workers they protect by means of political action led by their sister parties. However, the social democratic parties, or even more so the Christian democratic ones, accept the capitalist system as a framework of their action, with the aim of reforming it or converting it for the benefit of the workers. Such a strategy has restraining effects and pushes towards acceptance of compromise by the dominant actors in the system. The development of bureaucratisation and its consequences is likewise observable in the case of the big workers' parties which developed in Western Europe.

In normal times, these parties prove to pose relatively little threat to the foundations of the capitalist system. Sometimes, they are led to taking decisions

in favour of social categories other than wage earners or prejudicing the interests of the latter. In some cases, they moreover use the relation that links them to the unions to restrain the latter's members to accept these decisions or to limit themselves to calling them into question. Such pressures can be carried out by means of organic links binding partisan and union organisations, or through interpersonal relationships (Hyman 2001: 20).

The acceptance by union leaders of parliamentary government as the only legitimate form of action and of the pre-eminence of their sister party in the field of political struggle, their willingness to conserve their links with this party, as well as their own characteristics outlined above, quite often bring them to bow before such pressures. Besides, to distance themselves from their sister party when the latter is in power can seem an even worse solution, risking to deprive them of their favourite ally in the political field (Taylor 1989: 49 and 187).

This does not mean that union organisations and their leaders remain completely passive with regard to such policies. Most of the time they look to put pressure on the sister party to shift its policy or, at least, to alleviate the harmful effects for (some of) their members (Valenzuela 1992: 66).

Such links between parties and unions allow most certainly for gains for the union organisations and their members, but it also obliges them, in order to preserve the privileged link established with the party, to accept what are sometimes unsatisfactory compromises or setbacks, to abandon some struggles or bring them to an end. The analysis of relations between unions and the unemployed provides a good illustration of this position. In their sister parties the unions found important allies in the building of the current unemployment schemes. However, since the middle of the 1970s, many of these sister parties brought in reforms of the social protection systems. The unions are thus confronted with difficult choices: to oppose their sister parties or accept compromises, particularly to the detriment of the unemployed. Finally, the presence of the sister parties in power or in the opposition also determines the behaviour of the unions towards the struggles of the unemployed. Evidence from Belgium, from Germany or from Sweden for instance (Baumgarten and Lahusen 2012; Faniel 2006; Linders and Kalander 2007) show that trade unions can support some mobilisations for the unemployed as long as their sister parties are in the opposition but that they can change their attitude quite promptly (but not necessarily without internal tensions) when those parties come back to government.

Conclusion

In many Western countries, the unions speak on behalf of the whole of the working class, the unemployed included. Even so, they keep up a problematic relationship with the unemployed. While the unions protect the conditions of the unemployed in certain cases, it is clear they rarely regard this objective as a priority. Besides, they maintain an ambiguous relation to the organisation and

collective mobilisation of the unemployed. A Marxist dialectical approach to trade unionism allows one to understand the reasons for these union attitudes towards the unemployed.

The unions protect the workers and unify them. They are very aware of how the risks of unemployment weigh heavily on the whole of the working class. It is consequently logical that they are attached to the defence of full employment and to the situation of the unemployed. But the core constituency of the unions influences the priorities of these organisations. As a consequence, the organisation of the unemployed and their concerns often ranks second in the union priorities. For the unemployed, probably the best opportunity to have their claims strongly defended by the trade unions is when the latter analyse the priorities of the former as being perfectly compatible with the interests of the 'core' union rank-and-file, i.e. the 'active' workers.

Unions are bureaucratised organisations. They have at their disposal a large collective body that they can put at the service of the struggles. Including those of the unemployed. In some cases, the unions offer the unemployed invaluable resources to help them get organised. However, the union leaders, especially on whom is placed the pressure of the capitalist system as a whole, also keep a watch on constraining the demands of workers and put a brake on their radicality.

In many countries the unions also play a role in the management of the unemployment scheme. They can use their position to push ahead with certain demands to the advantage of the unemployed. But the union representatives are also subject to pressures, especially ideological ones, coming from the public authorities, from the employers or even from their sister parties (especially when the latter are in the government) aiming at the moderation of their demands. The union management of unemployment schemes as a result takes a more technocratic turn than militant. This is made possible by the absence of any significant organisation of the unemployed at the heart of the unions or the little weight they carry within the union bodies. Finally, the willingness of the union leaders to maintain this position at the centre of unemployment schemes, as well as privileged relations they maintain with their sister parties lead them equally to moderate their demands, to the point of accepting significant climb downs to the detriment of the unemployed and, more widely, of the protection of workers as a whole.

This attitude of the union leaders also explains that they give more importance to the representation of the unemployed *in their name* than the self-organisation of the latter within their own structures. Nonetheless, when it becomes indispensable, these leaders prefer to set up groups of the unemployed within their organisation, and under the control of the latter, rather than let them develop outside the union structures and confront the competition of generally more radical groups which challenge the union monopoly of representation of jobless workers. Finally, if such organisations for the protection of the unemployed emerge nevertheless outside of the trade unions,

the relations they maintain with the management of the latter have more the imprint of hostility or of indifference than of collaboration.

A Marxist dialectical approach to trade unionism based on the combination of the four characteristics of unions developed in this article allows one to understand the discrepancy between on the one hand the trade union reasoning and commitments in support of the protection of the working class, including the unemployed, and on the other hand the acts and strategies really implemented by the majority of Western trade unions faced with the organisation and protection of the unemployed. But all trade unions are not the same and the peculiar position of each organisation regarding each of the four characteristics produces different combinations of relationships between unions and the unemployed. People then have some room for manoeuvre inside organisations shaped by structural dynamics.

Such a perspective makes it possible to understand why the unemployed, other union rank-and-file or some union representatives try to use the force of trade unions to enlarge the defence of the unemployed and to enhance the organisation of the unemployed and the mobilisation of and on behalf of them. It also reveals the possibilities these people can lean on in order to influence the union positions in a more comprehensive and more combative way favourable to the unemployed. But such a dialectical approach exploring the tensions existing inside unions on the four issues also stresses the structural difficulties those people face when trying to modify the relationship between trade unions and the unemployed.

Finally, it would be interesting to complement this approach centred on the trade unions with works considering the viewpoints of the unemployed on the unions. Do they see such organisations as appropriate structures for their own mobilisation? What kind of trade unionism seems to offer them the best help in their struggles?

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About the author

Jean Faniel (PhD, Université libre de Bruxelles) is a political scientist and a researcher at the Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques (CRISP), Brussels, Belgium. He has published widely on trade unions, collective action of the unemployed, the relationship between trade unions and the unemployed and Belgian politics. Recent publications include: *The Mobilization of the Unemployed in Europe. From Acquiescence to Protest?* New York: Palgrave (2012, edited with D. Chabanet), "Crisis behind the Figures? Belgian Trade Unions between Strength, Paralysis and Revitalisation", *Management Revue. The International Revue of Management Studies, 23 (1), 2012*: 14-31, "The Mobilization of the Unemployed: A Recurrent but Relatively Invisible Phenomenon" (with D. Chabanet), in *Unemployment and Protest*, edited by Matthias Reiss and Matt Perry, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2011); "Belgium: Unemployment insurance caught between pressure from Europe, regional controversy and fall-out from the crisis", in *Unemployment benefit systems in Europe and North America*, edited by Florence Lefresne, Brussels: IRES/ETUI (2010); "Belgian Trade Unions and the Unemployment", in *The Politics of Unemployment in Europe*, edited by Marco Giugni, Farnham: Ashgate (2009) and "L'Europe du chômage" (2007, edited with D. Chabanet), special issue of *Politique européenne, 21*. He can be contacted at j.faniel AT crisp.be.

Grasping new forms of unionism:
the case of childcare services in Quebec

Martine D'Amours, Guy Bellemare and Louise Briand

Abstract

As a result of the transformations taking place in the world of work, unionism is increasingly moving away from its traditional basis in the North American context (one firm, one employer, employees forming a union within a defined regulatory framework). Although subscribing to the thesis of the crisis of unionism, we believe that union action is being revived in other forms, in alliance with other actors, according to various logics and levels of action which are not taken into account by traditional frameworks of analysis. In this article, we analyze the experiences of two different groups of workers in the Quebec childcare services sector (employees and self-employed workers) as examples of emerging forms of unionism. We also propose that a new framework, based on a broader definition of actors, the analysis of their logics and levels of action, and their goals and the rules they try to modify or construct, will be useful to grasp the contemporary forms of workers' collective action.

Introduction

The symptoms of the crisis of unionism (drop in union membership, decrease in unions' effectiveness) are well known and the factors explaining them have been well documented, the most notable being the globalization of markets and the emergence of new technologies and organizational restructuring processes (Osterman et al., 2001). The political-legal parameters of recent decades are another important factor, that is, the coming to power of neoliberal governments and their subsequent adoption of anti-union legislation (Clawson, 2003).

In response to these developments, various ideas have been put forward regarding the revival of unionism. Lévesque & Murray (2010) examined the conditions for international trade union action and the difficulties and potential of local union involvement in cross-border alliances. Osterman et al. (2001) have called for the creation of a new social contract and suggested developing a union movement that establishes its political action at the national level. Behrens, Hurd & Waddington (2003) have also argued that union action must be reorganized, but at the international level, whereas, according to Turner & Hurd (2001) and Jones (2002), union revitalization will depend on territory-based action, centred on smaller areas such as cities or regions, and must be in line with social movement unionism. All these proposals, despite the different levels of action to which they refer, are based on coalition-building, that is, on the idea

that unions must establish bidirectional relations with other social actors in order to carry out their action successfully.

While we generally subscribe to the thesis of the crisis of unionism and the proposals for ending this crisis, we nevertheless believe that the situation is not as dark as it might seem. We suggest that, because of the transformations that are taking place in the world of work, unionism is increasingly moving away from its traditional basis in the North American context (one firm, one employer, employees forming a union within a defined regulatory framework) and that union action is being revived in other forms, which are driven by various logics and at different levels of collective action. We posit, therefore, that the traditional framework of analysis of unionism overlooks emerging forms and that it is this framework that needs to be renewed. In support of this position, we will analyze the union action taken by two different groups of workers (employees and self-employed workers) in the same sector (childcare services) and the same geo-political context (Quebec, following the introduction of the government's family policy in 1997).

Transformations in the world of work and the need to renew the framework of analysis of union action

The world of work, on which union action and the traditional union logic underlying it was built, has changed. In support of our position regarding the prospects of unionism presented above, we will present the changes that have been associated with boundaries – of work, the firm, and social systems–, and will bring out their impacts for the analysis of union action. In this article, the notion of boundary refers to the contours of the object to be analyzed and the identification of actors and their loci of action.

On the one hand, Taylor (2004) proposes a new conceptualization of work that includes formal and informal, public and private, and paid and unpaid work. These descriptive terms reveal a variety of forms of work (see Table 1) – brought together by Taylor under the expression *Total social organization of labour* – which show the limits of separating the public and private spheres of work and, more generally, a broadening of the boundaries of work. Broadening the boundaries of work implies the emergence of new objects of study, such as transitional labour markets (Gazier, 2003; Schmid & Gazier, 2002), and gives rise to issues which have not received much attention in the past, such as work-family balance, patterns of consumption, and gender issues. The broadening of these boundaries also requires that researchers consider and explain the links between labour policies and social policies.

Table 1: Forms of work. Adapted from Taylor (2004, 39).

	Formal **Public or private**	**Informal**	
		Public	**Private**
Paid	Formal employment in the public, private and non-profit sectors e.g. employment in a childcare centre	Informal economic activity e.g. paid babysitting for friends or neighbours	Paid domestic labour e.g. paid babysitting within the family
Unpaid	Formal activity in the public, private and non-profit sectors e.g. volunteer work in a hospital	Informal unpaid economic activity e.g. helping a third party, such as a sick neighbour	Domestic labour e.g. housework in one's own home, caring for a sick family member

On the other hand, the emergence of new organizational forms such as network-based (Briand & Bellemare, 2005) and team-based organizations (Briand & Bellemare, 2006) and the revival of own-account self-employment for a client firm (D'Amours, 2006) implies that the legal boundaries of the firm no longer define the relationship at play, the actors involved, or even the locus of their action. The changing boundaries of the firm require taking into account the action of recognized social actors (employer, union, state) but also that of other actors (e.g. the client, see Bellemare, 2000) whose existence and role remain a priori undetermined.

Moreover, it has been observed that the powers of the state are increasingly being delegated to supra-national bodies and to cities and territorial communities (Boyer & Hollingsworth, 1997). This trend has been accompanied by the phenomenon of "glocalization," that is, the idea that market globalization has been coupled with a localization movement (Jacobs, 1984; Boyer & Hollingsworth, 1997; Sassen, 2000). These changes refer to an "upwards" and "downwards" extension of the boundaries of social systems which, in their own way, demand a questioning of the traditional levels of analysis of union action (shop floor, firm, national, international) and the traditional actors (employer, union, state). In order to explain union action in the context of glocalization, researchers must therefore include in their analyses new levels of analysis and new actors.

Faced with the observable changes in the boundaries of work, the firm, and social systems, new forms of unionism are emerging. These emerging forms

differ from the traditional model in various ways: they extend beyond the boundaries that traditionally restricted union action to unionized workers; they transcend the boundaries of the firm, their action being situated at different levels, in particular, the sectoral and territorial levels; they also offer the possibility of developing alliances with other actors, whose identities and logics of action influence the demands put forward and the types of union action taken. In sum, the emerging forms of unionism can lead to impacts not only with regard to working conditions, but also with regard to public policies in the area of "life politics" (Giddens 1991) as well as new rules pertaining to the employment relationship and collective bargaining.

In order to grasp the potential for union renewal offered by these emerging forms of unionism, we suggest that it is necessary to renew the framework of analysis of union action, breaking with the static approaches which have, to date, characterized this field of study. This framework of analysis must be based on broader conceptions of the actors and logics of action involved and of the levels of union action considered.

The actors

Bellemare defines the industrial relations actor as "an individual, group, or institution with the ability to influence, through its action, the direction of industrial relations (direct action) or the actions of other industrial relations actors (indirect action)" (Bellemare, 2000: 386). According to this definition, the notion of actor is continuous rather than dichotomous: the actor can be more or less significant depending on the continuity and depth of his/her action and his/her capacity to reach certain goals and bring about changes in the industrial relations system, with more significant actors managing to bring about changes that are both substantial and lasting.

The logics of action

Collective action can borrow from various registers of meaning or "interpretive frameworks that allow the actors to share the same understanding of the social reality and the meaning of their actions," which Enjolras refers to as "logics of action" (Enjolras, 2006: 73). This concept is closely related to that of "framing" used by Yates to study the unionization of care workers in British Columbia (Yates, 2010). Based on the definitions identified above, D'Amours (2010) developed a framework involving three parameters: the identities mobilized by the actors, their goals and demands, and lastly, the rules that the collective action is attempting to modify or construct.

The levels of action

The changing boundaries of social systems challenge the traditional levels of analysis of union action (shop floor, firm, national, international) and the

traditional actors (employer, union, state). In order to explain union action in the context of glocalization, researchers must therefore include in their analyses new levels of analysis and new actors. In our view, an industrial relations system constitutes both the conditions for and the results of the interaction of actors in the field of work. Neither actors nor contexts can be totally circumscribed *a priori*, since they are defined through their interaction. Industrial relations are conceived of in terms of an appropriation and transformation of the environment by the actors concerned, as opposed to being interpreted as the passive localization of activities (local context) in specific situations (national context) (Giddens 1984).[1]

In support of this position, we will analyze the experiences of two different groups of child care workers, in the same geo-political context (Quebec, following the introduction of the government's family policy in 1997), in search of actors, logics and levels of collective action which are different from those associated with traditional unionism and which could therefore help us to grasp emerging forms of unionism.

Quebec is an interesting case study in several ways. Indeed, although the rate of unionization in Quebec has levelled off in recent years, it remains much higher than elsewhere in North America (approximately 40%). Moreover, Quebec has seen the emergence of collective labour relations systems – based on the Wagner Act – which differ from the general system, the extension of the terms of collective agreements to non-unionized workers (a phenomenon which has nevertheless been in decline since the 1980s) and the implementation of a system of labour relations between self-employed workers in the arts sector (theatre artists, recording artists, cinema artists and multimedia artists) and producers. Lastly, it should be noted that the favoured locus for the development of childcare services in Quebec is the social economy firm rather than the for-profit firm or public organization. This important distinction partly explains the potential of unionism in this sector but also the challenges it faces in terms of renewal.

The empirical data will be drawn from previous work by Bellemare, Gravel, Briand & Vallée (2006). Bellemare et al. conducted 43 interviews with provincial and local representatives from the trade union confederations in the childcare sector, representatives from the two childcare associations, representatives from the Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance (MFE, ministry of family and childhood), and local childcare workers and managers.. D'Amours (2010) studied the logics of action of independent workers' associations, two of which were in the childcare sector, and conducted a questionnaire-based survey (forthcoming) on the aspirations for collective action of unionized home childcare providers (HCPs) affiliated with the *Centrale des syndicats du Québec* (CSQ, a major Quebec trade union confederation).

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[1] See Bellemare & Briand, 2011 for a detailed presentation of this proposed framework of analysis.

The unionization experiences of educators working in childcare centres (CCs) and home childcare providers (HCPs)

The development of childcare services in Quebec

In Quebec, until the late 1960s, childcare needs were met by family members, friends and neighbours. However, the growing number of women in the labour market meant that an increasing number of children were in need of childcare services and were often cared for in inadequate conditions. The first non-profit childcare centres emerged in 1966. Their funding was fragile and relied on parents' contributions and federal and provincial government funds. Government programs were created following an increase in public demand in the 1970s, but the funding remained insufficient. Some childcare centres closed down while others were forced to substantially increase parents' contributions, which reduced the accessibility of childcare services. Very often, the survival of a childcare centre hinged on the very poor working conditions of its workers and the volunteer participation of parents in maintenance tasks and activities with the children.

From 1980 to 1990, the funding situation changed little. A report drawn up in the late 1980s indicated that there was little social recognition for: (1) the work of childcare workers and (2) the collective responsibility for childcare services on the part of political leaders. Public subsidies mainly targeted low-income families; other taxpayers benefited from tax deductions. During this period, social action took the form of non-partisan political action which grew out of social movements led by unions and women's groups and brought together parents who stood in solidarity and shared a common understanding of the issues.

In 1994, there was a significant breakthrough when the Government of Quebec granted a subsidy linked directly to the wages of childcare centre workers. Until then, the government had been opposed to this idea, alleging that childcare centres were independent entities and that their wage policy came under the responsibility of their boards of administration. The election of a PQ government in 1995 led to the creation of a multi-stakeholder task force mandated with examining funding and the question of wages. The "March for Bread and Roses" organized by the women's movement in 1995 sped up the debate on the social economy, since one of the demands put forward specifically concerned childcare services. In 1996, a Quebec-wide Socio-Economic Summit was held, bringing together employers and unions (invited by the government) and, for the first time, several representatives from social movements (women's groups and social economy actors). The social economy was recognized as an alternative mode of economic activity in exchange for an agreement by the social actors on the government's pursuit of a zero deficit goal.

In September 1997, the government announced the creation of a network of childcare centres – social economy firms – and of the MFE. Each childcare centre was to care for children until they entered Kindergarten and set up a program fostering their development. The policy provided for a rapid increase

in the number of available childcare spaces, the gradual introduction of reduced-contribution childcare spaces, the accelerated introduction of part-time educational childcare and the provision of free childcare services for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The law provided for the participation of parents in the organization and running of childcare centres and these centres were given the responsibility to train the parents who would be sitting on their boards of directors. The CCs were given the mandate to set up educational services within the parameters established by the MFE and to provide other services to families: support, assistance and advice to parents, a variety of childcare services (drop-in, summer, evening, night, part-time), etc. The government would now fund 85% of the cost of each childcare space. Between 1997 and 2002, 88,064 new spaces were created, the MFE's budget was quadrupled (from $290 million to $1,025 billion), and the number of CC workers rose from 11,580 to 22,781. In 2011, over 214,000 spaces were available, distributed among more than 1000 CCs, over 600 subsidized private daycare centres, and almost 15,000 HCPs.

The provision of home childcare, which was legally recognized in 1979 and specifically regulated as of 1994, underwent a major transformation following this reform. In order to respond to the ever-growing demand for quality childcare services, the MFE included in its program educators providing home childcare who wished to offer reduced-contribution childcare spaces. Thus, some 15,000 HCPs provided approximately 120,000 additional spaces. The MFE gave the CCs the role of coordinating, overseeing and monitoring these educators, and this is when they began to be called "home childcare providers" (HCPs). The 1997 *Act respecting childcare centres and childcare services* thus integrated into the same network two different types of childcare (in childcare centres and home childcare), covering two different types of workers: educators employed by childcare centres and self-employed home childcare providers.

Table 2: Timescale of the development of childcare and the unionization process

	Social movements	**Public policy**	**Unionization of employees of CCs**	**Unionization of HCPs**
1966	Creation by parents (women's groups) of the first non-profit childcare centres			
1970			Together with the womens' movement, unions asked for the creation of a universal network of free government-funded childcare services	
1974		Program aimed at partially funding childcare services		
1979		Legal recognition of home childcare	First union certifications	
1994		Subsidy linked to the wages of childcare centre workers Regulation of home childcare		
1995	"March for Bread and Roses" organized by the women's movement			
1996		Socio-Economic Summit Recognition of social economy		

1997-1998		Quebec Family Policy Creation of a network of childcare centres offering reduced-contribution spaces (RCS) CCs were given the mandate to coordinate and monitor HCPs offering RCS	1998: the childcare unions demanded a sector-based central bargaining table, and made 3 main demands 1999: the gov't met unions' demands	Although considered to be self-employed, some HCPs approached union federations, asking to be considered as employees
2002-2003				Courts granted union certification to several groups of HCPs
2003		The gov't withdrew from HCPs their status as employees; this law was declared unconstitutional by the Superior Court in 2008		
2009		Creation of a distinctive collective labour relations system		
2011				Unionization campaign under the new labour relations system

The unionization of educators employed by childcare centres

During the 1970s, the trade union confederations joined the women's movement, the *Comité de liaison des garderies populaires*, and other citizens' groups and community organizations with the aim of inducing the Government of Quebec to recognize its collective responsibility in the area of childcare services. Within union organizations, the women's action committees, created during the 1970s, promoted the work-related and societal demands of women. These committees were very active in terms of helping the union confederations develop their positions and means of action with regard to childcare services.

The first demand was for the creation of a universal network of free government-funded childcare services. Women workers, together with the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux* (CSN, Confederation of National Trade

Unions) and the women's movement, came to the conclusion that unionization in this sector could act as an additional tool for consolidating the network and improving working conditions (Leclerc, 1986). The parties' aim was the creation of a provincial bargaining table where negotiations could take place with the government. More specifically, this coalition demanded that the government introduce direct subsidies to childcare centres rather than focusing exclusively on funding through assistance to parents.

This mobilization mainly entailed public awareness-raising campaigns, which involved publishing briefs, holding demonstrations, occupying government ministers' offices, and holding day-long Quebec-wide strikes demanding that the work of childcare workers be recognized. The participants in these strikes always included the workers and directors of childcare centres, and often parents and their children, as well as representatives from feminist organizations. This forced the Government of Quebec to set up a program aimed at partially funding childcare services as of 1974. These measures represented a first step toward the recognition of the government's responsibility with regard to childcare (Aubry, 2001). However, the insufficiency of government funding threatened the survival of many childcare centres which thus decided to group together in several regions in order to better support their demands.

During the 1990s, the coalition continued to make demands. While discussions concerning these demands were on-going, the awareness-raising campaign was making good progress and much of the public had become aware of the lack of recognition of childcare work due in particular to a publicity campaign in which the unions demonstrated that an educator working in a childcare centre earned two times less than a zookeeper responsible for looking after monkeys. This striking illustration of the systematic undervaluing of women's work united feminist and union demands. The government's repeated refusals on the question of funding led to a series of strikes, sometimes organized by the unions and sometimes by the parents, with each side supporting the strike activity launched by the other. On April 22, 1993, dozens of childcare centres participated in the North American strike by childcare centre workers. Several of these strikes also included parents and non-unionized childcare centre workers.

The election of a PQ government in 1995 signalled the possibility of an overhaul of childcare policy. The various feminist movements in Quebec organized a "Women's March" towards Quebec City on May 26, 1995 to demand that the government set up a program of "social infrastructures" that would lead to the creation of numerous jobs for women, protesting against the overly male-gendered nature of government investments which gave priority to road infrastructures and "concrete."

In 1996, the PQ government organized the Quebec Socio-Economic Summit which notably led to the recognition, by the government, of the importance of social economy firms. This recognition led the government to directly subsidize childcare sector wages while respecting the autonomous nature of individual childcare centres, governed by boards of directors. These gains established the

basis for the government's 1997 Childcare and Family Policy – which went well beyond the sole question of funding childcare services[2] – and the creation of the MFE, the network of subsidized childcare centres, and the related regulations. The childcare policy also provided for the participation of parents in the organization and running of childcare centres.

During the 1998 negotiations, the childcare unions demanded that a sector-based central bargaining table be set up. This table would bring together the unions, the MFE, and the two provincial childcare associations (*Concertaction* and the *Fédération provinciale des garderies*, which have since merged). These latter two entities had grown out of regional childcare associations and were made up of representatives from the boards of directors of childcare centres which were in turn made up of parents and childcare centre workers. They made three demands: (1) a significant wage adjustment and the introduction of a single wage scale for all childcare centres in the network; (2) the creation of a sector-based wage parity committee; and (3) the creation of a committee with the mandate to set up a pension plan for childcare centre workers (Aubry, 2001).

On May 20, 1999, the government met the educators' demands. The agreement provided for average wage raises of 35% over four years for all *unionized and non-unionized* childcare centre workers and for educators working in for-profit childcare centres, as well as an increase in the amount paid to home childcare providers (Lalonde-Gratton, 2002). This was an anomaly in the North American labour relations system which normally limits the scope of negotiated agreements to unionized workers and establishments only.[3] In this case, the main monetary content of the negotiated collective agreements (wages, benefits, insurance, pension, vacation and leave) was extended to non-unionized workers. Lastly, the agreement provided for the creation of working committees to discuss the introduction of a pension plan and pay equity plan which would be subject to future negotiations. The success of these union initiatives and the extension of the monetary content of the agreements to non-unionized workers led to a second wave of unionization, with the result that the rate of unionization in this sector currently stands at over 25%, or five times higher than that in other sectors of the social economy.

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[2] As stated by Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard on January 23, 1997, when he was presenting the White Paper on Family Policy, "The new provisions for family policy of the Government of Quebec are in line with several of the government's major goals, that is, to combat poverty, ensure equal opportunity, develop the social economy, integrate social assistance recipients into the labour market, and increase support for parents who are already employed. In addition to being central to the government's strategy, these provisions consolidate the most fundamental values of our society: the importance of family and love of children" *(trans).*

[3] While successive governments in Québec put an end to most of the collective agreement decrees and deregulated labour relations, the agreement in the childcare sector revived the extension of working conditions to non-unionized workers, not under the Act respecting collective agreement decrees, but rather through the adoption of a ministerial regulation to this effect.

The unionization of home childcare providers (HCPs)

The major reform that took place in 1997, which consolidated the network of childcare centres and supported it, in particular, by creating reduced-contribution childcare spaces, also had a dramatic impact on home childcare services, which until then had been provided by self-employed workers who could freely choose the parameters of their work, while being subject to regulations aimed at ensuring the respect of quality standards. From 1997 onwards, not only were several elements of their service delivery (in particular, the fees they could charge and their hours of operation) now determined by the law or regulations but, also, the CCs were given the mandate to coordinate, oversee and monitor their services. This led to the emergence of two competing organizations, which each claimed to represent homecare providers (HCPs) but which embraced opposing logics: one sought to regain the lost autonomy of HCPs, while the other sought to have HCPs recognized as employees and give them access to unionization.

The *Association des éducatrices en milieu familial du Québec* (AEMFQ, Quebec association of educators providing home childcare) aimed to gain recognition of the status as self-employed workers of educators providing home childcare while improving the conditions surrounding their work. Thus, the main terms advocated by the AEMFQ concerned this recognition as well as a more limited, strictly administrative, control by a coordinating body that would deal specifically with home childcare. The AEMFQ supported the *Act to amend the Act respecting childcare centres and childcare services*, which gave HCPs the status of service providers as defined in the Civil Code, or self-employed workers. It also supported the principle behind the reform of 2005, which gave the coordinating offices more limited power than that which had formerly been given to the CCs, that is, their role no longer involved overseeing home childcare providers but rather coordinating and monitoring their services (as prescribed by law) and providing pedagogical support (when requested).

The *Alliances des intervenantes en milieu familial* (ADIMs, home childcare workers' alliances) were also formed following the *Act respecting childcare centres and childcare services*. Aside from the concerns raised by the reform of childcare services, two other developments, which arose in 1998, led to the emergence of this association of alliances: the revocation by CCs of some HCPs' work permits and the MFE's intention to no longer pay these workers for statutory holidays, citing as a reason their status as self-employed workers. It is interesting to note that when these HCPs first approached the CSQ, they were not familiar with union culture (referring to themselves, moreover, as an "alliance" rather than a "union") and that, at the beginning, their status as self-employed workers did not appear problematic to them. It was the way the government used this status, citing it as a reason not to improve their working conditions, which pushed them to embrace the idea of unionization. For example, the impossibility for pregnant or breastfeeding HCPs to take advantage of preventive withdrawal, which educators employed by CCs could

do, became a key issue and a powerful symbol of the unfair working conditions which applied to home childcare providers.

The union organizations first put pressure on the legislator to allow these "hybrid" workers (legally self-employed but economically integrated into a network that controlled major parts of their service delivery) to be considered as employees.[4] In 2002 and 2003, after the legislator had rejected this proposal, several groups of HCPs (some affiliated with the CSQ and others with the CSN) filed dozens of applications for union certification under the Labour Code. Giving these workers the status of employees, the labour commissioner granted them certification. These decisions, which were first confirmed by the Labour Court, were then appealed before the Superior Court of Quebec. However, without waiting for the court's decision, in December 2003, the Government of Quebec adopted the *Act to amend the Act respecting childcare centres and childcare services*, which effectively withdrew from HCPs their status as employees. In the fall of 2008, the Superior Court of Quebec declared this law unconstitutional because it violated the right to freedom of association and the right to equality.

After the Superior Court decision, the Government of Quebec had to offer HCPs a form of recognition of their right to freedom of association. To this end, it created a distinctive system, outside of the general system provided for in the Labour Code, which gave the 15,000 HCPs the status of self-employed workers and set up a separate collective bargaining system for them. The *Act respecting the representation of certain home childcare providers and the negotiation process for their group agreements* which created this system, stipulated the subjects covered in a group agreement which were limited to the following elements: "the subsidy granted to fund educational home childcare and to give home childcare providers access to programs and services that meet their needs, in particular with regard to plans in such areas as employment benefits, health, safety, training and professional development, the terms and conditions applicable to days of leave, the procedure for settling disagreements, and the indemnification for losses sustained as a result of a suspension, revocation or non-renewal of recognition."

Analysis and Discussion

A coalition, created some 30 years ago, between unions affiliated with two "competing" union confederations, women's movements and parents' associations, succeeded in bringing about the creation of a universal network of financially accessible quality childcare services, which also constituted a powerful symbol of the recognition of women's work, that is, the work of both the users of this network and its workers. This case empirically shows how

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[4] This possibility exists under the Canada Labour Code which considers a "dependent contractor" to be an employee. The union organizations demanded that the Quebec Labour Code do likewise, but in vain.

union action can still act as the impetus behind a social movement with the power to force the government to adopt far-reaching social policy measures (social unionism) and succeed in bringing together workers whose profile is quite different from that of the typical unionized worker. In the following pages, we will highlight three specific characteristics of this movement.

The first characteristic is that it involved a struggle which was marked from the outset by a multiplicity of actors (women's movement, social economy) and which, through the identities it mobilized and the alliances it created, influenced the demands put forward by the unions. In this struggle, the unions had to modify the way they dealt with their partners and come to terms with two realities that were relatively new to them: the feminist movement, including feminist approaches to management, and the social economy. These realities, in fact, were behind the actors involved here, who made demands that differed from the usual union demands. This had an important impact on the mode of governance which prevailed in daycare services, as well as on the level at which negotiations were held.

In the early 1980s, divisions arose between the representatives of union organizations, regional unions representing childcare centre workers and childcare associations. Representatives from the union confederations feared the development of low-cost subcontracting to social economy firms. This is why they clearly favoured public ownership of childcare centres. It was not until the Socio-Economic Summit of 1996 that many of the unions' fears in this regard were eased.

Later on, differences emerged regarding which levels of negotiation to favour. Some unions preferred to join the Common Front of public and parapublic sector workers formed by the CSN, the CSQ and the *Fédération des travailleurs du Québec* (Quebec's federation of labour, FTQ). They saw this as the best way to force the government to recognize its responsibility to fund childcare centres.

Other unions advocated focusing on union action that would ensure that the control of childcare centres remained in the hands of parents, while also involving childcare workers. These unions and parents' associations felt that any unionization that would seek to integrate childcare centre workers into the state was therefore not an option. They believed that joining the Common Front would necessarily lead to state control over the network of childcare centres and to the loss of the co-management of the organization of childcare services by parents and childcare centre workers, and ultimately pit parents against these workers. Although the latter endorsed the goal of inducing the government to recognize its responsibility to fund childcare services, they strongly defended the idea that it was up to the childcare centres' autonomous boards of directors, made up of parents and childcare workers, to manage the funds granted. The "co-management" option thus implied a redefinition of the government's role in its relations with social groups (Leclerc, 1986) and suggested the development of a new union practice.

Despite these differences, most of the childcare unions agreed to join the Common Front of public sector workers, which was given the mandate to demand the integration of childcare centre workers into the state. Faced with the fears raised by this option, the CSN attempted to reassure those who were skeptical by asserting that unionization would be carried out in such a way as to ensure that the relations between childcare centre workers and parents would not be affected. On the contrary, it was convinced that unionization would create a common front through which parents and childcare workers could put pressure on the government (Lalonde-Gratton, 2002).

However, the negotiations within the Common Front were not highly productive. Childcare policy did not move forward and subsidies to childcare centres remained low. In fact, due to inflation, the wage conditions of childcare workers deteriorated. In this context, it became more difficult to maintain the mobilization of stakeholders and keep up the pressure on the government. As of 1988, most childcare unions decided to discontinue their participation in the negotiations led by the Common Front. They chose instead to send their wage demands directly to the newly created bargaining table which allowed them to negotiate with the *Office des services de garde à l'enfance.* This decision led to some tensions; however, the regions that would have preferred to maintain their affiliation with the public sector rallied to the majority decision in the end.

Furthermore, parents, who had participated since the beginning in the struggle for the development of an accessible network of childcare services, wanted to be associated with the co-management of childcare centres without, however, being considered to be the employers of childcare workers. As one provincial representative of the CCs explained, "the government tried to convince the provincial parents' associations to become an employer body, which we always refused. We want to be associated with negotiations at the provincial level, but not on this basis. The MFE and the Conseil du Trésor [Quebec treasury board] are the employer body. We've fought for a long time to get them to take on this responsibility and we aren't going to go back on it now" (trans.). This is why a representative from the MFE was sitting at the central bargaining table in 1999, but not as the employer. Nevertheless, since the MFE was the main funder, its representative had the mandate to "make sure the MFE would be able to foot the bill" (interview with an MFE representative, trans.). However, these roles later became less ambiguous, according to the CSQ, which asserted that the CC associations went from being "pressure groups to becoming mouthpieces for the MFE" (interview with a CSQ representative). Since this time, the employer body at negotiations has been centralized to the provincial level and integrated into the services provided by the *Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance* (AQCPE, Quebec association of childcare centres). The location and role of this employer body continue to be the subject of debate within the AQCPE today.

The second characteristic refers to the fact that, through this experience, the union organizations recruited members outside the ranks of their traditional membership, reaching out to women whose status was that of self-employed

workers working in their own homes. Moreover, these women had multiple logics of action – that had to be taken into account in the union action taken – which also marked the demands put forward.

Associations of educators providing home childcare existed before 1997 but it was the reform of 1997 – which made them "hybrid" workers (legally self-employed but economically integrated into a network that controlled major parts of their service delivery) – that truly transformed these associations into actors. Two logics of action clashed: an entrepreneurial logic which mobilized their identity as self-employed workers who were "masters in their own homes" and a union logic demanding wages and social security provisions equivalent to those of employees of CCs, while maintaining some significant room to manoeuvre, in particular, the right to choose both their clientele and the individuals who would replace or assist them.

Thus, the logic behind the collective action taken by the AEMFQ has been described as being "entrepreneurial" (D'Amours, 2010), that is, the HCPs saw themselves as entrepreneurs who were demanding full and complete autonomy and aimed to limit or modify the controls over them. In addition, the context of this "enterprise" was the family home. This, moreover, is what led the AEMFQ to specify that the "provision of services" could differ from one enterprise to another, in particular because the educators had to take into account their own families' needs. The AEMFQ demanded the adoption of measures that would increase the autonomy of its members (in particular, the right to be replaced occasionally and not to apply the pedagogical program), as well as less restrictive standards than those applied in CCs. As for their working conditions, the AEMFQ put forward demands related to fee increases, but not to social security. In fact, this association considered that it was up to each educator to take care of these matters herself, and to choose, among a range of social security options, those that met her needs.

The action taken by the ADIMs was, for its part, marked by "traditional union logic" in the sense that this association of alliances considered HCPs to be workers, and demanded standardized working conditions and equal wages to other workers in this sector, while seeking to broaden the statutory definition of employee. The action taken by the ADIMs consisted in extending labour law protection, including the freedom of association, to as many workers as possible. Union organizations in Quebec fought to have the Labour Code's definition of employee broadened to include dependent contractors, that is, individuals who own or rent their equipment and work tools but who are economically dependent on their contract giver (CSN), or former employees who have been turned into "self-employed workers" by their employer (FTQ) (in El Filali & Denis, 2004). As seen above, these alliances did not succeed in this regard. Moreover, they supported the organization of legally independent workers for whom the conditions surrounding their work had changed to the point where it was hoped that they could be reclassified as employees under current laws. The union organizations did not succeed in obtaining this reclassification for HCPs, among others, because, while the workers concerned

showed several characteristics that were similar to those of employees, they also shared some of the prerogatives enjoyed by self-employed workers. In this respect, it is interesting to note that HCPs, who cared for children in their homes, insisted on maintaining the possibility, specific to self-employed workers, of choosing their clientele, and, when applicable, the person assisting them or replacing them when they were sick. Moreover, they succeeded in having a professional autonomy clause included in their collective agreements, which gave them this prerogative.

The third and last characteristic refers to the results of the union action taken, namely, not only a significant improvement in working conditions – albeit to a different extent in each of the two cases – but also the implementation of a far-reaching social policy and the creation of specific rules pertaining to the negotiation of working conditions and their subsequent extension to non-unionized workers.

Initially launched by a social movement demanding recognition of the government's responsibility with regard to childcare, the process of unionization contributed to the development of a network of quality childcare services but in which the organizations and actors remained autonomous. The establishment of this network and the resulting improvement in the working conditions of childcare workers made it possible to launch a second wave of unionization. In fact, the number of workers in this network doubled between 1997 and 2001, and the rate of unionization went up to almost 25% of CCs (CSQ, 2002). Moreover, the establishment of the network of CCs led to the association – indeed to the unionization – of educators providing home childcare, considered to be self-employed workers, a category of workers historically excluded from the possibility of collectively bargaining their working conditions. The Act respecting the representation of certain home childcare providers and the negotiation process for their group agreements, adopted in June 2009, set up a sector-based system for the negotiation of collective agreements for HCPs. However, the subject matters that could be negotiated were strictly limited by the law and the status of self-employed worker imposed by it still excludes HCPs from the field of application of the *Act respecting labour standards* and the *Pay Equity Act.*

The union organizations with which the ADIMs were affiliated, that is, the CSN and especially the CSQ, succeeded in bringing together the vast majority of HCPs and led negotiations to conclude the first collective agreements, signed in 2011. As was the case for educators working in childcare centres, these negotiations involved the Ministère de la Famille and the associations representing HCPs by territory. They took up the model used by the CCs such that the content of the signed agreement for each territory applies to all current and future HCPs in the said territory. In total, 100% of educators providing subsidized home childcare, unionized or not, are now covered by collective agreements which have improved their working conditions. Although the subject matters covered by the group agreements are quite limited, main

improvements have been gained with regard to leave, vacation and the contribution to employee benefit plans.

Table 3: Synthesis of relevant actors, logics / levels of action and results

	Child care employees	**Homecare providers**	
Actors	Women's movement, citizens groups, community organizations, trade unions (women workers)	"Traditional" self-employed workers' associations (AEMFQ)	HCPs joined trade unions (ADIM)
Demands	Creation of a universal network of free government-funded childcare services (direct subsidies to CCs) Unionization as a tool to improve working conditions	Recognition of HCPs' status as self-employed workers	Working conditions and pay equivalent to those of workers in childcare centres; full coverage by the labour laws
Logics of action	Union	Entrepreneurial	Union
Level of action	Local/sector/national, evolving through social relations	Sector	Territory/sector
Results: working conditions	Wage raises; benefits; working committees to discuss pension plans and pay equity		Subsidy raise; contributions to collective insurance; statutory holidays and vacation leave
Results: rules	Sector-based central bargaining table Main monetary content of the negotiated collective agreements extended to non-unionized workers		Sector-based collective bargaining involving self-employed workers Main content of the negotiated collective agreements extended to non-unionized HCPs

Conclusion

It was difficult for the unions to accept the development of social economy firms, which they had long associated with the low-cost subcontracting, by the government, of public or would-be public services. As was the case for the government, it took them time to understand and come to accept the practice of co-management by parents and childcare workers within the kind of flat organizational structure that this type of enterprise implies. The union action taken by educators working in childcare centres was certainly not linear and their logic of action derived from various allegiances – traditional union, social movements, occupational. This logic was nevertheless stamped by a strong identity (that of women) and persistent demands (recognition of their work but also the fight to combat poverty, ensure equal opportunity and integrate social assistance recipients into the labour market), and it led to the adoption of different rules (network forum, extending conditions to non-unionized educators). In the case of HCPs, the union logic took precedence over the entrepreneurial logic and their collective action led to the creation of a sector-based system which allows self-employed workers to collectively bargain their working conditions, a measure which is quite exceptional in North America.

Throughout this article, we have suggested that the crisis of unionism is less serious than it might seem. Unionization experiences in the childcare sector have shown that collective action continues to be taken but that, because of the transformations that are taking place in the world of work, this action is increasingly moving away from its traditional basis – one firm, one employer, employees forming a union within a defined regulatory framework. What these experiences reveal, in particular, is that present-day union action is moving away from the traditional union logic which focused on defending certain human rights and freedoms (freedom from inequality and exploitation, the promotion of justice and equality) or emancipation politics (Giddens 1991), and that it is moving closer to identity issues and demands that are more closely associated with the political domain affecting workers' lives and their life choices (life politics, Giddens, 1991). Emerging forms of unionism involve new actors (women's movements and parents' associations, social economy movement) and various levels of action (sectoral, territorial), in a broader definition of the boundaries of work (not limited to salaried work). They have led to a number of gains in terms of wages, benefits and working conditions, extended to non-unionized workers, and to the development of a network of quality childcare services, in which the organizations and actors remain autonomous.

Taking account of the various issues and actors involved as well as the struggles related to emancipation politics and life politics represents both a challenge and an important developmental path for unionism. In order to grasp this opportunity, however, union organizations must recognize the autonomy for action of social movements and organizations working to defend the rights of minorities and non-salaried workers and stop pressing these actors to support unions and join causes that are foreign to them. Workers' rights can be

defended through alliances with other types of human rights organizations and outside regular labour legislation, as illustrated by Heery et al. (2012).

The two cases studied here also demonstrate that the extension to non-unionized workers of major sections or the entire content of collective agreements does not constitute a brake on unionization. On the contrary, in both cases, this extension, under different legal mechanisms (a regulation and a law) was followed by a second wave of unionization. Further research is needed to explain this situation. In addition to the traditional business unionism theory according to which unions attract members through their ability to negotiate advantageous working conditions for their own members only, another hypothesis should be tested, that is, that it was the political pertinence of the struggle, combined with the improvement of working conditions and the social transformation of class and gender relations which led to the revival of unionism in these cases.

Another avenue for union action which could be explored pertains to the logic of action, and more specifically, the types of identity discourse mobilized by these actors. Apart from the class and gender identities mentioned above, our study showed that the boundaries between the "public" and "private" spheres, which are closely related to these identities, are also being challenged: "private" in the sense of "domestic," obliging the state to recognize home childcare providers' status as "workers" and acknowledge that childcare is a public concern. It should not be forgotten that, for a long time, the state insisted that childcare was strictly the private responsibility of parents, and that childcare could be supported through tax credits for parents. However, the investment it made in these fiscal measures was limited, forcing many mothers to stay at home. Interestingly, this same type of narrative can be heard in other major sectors which are experiencing strong growth, such as homecare for the sick or elderly. Seen as a private concern by many states, this sector mainly involves volunteer work on the part of women (mothers, wives, daughters). This sector also contitutes a potential private capitalist market and a union issue. Indeed, there is a growing need for quality homecare services and the workforce will be in need of protection. Can unionism find inspiration in the case of unionization in the childcare sector and the type of social struggles presented above in order to put forward proposals and actions aimed at a far-reaching transformation of social and political practices in this sector? The creation of a large coalition between unions, feminists, seniors' advocacy groups, and social economy actors would make it possible to put forward alternative proposals related to the development of services, social economy firms, intergenerational relations, and decent working conditions.

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About the authors

Dr. **Martine D'Amours** is a Professor of industrial relations and sociology of work in the Industrial Relations Department of Université Laval. Her research focuses on non-standard employment, especially new forms of self-employment, and the challenges for social protection and collective representation of these workers. She can be contacted at Martine.Damours AT rlt.ulaval.ca.

Dr. **Guy Bellemare** is a Professor of industrial relations and sociology of work in the Industrial Relations Department at the Université du Québec en Outaouais, Gatineau, Québec. His research focuses on social innovation in the workplace with a particular emphasis on work carried out in social economy enterprises and public sector organizations. He also works on revitalizing theories related to the field of industrial relations. He can be contacted at guy.bellemare AT uqo.ca.

Dr. **Louise Briand** is a Professor in the Accounting Department at the Université du Québec en Outaouais (Québec, Canada). Her main research focus is on management control and inter-organizational surveillance and their evolution. She can be contacted at louise.briand AT uqo.ca.

All three of them are members of the Centre de recherche sur les innovations socials-CRISES (Research Center on Social Innovations).

"Inspire and conspire":
Italian precarious workers between
self-organization and self-advocacy[1]

Annalisa Murgia and Giulia Selmi[2]

Abstract

The scenario we see today in the labor market in Italy is composed of a progressive proliferation of non-standard contracts. This involves first and foremost a problem of citizenship and welfare, due to the lower or almost non-existent possibility of access to social rights associated with these types of contracts. Faced with this situation, over the last ten years, Italy has seen the emergence of a complex social movement to counter precariousness. This movement at first concentrated its efforts in the rewriting of the symbolic vocabulary and imagination at work, in an attempt to consolidate the precarious as a collective subjectivity beyond its traditional representations. In recent years, however, this process of "self-representation" in terms of a collective narrative is matched by a process of "self-advocacy": an effective self-organization of temporary workers to handle the conflict in the workplace. In a scenario of no confidence in political parties and trade unions in addressing the issue of precariousness, these movements refuse the delegation of the conflict, promoting instead a modality of action based on the organizational form of the network, sharing knowledge and direct representation. This paper explores two particular movement experiences in the Italian context.

Introduction

Research on the transformations of contemporary work has long emphasized the development of new forms of work and social organization in advanced capitalist countries. In Italy, as elsewhere in Western countries, some of the key elements of stability that characterized work have been called into question: times and places; forms of contract (jobs today are increasingly part-time, temporary, on-call or pseudo-freelance); salary; career paths, protections and

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[1] The present article is a totally collaborative effort by the two authors, whose names appear in alphabetical order. If, however, individual responsibility is to be assigned for academic purposes, Annalisa Murgia wrote the introduction, Section 1 and the conclusion; Giulia Selmi wrote Sections 2, 2.1 and 2.2.

[2] "Inspire-conspire" is the title of a campaign promoted by the San Precario movement, begun in 2006, against precariousness in the fashion world. "Take force inspiring, breathe it out conspiring and kicking against a reality that claims that you're alone, isolated, unable to exchange, share, mix, reshape everything that surrounds you". Available at: http://www.chainworkers.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=SerpicaNaro.DocumentoPolitico

rights connected to the work contract and, finally, the forms of representation. We have witnessed a progressive proliferation of temporary contracts marked by instability both of income and employment together with a serious uncertainty due to the lack of adequate protections in terms of continuity of wage, social security and so on. These different contractual forms were complemented with traditional employment contracts and open-ended contracts whose regulation did not undergo any change and which continue to be associated with full access to the welfare state. Consequently, in Italy, the real problem concerning precarious occupations is first a problem of welfare, or it has to do with the lesser or absent possibility for precarious workers to access social protection (Cimaglia, Corbisiero and Rizza, 2009; Palidda, 2009).

The discontinuity of employment and income thus put the need to establish forms of protection to assist precarious workers and reconstruct the various temporary jobs (both dependent and independent) at the center of the debate. In order to address these issues, trade unions partially reviewed their traditional practices of representation. Given their increasing inability to be the bearer of the rights of homogeneous social subjects and their widespread interests (Carrieri, 2003; Ballarino, 2005; Regalia, 2009), they tried to open collective bargaining to the so-called atypical jobs (Ballarino and Pedersini, 2005; Cella, 2005; Pedersini, 2005; Regalia, 2005; Lazzari, 2006). However, up to date, none of the major trade unions managed to find neither new ways of gathering this new typology of workers nor new forms of bargaining that would allow to take responsibility for issues of workers with temporary contracts. According to the Country EIRO Report on "Flexicurity and industrial relations" (Madama and Coletto, 2009), all solutions concerning the extension of social security to temporary workers are rather fragmented. Overall, it appears that the government and trade unions as well as employer organizations have not been interested in such a debate.

So how is it possible to overcome the difficulties of organizing and representing individuals who, due to the unstable and dispersed (by category and area) features of their jobs, are struggling to build capacity for conflict and to express a power of alliance? Is it possible to try out cooperative and conflictual forms of action despite the apparent "non-organizable" feature of this precarious universe? Can a "precarious conspiracy" – as some Italian activists defined it – be possible outside the traditional union rules?

After a brief review of the issues related to the proliferation of atypical contracts and entry barriers to the welfare state, we will discuss the current configuration of the Italian movement against precariousness in relation to the crisis of representation of the traditional trade unions through the analysis of two emblematic cases of non-standard workers' self-organized movements in the metropolitan context of Lombardy.

We were invisible and we showed ourselves, we were unrepresentable and we self-represented

For several years, numerous studies on the Italian labor market have pointed out that in Italy the "hard core" is still represented by "standard" work, or permanent and full-time dependent contracts (18 million compared to 5 million of part-time and atypical contracts). However, over 60% of newcomers are currently on short term contracts, which means less security in terms of future perspectives of employment and career opportunities, a lower level of protection (in case of sickness, unemployment, maternity, so on), little or no job training and low wages. Besides, the average age of atypical workers is rapidly rising and almost half of those who work under atypical contracts have completed at least ten years of work experience (ISTAT, 2008; Murgia, 2010; Villa, 2010).

The introduction of the so-called non-standard jobs - due to the labor reforms of 1997 and 2003 - undoubtedly resulted in a series of advantages for companies that now can establish more elastic and flexible relations with workers, having the opportunity in some cases to "test" new hires, and - more frequently - to recruit staff for limited periods of time. However, it largely failed its stated goals: it didn't contribute to the reduction of the gender and generation gaps in the labor market while launching a further process of market segmentation and, as a result, of occupational segregation, to the detriment especially of youth and women (Berton, Richiardi and Sacchi, 2009; Villa, 2010).

Nor has the recent law (2012) promoted by Elsa Fornero – the current Minister of Labor – brought substantial changes, although it introduces some correctives in regard to the indiscriminate use of project contracts and better regulation of apprenticeships. It has not intervened on the wide range of temporary contractual forms still in effect, and it has not introduced any form of universal protection in the case of job loss, even less an income continuity scheme. The effects of precarious employment persist to be particularly negative on young workers (53% of all precarious workers are under 35 years of age), as difficult early experiences of transition into work are likely to be associated with deterioration in long-term life chances ("scarring effect") (Samek, Semenza, 2012). Moreover, people not in education, employment or training – NEET people – have reached a figure of 2.1 million in Italy, or 22,1% (vs 15,3% in Europe; ISTAT, 2012). The current situation that young people are experiencing in the Italian labor market, in fact, forced them to the inactivity by a process of "discouragement": they don't even look for a job, because they are aware that it is useless (Carrera, 2012).

Therefore, the new scenarios of work have obliged us to redefine the traditional interpretative categories constructed around work understood in term of a permanent and dependent job (Casey, 1995; Sennett, 1998; Beck, 1999). In the increasingly globalised and interconnected contemporary societies, a profound change – to which information communication technologies have largely contributed – is apparent not only in the nature of work but also in social relationships in all the life spheres (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Morini and Fumagalli, 2010). In a context like this, characterized by heterogeneous and

constantly changing situations, the images and meanings attributed to work are redefined as people constantly move among jobs and oscillate between employment and unemployment, between training and work, thus giving rise to new professional pathways and, in general, to new life-stories. What changes in this scenario is not only the geography of the world of work but also the different forms of social vulnerability incorporated it (Castel, 1995; Chicchi, 2001; Fumagalli, 2011).

These economic and social transformations contribute to the elaboration of a new representation of precariousness, which is much broader than the debate about the so-called atypical work, it overflows and extends into self and dependent employees, and it occurs as an existential condition that concerns young people, women and migrants, underserved populations, only barely protected by a welfare patterned on a Fordist world (Standing, 2011; Armano and Murgia, 2012). This raises the process of individualization that profoundly imbues contemporary society. This individualization has been subject to evident tensions – within the world of work – between projects for emancipation and self-fulfillment, on the one hand, and re-interpretation of the job through private experience on the other, in continuous oscillation between autonomy and subordination, and between old and new forms of (self)organization by workers (Gherardi and Murgia, forthcoming 2012).

In this picture, the growing apart of the structure of the labor market and the welfare state gave rise to a gap, growing over the years, between those with full guarantees acknowledged, and those who work with temporary contracts with reduced access to social rights. In this sense, the problem concerns not so much the labor market flexibility itself, but the lack of rights and of support for the periods between one job and another. More generally, this implies that the possibilities to practically acquire full citizenship are limited since - de jure or de facto (because of the brevity of contracts and/or the fear of a non-renewal of the contract) – people cannot (or can only partially) access the social protections granted to permanent employees (Samek and Semenza, 2008; Cimaglia, Corbisiero and Rizza, 2009; Berton, Richiardi and Sacchi, 2009).

Despite the high rate of stillborn enterprises and progressive discontinuity of employment in Italy, access to social protection for workers is still largely based on dependent work for which the Italian labor system recognizes certain rights and protections whereby people acquire a certain status and social citizenship. The spread of more frequent professional transitions and more fragmented careers was not matched with a redefinition of the forms of social protection and models of representation. In particular, with regard to the forms of representation, the new, flexible type of jobs had a decisive influence on the rate of unionisation, especially because bringing together workers with short-term contracts into a network of representation would require unions to renew their ability to provide answers to their questions, that are partially different, more difficult and heterogeneous than those of standard workers.

Since the late 1990s, the three main national confederal unions – CGIL, CISL and UIL – have sought to respond to the growth of atypical work and its lack of

representation with the creation of representative organisations for workers employed on atypical contracts. Membership in these organisations extends to all workers that can be defined as independent, quasi-dependent, or on fixed-term contracts, regardless of the sector and profession to which they belong. Yet we must face the fact that the trade unions no longer perform a cohesive social function based on traditional identity mechanisms, and they encounter great difficulties in aggregating and organizing non-standard workers. The heterogeneous nature of these workers not only makes any kind of collective action difficult, but also – in the case of "atypical" trade union organizations (e.g. NIDIL, FELSA and CPO) – means that these are not well-rooted in the work contexts of the rank and file that they wish to represent, owing above all to the temporary nature of employment relationships and the fragmentation of collective agreements (Ballarino, 2005; Bellardi, 2005).

This is the reason why the (few) successful actions of Italian unions in this field usually took place at company level where there were particularly large numbers of workers on temporary employment contracts, often hired on the basis of improper contractual arrangements, for instance freelancers instead of dependent employees – the typical situation in several Italian call centres. The negotiations aimed in these cases to improve working conditions and to reclaim a procedure of stabilization of temporary workers (Galetto, 2010). In most cases the trade unions therefore intervened on the issue of atypical work on one side with initiatives aimed at furnishing information on job stabilization procedures and at rights associated with temporary contracts; on the other hand, through the submission of legislative proposals on the recruitment of temporary workers (see in this regard the campaigns "Campagna di stabilizzazione 2008" by Nidil and the campaign "Assunti davvero" by grassroots trade unions).

On the contrary, in cases where there is not a large number of temporary workers, the unions are rarely able to obtain new rights for atypical work. It should be said that access to a right in the workplace – even in the case where the right exists – should not to be taken for granted for a temporary worker, whose contract renewal is totally at the discretion of the employer. Having a short-term contract makes precarious workers easy to blackmail and often holds back those who would like to participate in union activities. In situations where there is a high turnover and contracts are short, it is particularly difficult for unions to intercept the workers and to promote joint actions. For those who daily experience professional instability it is therefore difficult, to benefit of existing legal protections against the risks associated with the intermittency of employment by means of collective institutionalized actions.

Italian industrial relations scholars initially debated the fact that unions' political action was excessively focused on the work of insiders, excluding those considered outsiders due to the type of contract (Accornero, 1992; Regalia, 2000; Regini, 2003). Later, the focus shifted to the concepts of representation and representativeness of trade unions, considering the changes of the labor market and the diversification of the workforce (Fasoli, Cella and Carrera, 2005; Galetto, 2010). Researches focused then on those organizational and regulatory

forms of trade union actions aimed at representing atypical workers. However, given the poor results gained by the unions dedicated to the protection of the rights of precarious workers, it seems interesting to explore new and "bottom-up" ways of organizing recently experienced in some areas of the country, in line of discontinuity with the practices of confederal unions.

Alongside more traditional practices of union representation, in recent years new forms of challenge based on networks of actions, people and practices bottom-up arose. Among them, the first and particularly significant is the May Day Parade – a parade of precarious workers held every first May in many Italian and European cities – which has transformed the traditional Labor Day into an opportunity for visibility and conflict on the issue of precariousness through ironic and subversive forms of communication (Mattoni, 2012).

This movement initially concentrated its efforts in the rewriting of the symbolic vocabulary and imaginary on labor in the attempt to consolidate the precarious workers as a collective subjectivity beyond its traditional representations. In recent years, however, this process of symbolic "self-representation" is supported by a process of actual "self-advocacy" in which these activists tried to experiment with forms of cooperative action and conflict beyond the apparent "impossibility to organize" the precarious universe.

In this sense, this movement differs from the traditional trade union action in at least two factors: first, activists and especially young people, women and the "cognitariat"[3] have taken the form of precarious self-representation as a precondition to become a political subject, refusing to accept intermediate forms of organization as "interpreters" of their issue in more or less institutionalized areas of the political arena. Second, while the unions deal primarily with labor rights, demanding more guarantees for their patrons, or for all workers (according to whether they belong to an associative or general union), this movement developed demands for greater rights, which are connected not only to the working sphere, but more generally to the life paths of individuals.

In such a scenario of lack of confidence in political parties and trade unions in dealing with the issue of precariousness, these social movement actors reject the delegation of conflict, promoting instead modes of action based on the organizational form of the network, the sharing of knowledge and the direct representation in continuity with the so-called global justice movement born in Seattle in 1999, with whom they share the same political roots.

In the next section two cases of self-organization of temporary workers in the metropolitan territory of Lombardy will be discussed. They differ from one another in three main elements: the type of work (high skilled service industry vs. "poor" service industry), the relationship with traditional trade union organizations (collaboration, albeit conflictual, in the first case; sharp contrast,

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[3] What has been defined by Franco Bifo Berardi (2001) the new "virtual class" of the labor market, the "cognitive proletariat".

in the second) and the form of self-organization (whether or not related to the workplace). From a methodological point of view, this contribution is based on the analysis of the paper-based and web-based documents, performance and political actions carried out by the activists of the San Precario Network from 2002 to 2011. Moreover, we identify ourselves as activists and precarious workers. So our reflections in this article come also from our personal and political experience within the Italian movement against precarity.

From self-representation to self-advocacy:
the San Precario Network

The groups of precarious workers constituting the San Precario Network, as well as the Saint himself, are not new in the debate on precariousness. However, as already mentioned, academic attention focused mainly on communicative, iconographic and symbolic aspects of this movement (Bruni and Murgia, 2007; Mattoni, 2008; Bruni and Selmi, 2010). The first noteworthy element of this network, was its ability to create a new symbolic language capable of representing the experience of precariousness outside the traditional narratives on labor. In a framework of contractual fragmentation, deep blackmail and invisibility in the public space, these forms of self-representation – from the May Day Parade to the creation of the icon of San Precario up to the project "Imbattibili"[4] - contributed to legitimize "precarious workers" as a political subjectivity in the social and political debate and gave them a language through which to represent their experiences and the fight for their rights. Early in the new millennium, the dominant narrative on precariousness was aimed at minimizing, if not completely denying, the wild deregulation of the labor market and the consequent loss of labor and welfare rights carried out at precarious workers' own expenses. Within this frame, the Italian activists against precarity were able to politically legitimize the precarious subjectivity in the public debate and to claim different labor politics focused on a new idea of welfare state and citizenship rights.

In contrast, in this article we shift the focus from the forms of self-representation, to explore the processes of actual self-advocacy carried out by some groups of precarious workers within the frame of the San Precario network. The institutionalisation of precarity in the Italian labor market posed new challenges and encouraged a redefinition of political action towards an actual assumption of the social conflict in the workplace. The developing "system" of precariousness was not matched by the ability of traditional workers' partners to understand and defend the instances of those who are outside of the standard frame of labor. Precisely in this *vacuum* of advocacy, the San Precario network is an interesting and eloquent experience to explore, both

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4   For more information: http://www.chainworkers.org/MAYDAY/index.html, http://www.chainworkers.org/SANPRECARIO/index.html e http://www.chainworkers.org/IMBATTIBILI/

in terms of participation and self-organization of precarious workers and by virtue of its new ways to protect rights and interests in the workplace.

On one hand, the San Precario activists continue their "cultural actions" on the issue of precariousness that characterized them from the beginning[5] and promote the emergence and consolidation of groups of self-organized workers in various employment sectors – from call center to university – as can be seen on the web site that collects their experiences: http://precaria.org. On the other hand, activists moved a step forward towards a direct assumption of conflict and bargaining in the workplace, without delegating to unions. This was possible thanks to the creation of the *San Precario Points* or a legal/political desk through which the rights of precarious workers were protected in a mode which mixed the traditional legal forms of strike with different forms of activism coming from a different political tradition mainly linked to the so-called social justice movements.

This network of activists sees the participation of both groups ex ante – or co-workers and/or workers of the same professional field that self-organize themselves in order to gain a voice in the protection of their rights – and ex-post groups or precarious workers that turn to the San Precario Point without ever having been a member previously to seek support to protect their rights in case of specific conflicts with the employer.

Following the thread of this dual belonging, we will discuss two emblematic experiences of self-organization and self-advocacy connected to the San Precario network to explore a variety of processes both of aggregation and relationship with traditional trade unions: the Network of Precarious Editors - self-organized workers in the world of publishing, and Sea Girls – workers of SEA s.p.a, the company that manages the services of the Linate and Malpensa airports in Milan.

When there is union, but without proxies: the network of precarious editors

The network of precarious editors (from now on Re.Re.Pre) gathers 150 workers in the publishing sector both print and digital:[6] editors, but also employees in the legal offices, press agents, copywriters in advertising agencies, iconographic researchers and translators who share the same precarious contractual conditions.

Its birth is the first noteworthy element to explore the process of self-organization and the characteristics of innovation in comparison to the traditional forms of representation in the workplace. The starting point is a call,

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5   Particularly the editorial activity "Quaderni di San Precario" downloadable at http://quaderni.sanprecario.info/.

6   Re.Re.Pre has its core in the city of Milan where it was founded. However in December 2010 two local hubs were created in Bologna and Rome.

circulated in January 2008 in specialized web sites and magazines, a sort of "call to arms" addressed to all precarious editors, inviting for an assembly to build a network "that serves to enhance us, defend us, support us. A network made up of experiences and proposals, aimed at reclaiming fairer working conditions, representing us in front of those who have so far believed only to squeeze ourselves out".[7] Re.Re.Pre immediately states the relationship that binds them to the "political subject closest to the issue of fighting precariousness", thus tightening "an important link with the movement of San Precario (as set out in particular by the contribution to the drafting of the knowledge workers' manifesto, the agreement to the Mayday 2009 and 2010 manifesto and, more recently, by participating at the General Assembly of Precarity)" (Rete dei Redattori Precari, 2010: 217).

From the beginning, the goals of this group of workers are clear: first, to give visibility to a collective subjectivity within the world of publishing; second to have direct voice in the negotiation and vindication of their working condition. In this sense choosing the network (both as organizational form and as technological platform through which grow this organization) is particularly eloquent: it is not an attempt to cause unrest within a single publisher or communication company, but rather the attempt to organize an entire working sector by trying to find a form of organization that is able to overcome the fragmentation and invisibility that characterizes it and to create a space for political action by which workers, with different backgrounds, but common precarious contractual conditions, can recognize each other and act together.

The digital call is followed by a founding meeting in April of the same year that establishes the goals and kicks off the creation of the web site that collects its activity (www.rerepre.org) and of the mailing list which serves as a virtual slot of the different members. The website gathers all the different activities of the group organized in sections. Alongside the programmatic pages that explain the identity and goals of the group, as well as the way to join it, there's an interesting section — "Life of a precarious worker" — that gathers stories of precarious workers in the publishing sector who experience difficult situations; a section where the political documents produced by Re.Re.Pre can be downloaded; and a precariousness dictionary where useful information on job contract in the publishing sector can be found. It is precisely on this website that the claims for "a fair job" suggested in the first call of which Re.Re.Pre wants to be the direct representative are explained: a critique of the indiscriminate outsourcing of editorial services that promoted the progressive disappearance of long-term and guaranteed jobs towards contractual arrangements with fewer (or no) protection, while the same working methods were maintained; the need for consultation between the parties in terms of timing, mode and compensation in case of occasional collaborations and the real autonomy of these workers; the need to draw up a "tariff of the editor" that makes remuneration for different jobs in this sector transparent and fair.

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7   Cf. Aa.Vv. (2010).

However, the implementation of these claims does not remain confined to the internet. Alongside the site and the mailing list, Re.Re.Pre organizes some public initiatives that embody and give visibility to its demands and expand the number of subjects involved: it organized a conference on precariousness in the publishing sector at the book fair in Turin, several leaflets were distributed in front of Milan's main bookstores to expose the working conditions that underlie the production of a book as well as a symbolic action of disturbance at the headquarters of AIE (Italian Publishers Association) during the negotiations for the renewal of the national graphic and editorial contract. For instance, in December 2010 some precarious editors – dressed as Santa Claus – entered without permission the AIE office in Milan – where a negotiation for the renewal of the graphic-editorial contracts was going on – to deliver to those present a document explaining the claims of the workers concerning the contract and some pieces of coal to underline the unfair behavior of the publishing companies towards their employees.

It is precisely during the renewal of the national contract that Re.Re.Pre becomes a significant experience in redefining the ways through which an entire working sector organizes and reshapes the relationship between self-organization of workers and traditional unionism. If workers usually turn to unions to support their claims, in particular during the negotiations for the renewal of the contract, in this case we face an opposite situation. The largest trade union confederation – the CGIL – seeks a direct connection with this network: first by inviting them to take part in the "Consultation of Professional Work" and second, through the SLC or the federation of communication's workers, by beginning a dialogue to explore the precarious conditions in the publishing sector in order to include a specific claim concerning temporary and non-standard workers in the trade union platform for the national contract renewal.

In this regard, self-organized workers burst onto the bargaining scene between employers and unions – historically dichotomous – and legitimize themselves not only as beneficiaries of decisions made for them by others, but as bearers of a direct experience and knowledge on the current configuration of work that the union, through its traditional ways, struggles to achieve and, therefore, to represent. The self-organization becomes, then, a way to do advocacy not only against employers, but against the trade unions themselves. It thus opens a gap in the supposed impossibility to represent precarious workers, starting from the experiences and demands of those who live precariousness in person.

When the union is not there:
the experience of Sea workers

After the world of publishing, we now totally change register. The second experience we'll introduce and discuss is significantly different from that described above, both in terms of reasons and ways of self-organization and in terms of working sector. It concerns the experience of a group of workers of Sea

Handling S.p.a, one of several companies of the SEA group that manages services in the Milan airports of Malpensa and Linate. This is not the case of a group of workers that decide to create a self-organized subjectivity of precarious workers within their workplace and afterwards "join" the network of San Precario, but a group that turns to the San Precario network to look for support to handle a situation of serious contractual difficulty that the traditional trade unions did not take care of.

In October 2004, twenty-one hostesses turned to the lawyers and activists of the San Precario Point to seek advice on their contractual condition. From 2001 to 2005 these workers signed several fixed-term contracts with Sea. Although over the years the company had promised them a long-term contract, they were informed it wouldn't be renewed. Besides the non-renewal of the contract, the workers lived for years in conditions of particular blackmail since the company, by relying on seasonal peaks, had been able to rely on workers who provided the same services as people with long-term contracts through the ongoing drawing up of short-term contract even when long term hiring would have been a must.[8]

The initial consultancy between the Sea workers and the activists of the San Precario Point turned into actual cooperation to win the dispute, first through legal tools. In July the lawyers of the network appealed to the court stating the illegality of the temporary nature of the contracts drawn up until then. They demanded for them to be verified, reinstatement of the permanent workers and payment of wages gained in the meantime. In March 2006, the dispute was won and the workers were reinstated in the company. Similar legal actions by several other precarious workers in the company followed over the years, asking SEA for the conversion of their temporary contracts into long term ones. It's noteworthy that traditional trade union representatives in SEA recognized these requests only two years later in a formal agreement that included a commitment to stabilize those who still had temporary contracts within twenty-four months.

The first element that leaps out in this quick reconstruction of the longest stories of these workers is the almost complete absence of trade union organizations that, while present in the company, hadn't been able to take responsibility of the instances of precarious workers. They only succeeded in imposing their voice with the employer well after the workers' self-organized initiative. The second mirror like element is the ability of the San Precario Point to become not just a symbolic reference point for precarious workers, but a real partner in case of conflicts with employers, a partner capable of taking responsibility in a dispute and to support workers, regardless of the trade unions positioning.

The third element, then, concerns how this conflict was handled. While the dispute first of the twenty-one hostess of the Sea and of many other workers afterwards was conducted through the tools of traditional labor law, it was also supported by different conflict tools coming from the political tradition of the

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8   For more legal information, see Paulli and Zappa (2010).

global justice movement and focused on communication and subvertizing. Alongside the legal work, several disruptive actions in the two Milan airports have been organized through subvertising communication strategies aimed at consolidating them as representatives of the issues related to precariousness. Among others, the replacement of all the company cafeteria table mats which reported the official logo of the Sea Handling company along with a series of marketing information with graphically equal mats who reported on the one hand information on the actual behavior of company towards its employees and other useful information to move a lawsuit against the company is particularly eloquent. These actions denounced precariousness and the complete deregulation of contracts as a structural condition of the contemporary labor market.

On the one hand, in a high blackmail framework like the one just described, the presence of the San Precario activists in the workplace allowed a denunciation of the working conditions people experienced in SEA and to lobby in the company without exposing workers directly who, due to the ongoing expiry of contracts, are in a state of extreme vulnerability. On the other hand, the case of the SEA became an opportunity not only to support the claims of a specific group of workers, but also to give voice to a broader claim against the precariousness of working conditions, which cuts across locations and types of work.

Discussion and conclusion

The cases of self-organization of precarious workers discussed above suggest a reflection on a variety of issues. First, the de-standardization of work, detached from a redefinition of the criteria to benefit of the welfare state, leads to a further spread of precariousness for those working with non-standard contracts who can't benefit of same social citizenship guaranteed by "standard" jobs.

Secondly, the increasing diversity of forms of work resulted, in Italy as well as in other countries of continental southern Europe where a universal welfare system hasn't been developed (or a welfare system able to avoid a situation where legal and social guarantees are left to a wide variety of company bargaining), in a problem of redefining the role of traditional trade unions, mainly because of the questioning of the national collective bargaining systems and of the labor law itself.

The progressive individualization of employment relations has led the confederal unions (NIdiL, Felsea and CPO) to think of new forms of representation which, however, do not enjoy the same recognition by workers and the same power over the employer. Starting from these considerations, we wondered whether other forms of organization of precarious subjects and collective elaboration of conflict on the issue of precarity were possible or not. The cases of the Network of Precarious Editors (Re.Re.Pre.) and the Sea workers, although very different to one another, led us first to question the supposed "impossibility" to organize the precarious universe often invoked as

the main cause of the crisis of traditional representation.

The critical point, then, seems to be not so much the "impossibility to represent" precarious workers, but the inability to rethink the structure of trade union representation and organizing themselves in order to promote people participation and new communication strategies inside and outside the workplace (Sconvegno, 2008). This doesn't mean, however, that there isn't the possibility of a dialogue between groups of self-organized workers and the unions. Despite this crisis of representation, unions maintain a huge force of attraction with respect to areas of labor which, although numerically and politically in decline compared to past decades, are nevertheless far from disappearing (Curcio, 2005).

The main problem that concerns both traditional unions and the experience of self-organization is the dialogue and joint action among the different parts of contemporary work within the paradigm of a widespread precariousness. A first step, as shown by the cases of self-organization of precarious workers outlined above, was moved by social movements against precariousness that critically questioned the traditional ways of participation and representation of trade unions, pursuing their own demands autonomously, while not renouncing – whenever possible – to implement advocacy with the unions.

The strategies adopted by these networks offer exciting new possibilities for political action, by avoiding the sterile dichotomous opposition between "old" and "new" forms of work, "old" and "new" forms of organization and trying instead to build a relationship between the forms of self-advocacy and the structure of union representation that could be tactically collaborative and confrontational at the same time.

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About the authors

Annalisa Murgia currently holds a postdoctoral fellowship co-funded by the Marie Curie Actions of the European Commission at the Interdisciplinary Research Group on Socialisation, Education and Training (GIRSEF) of the Académie Universitaire de Louvain (Belgium). She is also a member of the Research Unit on Communication, Organizational Learning and Aesthetics and of the Centre of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies at the University of Trento (Italy). Her research focuses on work trajectories, with a special focus on knowledge workers, workers with non-standard and precarious jobs, and the social construction of gender in professional careers. She can be contacted at annalisa.murgia AT unitn.it.

Giulia Selmi is a precarious worker and activist. Academically speaking, she holds a PhD in Sociology and Social Research at the University of Trento (Italy), where she is in the steering committee of the Center of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies. She is currently an Erasmus Mundus postdoctoral fellow at the University Mohammed V of Rabat (Morocco) where she researches the transformation of the intimate biographies of second-generation Moroccan youth living in Italy. She can be contacted at giulia.selmi AT unitn.it.

Sobre la precariedad y sus fugas.
La experiencia de las Oficinas de Derechos Sociales (ODSs)

Alberto Arribas Lozano

Abstract

Este articulo presenta la experiencia de la red de Oficinas de Derechos Sociales (ODSs), poniendo especial énfasis en su dimensión de sindicalismo social[1]. Creadas durante la primera década del 2000, y nacidas al interior de comunidades de activistas que formaban parte del área de los movimientos sociales autónomos en el estado español, las ODSs emergen como herramientas desde las que lanzar y acompañar procesos de auto-organización contra la precariedad en el ámbito laboral, de extranjería y del acceso a la vivienda. Desarrollando un trabajo político centrado en lo cotidiano, con un anclaje territorial fuerte, y buscando abrirse a una composición que desbordara las figuras más comunes en los movimientos sociales (blanco, universitario, clase media, europeo), la red de ODSs se piensa a sí misma como una dinámica experimental en la que las lógicas de investigación y de producción y circulación de saberes forman parte central de la práctica política. Hablar de las ODSs implica hablar de los trayectos compartidos por estas comunidades, así como del contexto social en el que estos dispositivos se despliegan y toman sentido.

Introducción

> Lo que sí creo que forma parte de ese común de lo que son las ODSs es el intento de construir otra política. Una otra política que rompa con... sobre todo las antiguas formas de organización más centradas en determinada composición de los movimientos, e intentar abrirse [...]. Entonces, como común eso; esa idea de abrirse, de ir hacia afuera, de crear alianzas, de organizarse con otros... y creo que eso es lo único que puede haber que digas: "¿una ODS en qué consiste?", pues un poco en eso.

> Entrevista a Silvia, Punto Mantero

Un primer acercamiento a la red de ODSs sitúa dicho dispositivo en el contexto marcado —desde mediados de los 90 hasta la actualidad- por el cruce de tres elementos: 1) la creciente desregulación y precarización de las relaciones laborales, que modifica las condiciones materiales y subjetivas asociadas al trabajo asalariado; 2) la consolidacíon de España como país receptor de migraciones, y la aplicación de políticas migratorias que generan una nueva estratificación social a partir de lógicas de inserción subordinada y del acceso desigual a los derechos; y, 3) la lectura crítica que un sector de los movimientos sociales hace sobre determinados rasgos de sus propias prácticas, y la búsqueda colectiva de otras *maneras de hacer* y de nuevos dispositivos de organización e intervención. La combinación de estos elementos es lo que permite entender la creación y multiplicación de las Oficinas de Derechos Sociales, y este artículo pretende ser una cartografía de dichos cruces construida a partir de las entrevistas realizadas en 10 nodos de la red: ODS de Málaga, ODS de Sevilla, Red de Apoyo a Sin Papeles (Zaragoza), ODS Ateneu Candela (Terrassa), Grupo de Migraciones de la Hormiga Atómica (Pamplona/Iruña), ODS EXIT (Barcelona), y ODS Patio Maravillas, Punto Mantero/Asociación de Sin Papeles, ODS de Seco y ODS de Carabanchel en Madrid[2].

El objetivo del texto no es buscar los límites precisos de las ODSs, definir lo que son (su identidad), sino trazar un mapa, siempre en movimiento, de los desplazamientos —las transformaciones- de esta red, situando en el centro del análisis los sentidos que sus integrantes dan a sus propias prácticas, las categorías desde las que interpretan y nombran lo que hacen[3].

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[2] La mayoría de las ODSs están situadas en centros sociales, ya que, siendo dispositivos que nacen dentro de comunidades con una trayectoria larga de activismo, se conectan y recombinan con otras herramientas producidas por dichas comunidades. Para una lectura de los denominados "centros sociales de segunda generación" ver ULEX 2008.

[3] Se intenta, por lo tanto, no 'disciplinar' a los sujetos desde las categorías del investigador, sino abrir el espacio necesario "para que los movimientos hablen por ellos mismos, planteen sus propios vocabularios, cartografías y conceptos del mundo, y articulen sus propias categorías de análisis" (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008, 26).

Nombrar la vida para leer el mundo, y viceversa:
el marco conceptual de la precariedad

> Nosotros interpretábamos el tema de precariedad como un aspecto muy transversal a nuestras vidas, en el sentido sobre todo de que también partimos mucho de la composición nuestra, gente que no... no éramos obreros, nadie curraba en fábricas, era todo gente con... o no todos pero la mayoría, con estudios universitarios pero sin curro, con problemas para poder emanciparse, y creo que eso de alguna manera nos determina en el discurso y en las prácticas políticas, ¿no?, no hacemos otra cosa sino que hacemos esto porque partimos de nosotros.
>
> Entrevista a Xavi, ODS Terrassa

Desde finales de la década de los 90, y de manera más intensa a lo largo de la primera década del 2000, el marco conceptual precariedad/precarización se situó con fuerza como eje de las discusiones de cierto área de los movimientos sociales. Este proceso señalaba el intento de pensar y producir prácticas políticas desde la problematización de las vivencias cotidianas que atravesaban a una comunidad/generación de activistas (juventud urbana, universitaria) que sentía que las narrativas disponibles –y los dispositivos que las sustentaban- no estaban siendo capaces de leer correctamente un contexto social en rápida transformación. Así, reflexionar sobre y desde las trayectorias vitales concretas –en primera persona- a partir de la noción de precariedad suponía elaborar un pensamiento (un saber) colectivo que nombrara y explicara todo un conjunto heterogéneo de malestares que definían unas nuevas condiciones de habitar la ciudad. Suponía, por lo tanto, un deseo/necesidad de investigar, entender y enunciar lo que estaba pasando, *lo que nos estaba pasando*.

El punto de partida de estas reflexiones era la comprensión de que las transformaciones en curso eran simultáneamente irreversibles y ambivalentes (Virno 2003, 64). Eran irreversibles en el sentido de que no hay vuelta atrás en el estallido del mercado de trabajo, la desregulación –la política de precarización- que acompaña al capitalismo flexible se convierte, aunque afecte de manera desigual a diferentes sectores sociales, en la tendencia central/estructural que define el ámbito de la producción y el empleo; así, la precariedad no sería ya un estado que afecta a un sector específico de la población, sino que nos encontraríamos ante un movimiento generalizado hacia la precarización, que afecta –como realidad o como amenaza- a la sociedad en su conjunto, una dinámica expansiva que acaba permeando todo el modelo de relaciones laborales y sociales[4].

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[4] Este proceso únicamente es novedoso en el occidente que fue fordista, en el resto del mundo dicha precarización ha sido durante mucho tiempo la norma; ver Mezzadra 2012.

Cartel de las jornadas sobre precariedad y nuevos derechos sociales, Sevilla, abril de 2007.

La flexibilización sistemática de las relaciones laborales opera en múltiples dimensiones: en el tiempo de trabajo, las modalidades de contrato y despido, la relación salarial, las tareas realizadas, la movilidad geográfica, etc., e instituye un mercado de trabajo caracterizado por múltiples segmentaciones (contratos temporales, intermitencia, prácticas en empresas, el modelo beca, etc.) en las que los derechos laborales y sociales han sido rebajados o eliminados. En este escenario, el tránsito entre trabajo (más o menos precario) y desempleo, así como el paso de un empleo a otro, son cada vez más frecuentes[5], cambiando,

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[5] En la Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA) del primer trimestre de 2012, la tasa de desempleo en España se sitúa en el 24,44% de la población activa, alcanzando los 5.639.500 de personas; en menores de 25 años el porcentaje se eleva hasta el 52%. La tasa de temporalidad entre

como plantea Sennett, "el significado mismo del trabajo" (2000, 9). Instalando una *economía política de la incertidumbre* (Bauman 2001, 65), esta flexibilidad forzosa se transforma en herramienta de disciplinamiento y control de la fuerza de trabajo en el capitalismo postfordista; cuando el empleo aparece como un (frágil) privilegio, el miedo disciplina tanto a quienes tienen trabajo como —indirectamente- a todos los demás (Bourdieu 1999, 124), abriendo un estado de vulnerabilidad que excede el campo laboral y afecta al conjunto de la reproducción de la vida. Como plantea Virno (2003, 46), el cinismo, el miedo y el oportunismo se instalan como tonalidades emotivas del postfordismo[6]; y, como consecuencia de la sensación creciente de riesgo y pérdida de control, el "sálvese quien pueda" pasa a ser el eje de rotación de un contexto social fragmentado, marcado por el acceso diferencial al empleo, al salario, a los derechos, etc., en el que lo característico del gobierno neoliberal de lo social será "localizar las «diferencias» de estatus, ingresos, formación, garantías sociales, etcétera, y hacer jugar eficazmente las desigualdades unas contra otras" (Lazzarato 2006, 234)[7].

Simultáneamente, nos encontramos en el tránsito hacia un modelo de (des)regulación postwelfare, caracterizado por el adelgazamiento generalizado de los sistemas públicos de bienestar y la limitación de las políticas de redistribución. Esta dinámica de re-mercantilización se justifica, según la racionalidad política y económica neoliberal, en que el *exceso* de derechos asociados a la ciudadanía social habría tenido el efecto de desincentivar el mérito y el esfuerzo, y de promover la pasividad y la "cultura de la dependencia". Así, la respuesta adecuada pasaría por situar la responsabilidad individual -y no las garantías colectivas- en el centro de los programas sociales: se pasa de hablar de derechos sociales a hablar de "ayudas" que se otorgan a personas/casos individuales, que pueden estar supeditadas al cumplimiento de contrapartidas, y cuyo objetivo es provocar el ajuste —instrumental y eficiente- de dichas personas a las lógicas del individualismo de mercado (Alonso 2007, 242).

La combinación de estos procesos señala las coordenadas en las que se despliegan las políticas neoliberales de producción de escasez, donde van a competir por los recursos (laborales, sociales) *quienes no llegan a ser ciudadanos/as* y *quienes están dejando de serlo* (Santos 2006, 180). La situación es, sin embargo, ambivalente en el sentido que esa hiperflexibilidad que -declinada en función de las necesidades del capital- se manifiesta como

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quienes tienen empleo es del 23,76%.

[6] En la misma línea, Standing (2011) plantea que el precariado experimenta lo que él nombra en inglés como las "cuatro Aes": anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation.

[7] Es la proliferación de situaciones "particulares", y su carácter inestable, lo que va a catalizar la competencia máxima, ya que "siempre se tiene un poco por encima a una franja de población cuya posición es mejor, y que nos invita continuamente a esforzarnos para lograr incluirnos en ella; y un poco por debajo a una franja de población peor, que mantiene viva la amenaza de que podemos caer" (Ávila y Malo 2008).

captura, puede abrirse igualmente a nuevas dinámicas, nuevos actores y nuevos repertorios de conflicto; fugas de la precariedad, más o menos frágiles, que buscan una reapropiación del tiempo de vida y una definición autónoma de la flexibilidad. Este artículo se centra en una de esas experimentaciones, tratando de cartografiar los múltiples desbordes (los cuerpos, los lugares, las imágenes) que contestan/desobedecen cotidianamente a las lógicas de precarización.

Precariedad en primera persona

¿Cómo se ha problematizado esta situación al interior de la comunidad de activistas en la que se centra este artículo?, ¿qué imágenes emergían de esos procesos de reflexión colectiva -en primera persona- que he mencionado? Las entrevistas señalan varios puntos cuya interrelación compone el "conjunto problemático" o "conglomerado heterogéneo" de elementos que intentan definirse con el concepto precariedad:

- La precariedad nombra la condición existencial actual, tanto en términos materiales como subjetivos. Es nuestro modo de vida, es la condición de vida hoy; como plantea Guillermo, de la RASP de Zaragoza, la precariedad es "lo que nos ha tocado vivir y contra lo que nos toca luchar".

- Tiene que ver con lo laboral, pero lo desborda: hay un proceso de precarización de la vida en múltiples dimensiones. Señala la dificultad creciente para estabilizar recursos (materiales e inmateriales) elementales para sostener una vida digna. Se asocia a una falta de recursos en muchos sentidos: dificultad en el acceso a renta, a vivienda, a formación, a la cultura, al ocio, "porque tienes un curro de mierda, no llegas a fin de mes, no tienes papeles, las hipotecas están muy caras...". Se manifiesta también en la crisis de los cuidados, en el uso de los espacios públicos, etc. y tiene un fuerte componente emocional y afectivo.

- Es una nueva forma de disciplinamiento; nos quieren precarios/as y con miedo: a perder el trabajo, a quedarte en la calle, a no llegar a fin de mes... porque con miedo somos más explotables, más sumisos, más desahuciables, más despedibles. Viene acompañada de un individualismo creciente, que hace que esa sensación de no futuro, de estar pendiente de un hilo, se traduzca en un "sálvese quien pueda" generalizado.

- Expresa la sensación de imposibilidad de realizar un proyecto de vida porque estás continuamente a expensas de factores que no están bajo tu control. Por eso está asociada a improvisación, a malabarismos. La precariedad es inseguridad constante, es no poder elegir (falta de autonomía); es andar en la cuerda floja; es incertidumbre, inestabilidad, malestar; es no saber qué va a pasar con tu vida, a muchos niveles. La precariedad es además no tener tiempo para nada, la falta de control sobre tu tiempo.

- Incide también en la forma de hacer política. Señala Xavi, de la ODS de Terrassa, que

> tú estás inmerso en esta misma situación que de alguna manera también te golpea, y esa imposibilidad de crear una subjetividad colectiva y de lucha también te afecta a ti, también te pasa de alguna manera lo mismo, y hay momentos en que ya no sabes si lo que tienes que hacer es dejarlo todo y partirte la cabeza por buscar un curro que -aunque te hipoteque la vida- te permita subsistir... o si tienes que dedicarte en cuerpo y alma al espacio más colectivo, más político, pero dices: ¿si hago eso cómo hostias voy a sobrevivir?

Y como dice Sebas, de la ODS Exit de Barcelona,

> cuando tú te ves dentro de esa dinámica y no ves salida... es muy difícil plantearte un futuro de una manera alegre [...]. Hay momentos que la verdad entre el miedo y el llegar a fin de mes, el no perder lo poco que tengo... y el seguir haciendo política para cambiarlo pues... no sé, es muy, muy difícil de llevar.

- Para los y las migrantes a todo lo anterior se suma la proliferación de fronteras que limitan su libertad de movimiento. Los controles de identificación, las redadas policiales, las detenciones o la posibilidad de la deportación dificultan la creación de vínculos; Pastora, de la ODS de Sevilla, comentaba las dificultades de los y las inmigrantes para ir al local donde se desarrollaba la asesoría legal,

> las mujeres no querían venir, tenían miedo, hubo un acoso [policial] brutal... recuerdo que salían corriendo, salían y corrían la calle para abajo, corrían la calle hasta la muralla, una callecita estrecha, decían que tenían ansiedad por salir al espacio abierto de afuera de la muralla, que ahí eres mucho más camuflable entre la gente

y Badara, hablando de la importancia de haber creado la Asociación de Sin Papeles de Terrassa, de la que forma parte, explica

> antes el caminar en la calle era muy difícil, te quedaba un susto... aún está, es que aún aquí en Terrassa hay un barrio que siempre si se camina allí... siempre hay redadas, policía secreta y eso, pero como piensas que si me pillan aquí puede ser que hay gente que está detrás de mí que me pueden apoyar y todo eso, hay un poco más de tranquilidad[8].

- Se subraya, en cualquier caso, que el problema no es la flexibilidad en sí, sino que la flexibilidad esté organizada en función de las necesidades del capital. Así, las fugas de la precariedad son intentos de reapropiarse del tiempo de vida, de ganar tiempo de vida al tiempo del trabajo[9]; como señala Marta, del Punto Mantero,

> en el caso de muchos de nosotros no es que la precariedad haya sido elegida, pero no hemos buscado la estabilidad. [...] yo me alegro mucho de todo lo que he podido hacer en estos años de no trabajar cuarenta horas, y creo que los centros sociales se han nutrido mucho de eso, y que ha habido una creación colectiva muy interesante que ha surgido de ahí, que ciertas militancias han sido posibles por eso.

Las fugas de la precariedad

A lo largo la primera década del 2000 se fue tejiendo, dentro de esta comunidad de activistas en la que luego nacerían los diferentes nodos de la red de ODSs, una tupida trama de reflexiones y proyectos compartidos, de encuentros y talleres de autoformación, de afectos y complicidades que tienen como eje común esa premisa de investigar/entender para nombrar y transformar[10]. Pensamiento colectivo, investigación militante y producción de movimiento

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8 La (re)producción de fronteras al interior del espacio social define -clasifica y controla- qué cuerpo puede circular, qué cuerpo debe ser bloqueado, qué cuerpo debe ser expulsado. Como afirma Benhabib 2007, "the poor migrant becomes the symbol of the continuing assertion of sovereignty. Migrants' bodies, both dead and alive, strew the path of state's power". Sobre resistencias a estos procesos ver: Nyers y Rygiel 2012; Sassen 2002; Suárez-Navas et al 2007.

9 Para una discusión en torno a este punto, ver Lorey 2006.

10 Sobre los movimientos sociales como productores de conocimientos ver: Casas-Cortés et al 2008; Holmes 2007; Escobar 2008.

entendidos como hilos de un mismo tejido,

> iniciativas que toman la investigación como palanca de interpelación,
> subjetivación y recomposición política, que utilizan los mecanismos de encuesta,
> entrevista y grupo de discusión como excusa para hablar con otros y hablarse
> entre sí, para desafiar las distancias de un espacio social hiperfragmentado y
> probar a decir la propia realidad, en busca de nociones comunes que la describan
> y formas de resistencia, cooperación y fuga que la agujereen, dando así
> materialidad metropolitana al «caminar preguntando» zapatista. (Malo 2004,
> 38)

En la trayectoria compartida por esta comunidad de activismo, la preocupación
sobre las temáticas de precariedad y migraciones es constante[11]. Viniendo del
trabajo en y desde los centros sociales, se participó en la declinación europea del
ciclo de movilizaciones cumbre/contracumbre característico de aquellos años
(Praga 2000, Barcelona y Génova 2001, etc.). Se participó activamente en el
apoyo y acompañamiento a los encierros contra la Ley de Extranjería
organizados y protagonizados por inmigrantes sin papeles en diversas ciudades
españolas, destacando los de Barcelona, Lorca y Madrid en 2001, y Sevilla en
2002. Se organizó el Campamento de Frontera en Tarifa en 2001. Se participó
en la dimensión europea del movimiento de movimientos a través de los
espacios dedicados a precariedad y migraciones en los encuentros del Foro
Social Europeo (Florencia 2002, París 2003, Londres 2004). Se formó parte de
las redes europeas por la libertad de movimiento No-border y Frassanito; y se
puso en marcha la experiencia del MayDay, iniciado en Milán en el año 2001 y
celebrado en Barcelona en el 2004[12], en Sevilla en 2005 y 2006, en Málaga en
2007 y en Madrid en 2008. Posteriormente, la pérdida de intensidad del
movimiento global y el deseo de experimentar otro tipo de prácticas impulsará a
dedicar mayor atención a los territorios más cercanos, sin olvidar que quienes
habían hecho este recorrido habían sido afectados/as por el encuentro con otras
experiencias, y que todo ese bagaje se posaría en los dispositivos que estaban
por venir[13]. Se organizó la Caravana Europea Contra la Valla - Caravana por la

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[11] La consolidación de España como país receptor de emigración se da a la vez que se producían
estos debates sobre precariedad, lo que facilita que ambas dimensiones se crucen; por otro lado,
la institucionalización de los y las inmigrantes como ciudadanos/as de segunda, o como no
ciudadanos/as, resultó central en el último ciclo de expansión de la economía española, al
asegurar una mano de obra barata que trabaja en condiciones de máxima vulnerabilidad en los
sectores de la construcción, hostelería, agricultura, y cuidados y servicio doméstico, abriendo un
proceso de etnificación de la fuerza de trabajo, de la precariedad y de la exclusión (Schierup et al
2006; Martínez Veiga 2004).

[12] Ver Raunig 2007; y marceloexposito.net/pdf/mayday_periodico.pdf

[13] Al preguntar por las influencias a la hora de pensar y poner en funcionamiento las ODSs, las
respuestas subrayan la importancia de ese ciclo global del movimiento: excepto Berri Otxoak
todos los referentes son de fuera del estado español. Se mencionan: los centros sociales italianos
y formas sindicales trabajadas allí, como la ADL de Padova; las experiencias de Justice for
Janitors, de los Workers Centers y del colectivo de trabajadores de Imolakee en Estados Unidos;

Libertad de Movimiento en noviembre de 2005 en Ceuta (acción en torno a la que se constituyó el Ferrocarril Clandestino, referente hoy en la lucha por la libertad de movimiento). Y ya dentro de ese giro hacia la investigación e intervención con un anclaje territorial más sólido, se empezaron a suceder en los diferentes nodos de la red encuentros y talleres sobre derechos sociales, migraciones/fronteras, precariedad, crisis, etc.[14], proceso que vendría acompañado por la producción de materiales —revistas, libros, informes- vinculados a las prácticas que desarrollaban los diferentes colectivos que formaban parte de esa red difusa[15]. Y es en este circuito de reflexiones, encuentros, acciones, campañas, afectos y complicidades, investigaciones y prácticas políticas donde va a emerger la red de ODSs.

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la red europea NextGENDERation; la Red Maíz en Austria; el Colectivo Situaciones en Argentina; o los movimientos de los Intermitentes del espectáculo y de los Sin Papeles en Francia. Igualmente, la influencia del pensamiento del área de la autonomía italiana y del post-estructuralismo francés son evidentes a lo largo de las entrevistas.

[14] Por ejemplo: en abril de 2006, en el Ateneu Candela de Terrassa, las jornadas "Trabajo, ciudadanía y migraciones en la globalización. Destruir fronteras construyendo movimiento", y ese mismo año en Málaga el "II Encuentro Estatal por los Derechos de los Inmigrantes", convocado por la Red Estatal por los Derechos de las y los Inmigrantes (REDI); en abril de 2007 las jornadas "Crisis del Estado de bienestar, precariedad y nuevos derechos sociales" en el Centro Vecinal del Pumarejo en Sevilla, y en mayo en el Ateneu Candela el "I encuentro de Agencias de Precariedad y Oficinas de Derechos Sociales"; en mayo de 2008 en el Centro Social Patio Maravillas en Madrid el "II Encuentro de ODSs", y en diciembre en el Centro Social Seco, también en Madrid, las jornadas "Crisis sistémica, nuevos derechos, máquinas creativas de lucha y contrapoder"; en enero de 2009 en Terrassa y Barcelona el "I Encuentro Europeo de Centros Sociales", en octubre en la Casa Invisible de Málaga el "Encuentro por el Cierre de los Centros de Internamiento para Extranjeros", y en noviembre en Zaragoza el "III encuentro de la Red de ODSs"; en marzo de 2010 en el Ateneu Candela las jornadas "La crisis y la política de lo común", y en abril, en Zaragoza, como respuesta a la Conferencia Europea de ministros de inmigración, el encuentro "Aquí no sobra nadie. Por unos espacios sin fronteras".

[15] Desde el dossier metodológico sobre co-investigación militante editado en el 2000 por el colectivo TrabajoZero, que circularía ampliamente en este área de los movimientos sociales, hasta las publicaciones actuales del Observatorio Metropolitano sobre la crisis; pasando por los números de la revista madrileña Contrapoder entre 2001 y 2005, el proyecto editorial de Traficantes de Sueños desde 2003, la Guía por la Libertad de Movimiento elaborada por el Ferrocarril Clandestino en 2006, etc.

Formas de hacer: la experiencia de las Oficinas de Derechos Sociales

> Lo que une es eso: la forma de preguntarse las cosas, la forma de ser retaguardia y no vanguardia, de no ir con el manual, de no adelantarse a la realidad sino que la realidad te va marcando los pasos.
>
> Entrevista a Pastora, ODS de Sevilla.

La primera ODS se crea en Sevilla en torno al año 2004-2005, en palabras de Carlos, uno de sus impulsores, se trataba se construir un dispositivo "que combinara lo técnico, los saberes técnicos, con los saberes de los movimientos sociales, o sea, los saberes políticos, [...] la hipótesis que barajamos todos es: ante situaciones individuales hacerlas comunes y dar una respuesta colectiva". A

partir de ese momento comienzan a extenderse por otras ciudades, emergiendo como entramado de experimentaciones colectivas que buscan promover y dinamizar procesos de (auto)organización social contra las lógicas de precarización. Se piensan a sí mismas como procesos abiertos, en construcción, y no hay al interior de la red una definición única de ODS; como afirma Pastora, también de Sevilla,

> la ODS en sí misma es un proceso diverso en cada territorio, e incluso en algunos territorios como en Madrid hay cinco ODSs y cada una es sui generis, ¿vale?, ahí nos definimos: desde la heterogeneidad de la ODS con un caminar conjunto que intentamos coordinar y alimentar, pero realmente no hay una definición; yo te voy a dar una definición y seguramente cada persona que entrevistes -incluso mis propios compañeros de la ODS de Sevilla- van a dar otra visión.

Las ODSs no responden a una fórmula concreta, cada nodo se declina de manera específica en su territorio, y su contenido se va modificando en el tiempo. En mayo de 2010, durante la primera fase de trabajo de campo de la investigación, desde uno de los nodos se envió un correo a la lista de la red preguntando si podía ser interesante, ya que estaban apareciendo nuevas ODSs, abrir un debate para definir más lo que es (y lo que no es) una Oficina de Derechos Sociales, o si se continuaba confiando en las líneas de afinidad que habían funcionado hasta ese momento. Incluí esa cuestión en las siguientes entrevistas, y en todas se planteaba que la ausencia de una definición cerrada es parte central del proyecto y de la posibilidad de adaptarlo a las diferentes situaciones, y que lo importante no es cumplir una serie de requisitos o poner en marcha determinadas herramientas, sino participar en los procesos comunes, en las discusiones y debates conjuntos, y cuidar el espacio de confianza de la red. Guillermo, de la RASP de Zaragoza, subrayaba que "la parte experimental implica que la definición esté siempre abierta, y que además se pueda coger por distintos sitios, se le pueda dar distintos enfoques"; y Pablo, de la ODS de Carabanchel, insistía en que lo semántico es secundario, "no es un debate en el que me interese meterme ni perder tiempo. [...] lo que me interesa es el curro, y que se respete una cierta forma de curro; después si le querés poner ODS o le querés poner... ponele como más te guste". Varias personas coinciden en que esa discusión sobre qué es una ODS podría servir para reflexionar juntas —dice Raquel, de Exit- sobre "cómo estamos haciendo política, cómo la ideamos, cuáles están siendo las tensiones, los límites, los conflictos", pero que intentar (sobre)codificar el dispositivo en una definición no era interesante; como dice Luis, de la ODS de Iruña/Pamplona, insistiendo en el carácter de experimentación constante,

> no tenemos referencias acabadas, definitivas, pero sí que tenemos referencias en movimiento, continuas... para eso está la red -entre otras cosas- para fijarnos y para hablar continuamente de cómo funcionamos en cada sitio, cuáles son los límites que nos encontramos, cuáles son las soluciones provisionales y definitivas

que aplicamos... y eso es bastante más útil que un protocolo fijo de actuación. Porque ya desde el principio hemos dicho que la situación en cada ciudad y la composición de la gente que pasa por las ODSs en cada ciudad es muy distinta, de forma que impide por completo pensar en un modelo tipo franquicia. Eso yo creo que sería completamente improductivo.
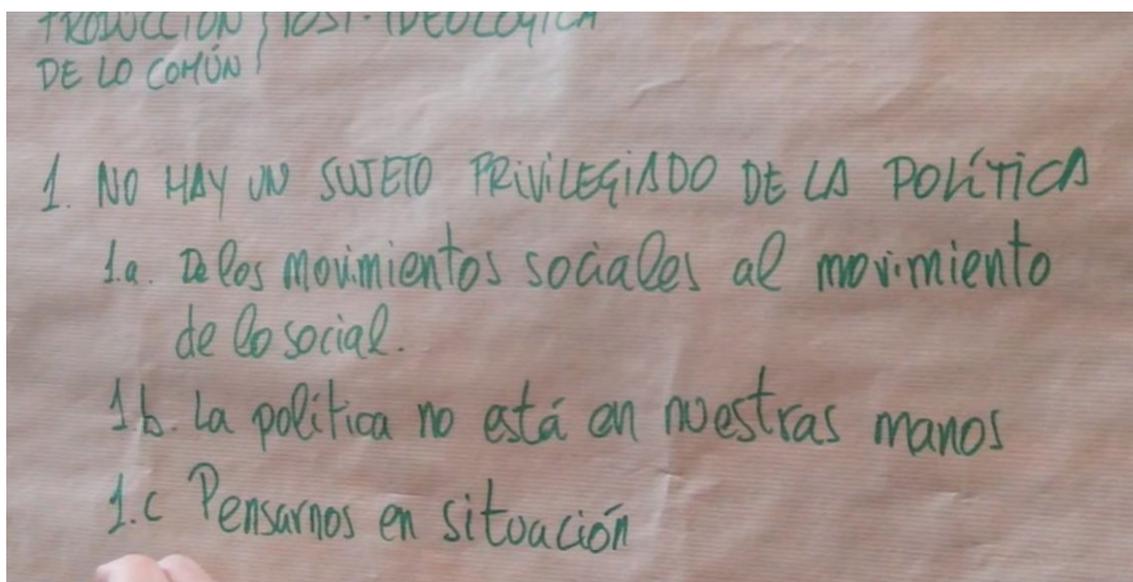
Materiales del taller preparatorio del encuentro del Ferrocarril Clandestino, sintetizando las ideas que salían de las entrevistas. Madrid, junio de 2011.

Y la misma lógica que funciona para cada Oficina de Derechos Sociales individual funciona para la red de ODSs, una red sin contornos precisos, sin estatutos ni fórmulas cerradas de pertenencia. ¿Quién forma la red?, quien está en la lista de correo de las ODSs, quien participa en los encuentros, en las discusiones y las campañas, y quien se autodefine como parte de la red y es reconocido como parte de la red por los otros nodos. Su arquitectura es abierta: autonomía de los nodos locales, y tiempos y ritmos determinados por los contextos de cada territorio; incluso nombres diferentes, porque como dice Marta ni el Punto Mantero ni la Agencia Precaria se han llamado nunca ODS, "eso no es lo importante, la cosa nominal. Lo que sí es importante es el espacio de afinidad y de discusión colectiva y de proyectualidad política de la red de ODSs". Política de la relación que dibuja un entramado complejo: cada nodo forma parte de sus propias redes locales/translocales; y, a su vez, la red de ODSs (red de redes, red junto a redes) atraviesa y se compone con otras tramas: redes de centros sociales (Ateneu Candela en Terrassa; Casa Invisible en Málaga; Centro Vecinal del Pumarejo en Sevilla; El Patio Maravillas, Eskalera Karakola, Centro Social Seco y La Casa del Barrio en Madrid, etc.), redes de librerías asociativas (La Hormiga Atómica en Pamplona/Iruña, Pantera Rossa en Zaragoza, Traficantes de Sueños en Madrid, Synusia en Terrassa, La Fuga en Sevilla, etc.), redes de grupos de investigación y auto-formación (Grupo de

Estudios A Zofra en Zaragoza, Nociones Comunes y Observatorio Metropolitano en Madrid, Exit en Barcelona, etc.). Hablando de estos diferentes planos que se cruzan, Panzer, de la ODS de Seco, plantea:

> hay que incidir mucho en que no se entienda la red de ODSs separada de su contexto de otro tipo de cosas. [...] esos mapas que se han ido superponiendo, y que están emparentados porque tienen debates, trayectorias, y puntos de ataques similares... es importante que se entiendan juntos, porque si no la red de ODSs te puede dar la sensación de ser una red de partido, por decirlo de alguna manera, ¿no?, y no tanto como un movimiento o grupos de gente que están escapando o han escapado o quieren escapar de ciertas cosas y están experimentando en una línea, ¿no?, y que hay distintos planos de experimentación, y que son muy coincidentes. [...] es decir, que todo eso ha ido dando una consistencia y una intensidad también a las relaciones de análisis, de pensamiento, y de compañerismo, y de lo que quieras, que sin eso no se puede entender ninguna de las partes.

Como ya he señalado, las ODSs emergen en el cruce entre las luchas contra la precariedad y las luchas migrantes (y las reflexiones que venían acompañando estos procesos), y nacen tras el cierre del ciclo de movilizaciones del movimiento global, un ciclo con una carga simbólica y creativa muy importante pero que, según Nico, de la ODS de Málaga, "de alguna manera se cierra o se agota sin que se haya podido modificar lo más mínimo las condiciones materiales de vida nuestra, de los movimientos, de los militantes y del entorno social donde trabajábamos". Así, se trata de recoger las discusiones y las experiencias que se venían lanzando en esos años, y ponerlas a funcionar a partir de nuevos dispositivos de organización e intervención aterrizados en el territorio.

En este sentido, como plantea Pantxo, en la red de ODSs "lo programático está más ligado a la cuestión de cuáles son las prácticas de reinvención de la organización y de las maneras de hacer". ¿En qué consiste esa transformación de las "maneras de hacer" que caracterizaría a las ODSs? En primer lugar, en su intento por producir herramientas –que presentaré más adelante- que sean capaces de intervenir en ese plano más cotidiano, las ODSs quieren escaparse de algunos elementos que consideran que han caracterizado la política de los centros sociales y/o de la militancia más habitual en el área de los movimientos autónomos, y que, según ellos, se habían convertido en un "callejón sin salida" que producía más rechazo y más distancia que otra cosa, y desde el que era muy difícil la creación de vínculo, de agregación política y de prácticas con capacidad real de incidencia. Como señala Marta,

> se huía de un tipo de militancia demasiado identitaria y autorreferencial, que utilizaba unos lenguajes que le permitían reconocerse pero que ya no tenía capacidad de... la ocupación hubo un momento en el que fue un movimiento, en el sentido de que invitaba a todo el mundo a cuestionarse a sí mismo y su forma de vida, pero dejó de serlo. Y entonces en ese momento de cierre... pues la

necesidad de salir y volver a contagiarnos con otros y volver a abrir procesos de politización y, por lo tanto, de movimiento.

Se busca entonces salir de una militancia más ideológica/identitaria[16], y conectarse "con el afuera", problematizando esa radicalidad gestual, discursiva, desencarnada, que no tiene/produce agarre en el territorio, muy "declaración de principios", y que se había quedado atascada en la repetición de lo mismo. Una concepción de la política que, en palabras de Guillermo, "es en realidad muy poco revolucionaria porque no tiene una voluntad real de transformación... mi interpretación es que tiene una voluntad más de crear una especie de modo de vida de unos cuantos", y frente a esa dinámica propone una práctica que

> tiene que estar totalmente metida en la coyuntura, tiene que tener una voluntad real de transformación, y tienes que estar continuamente evaluando si lo que tú haces transforma o no. No tiene ningún sentido decir: «mira, yo pienso así, la gente es tonta, y entonces... a ver si despiertan para darme la razón por fin a mí».

En el mismo sentido, Pantxo plantea que la preocupación es construir herramientas organizativas que permitan el paso "de la política del evento [...] a una política de la vida cotidiana, a una política que afecte la vida cotidiana". Y desde ahí se articula también una crítica a un modo de hacer política "espectacular", que produce momentos álgidos, explosivos, pero que no crea un sedimento desde el que continuar trabajando; como dice Silvia, en las ODSs

> hay una preocupación muy grande por construir desde la base, generar movimientos y procesos que... claro, son más largos en el tiempo, no es esta cosa del activismo que se quema inmediatamente y que con una acción pues ya has hecho algo muy importante, ¿no?, sino que son procesos mucho más largos y por tanto más difíciles de sostener, porque implican que estés ahí sin ver muchas veces resultados en el acto, pero que al final van dando como una consistencia diferente.

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[16]   Para situar estos elementos en una discusión más amplia ver: Escobar y Osterweil 2009; Wainwright et al 2007.

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El segundo elemento clave es ese intento de hacer trabajo de base, de construir procesos desde abajo, abriendo dispositivos que permitan poner en común problemas cotidianos y articular estrategias colectivas útiles para enfrentarlos[17].

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[17] Como plantean Boltanski y Chiapello, "esta reinscripción en los intersticios de la vida cotidiana es el precio que la crítica debería pagar para recuperar su realismo y, por consiguiente, su eficacia." (2002, 652).

Así, como dice Alcira, del Punto Mantero, "hay experiencias políticas donde la parte de lo cotidiano ni siquiera se trabaja. [...] lo que diferencia una ODS es ese intento, es ese desafío de hacer vínculo político, de ir tejiendo en medio de la complejidad". Y en esa búsqueda de concreción, de materialidad, es donde la enunciación en clave de derechos cobra sentido; como dice Xavi,

> cuando tú te sentabas a hablar con alguien que no tenía vivienda, que no podía acceder... o que no tenía trabajo, era un idioma bastante común que nos permitía una conexión directa... o sea, partir desde abajo hacia arriba y no de arriba hacia abajo. [...] el lema que se utilizó, «tenemos derecho a tener derechos», fue algo que la gente entendía perfectamente lo que estabas diciendo.

Y es que, como señala Luis, "los derechos se tocan", son "puedo ir mañana al médico o no puedo ir mañana al médico, puedo alquilar una vivienda con las mismas condiciones contractuales y con los mismos precios que un autóctono o no puedo". No se trataría entonces, subraya Pastora, de referirse al concepto de derechos sociales de los manuales jurídicos, sino que "a los derechos para poder vivir con dignidad y ser personas y tener una vida digna les llamamos sociales"; la apuesta política pasaría –por lo tanto- no sólo por demandar el cumplimiento de derechos que no se hacen efectivos, sino por abrir un plano de imaginación, invención y conquista colectiva de nuevos derechos.

El tercer punto a destacar es la idea de "ir hacia afuera, organizarse con otros" como uno de los elementos fuertes de las ODSs. Hay un deseo de mezcla, de heterogeneidad, de relacionarse con una composición social no militante y fugarse de identidades más cerradas –el "gueto" activista al que se refieren a menudo en las entrevistas-. Se pretende construir una política mestiza, salir fuera de los espacios ya conocidos, y constituirse como un dispositivo abierto y en interacción constante con el medio social en el que está. En la misma línea, Marta plantea que hay cierta querencia de comunidad,

> siendo esa comunidad siempre una comunidad imposible, y no queriendo la comunidad más identitaria de la ocupación, pero sí como alguna forma de común abierto... pero de común, de espacio que agregue los cuerpos, ¿no?, más allá de las palabras. Entonces creo que también había algo de eso detrás, el deseo de composición entre diferentes.

Esta disposición a la apertura y a la mezcla en la práctica política inaugura una situación que busca romper con el perfil «blanco/universitario/europeo/clase media» tradicional en los movimientos sociales del estado español; como dice Bea, para las ODSs "es mucho más importante juntarse con otros e intentar sacar cosas adelante que ser muy puros y sólo juntarnos con la gente con la que estamos súper de acuerdo". Este proceso tiene un fuerte componente experimental, ya que como dice Panzer

> no somos un colectivo de comunistas, ni de anarquistas, ni de izquierdas, ni de

antiglobales ni de tal, es... ¡vete tú a saber!, es una puerta abierta en la que la gente llega y si empatizas te quedas, y cuando te quedas pues empiezan ahí a surgir mil movidas que de repente te ves peleando hoy por las redadas en la calle y al día siguiente dices: «joder, pero, ¿y cómo piensas esto de no sé qué?», o ellos te pueden decir: «oye, ¿pero cómo puedes pensar tú que lo musulmán esto, o que ser negro es esto, o que...?». Es decir, hay mil diferencias, mil cosas que te pueden enseñar que... que te devuelven a ti que tienes una mirada racista, ¿no?, o mil cosas que se ponen encima de la mesa y que de otra manera... o sea, que desde luego en un centro social como los que teníamos antes no se iba a producir en la vida, en la vida, ¡no!, porque era "nuestro" centro social en el que hablábamos de "nuestras reglas" para que el centro social fuese puro y ahí quien entrase se impregnase de pureza, ¿no?. Yo creo que ése es el debate, ésa es la migración que se ha dado, ése es el cambio de... como de paradigma.
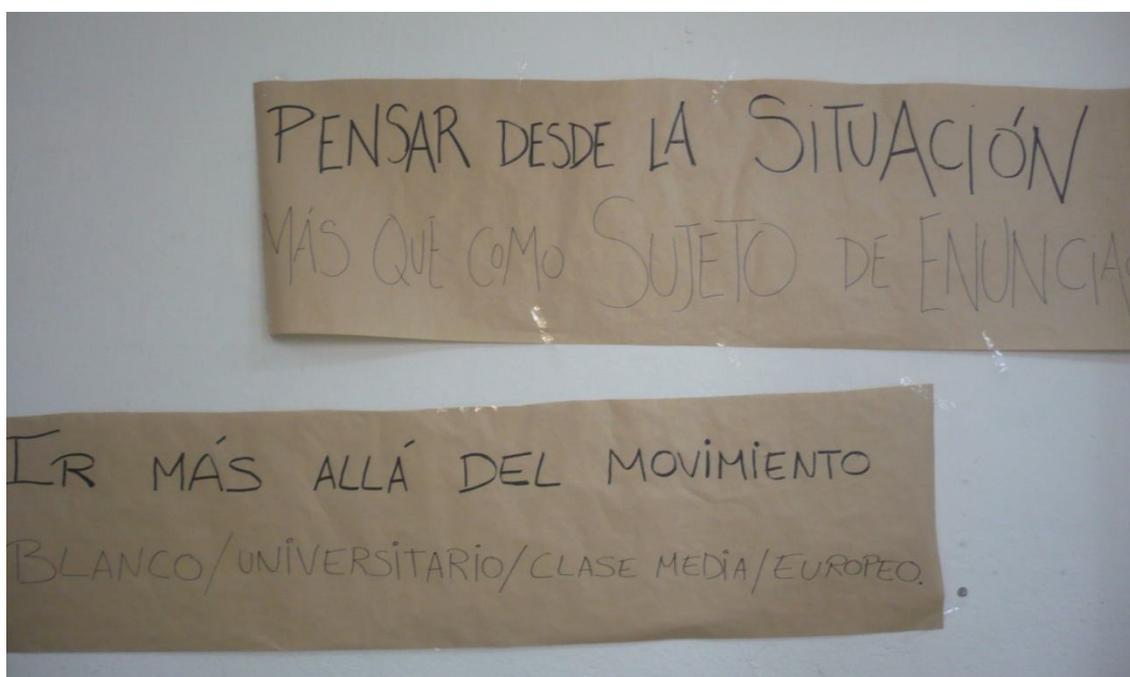
Carteles en el encuentro del Ferrocarril Clandestino, red que coordina a las ODSs madrileñas con otros colectivos de lucha por la libertad de movimiento; estas frases salían del trabajo que se había hecho con las entrevistas. Local de Traficantes de Sueños, octubre de 2011.

En este contexto, y desde el reconocimiento de que las políticas de precarización -aunque afecten a todos y todas- están diferencialmente distribuidas[18], el trabajo con migrantes deviene central, intentando cortocircuitar tanto las narrativas más asistencialistas, que anulan la agencia de los sujetos sociales, como el multiculturalismo de perfil bajo que invisibiliza la multiplicación de las fronteras y la vivencia concreta, material y cotidiana que de las mismas tienen

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[18]   Los elementos que se ponen en juego dentro de estas segmentaciones no son únicamente de carácter económico; para un análisis desde la colonialidad, ver Grosfoguel 2012.

los y las migrantes. Así, como dice Bea,

> el trabajo de extranjería no es «venga, vamos a ayudar a los pobres migrantes que están fatal», creemos que los inmigrantes ocupan un lugar central en el modelo de organización social, de acumulación de capital, de gobierno de las diferencias o de la exclusión... entonces no es algo que: «uy, pobrecitos migrantes», sino que si queremos transformar la sociedad, y no queremos ser sólo blancos, además, pues tendremos que juntarnos con otros que están también en el centro de qué está pasando. En ese sentido sí que era una alianza precario-migrante lo que nosotros buscábamos.

La pregunta central que se planteaban estas comunidades de activistas era cómo producir puntos de conexión entre esas diferencias, tejiendo puentes que permitieran cambiar las lógicas de competencia por lógicas de cooperación y acción conjunta. Para las gentes que pusieron en marcha las ODSs, en una política que intenta fugarse de sus rasgos más identitarios, más predecibles y cerrados, *trabajar con otros es pensar con otros*, situando en el centro de las prácticas la construcción de un común que haga posible la acción colectiva. Un común que, como dice Xavi, "no se construye hablando con la gente y convenciéndola de que tenemos ese común, sino que se construye estando en el día a día con la gente, mezclándote con la gente"; es decir, trabajando a partir de problemas compartidos y de elaborar herramientas útiles para enfrentarlos, construyendo en ese proceso vínculos, alianzas, afinidades.

Taller con la RASP de Zaragoza y la ODS de Iruña/Pamplona; local de la Librería Asociativa Pantera Rossa, Zaragoza, julio 2011.

Como cuarto punto, es importante señalar que este tipo de prácticas no se apoya únicamente en una noción diferente de las formas de hacer política, que como dice Vane, de la ODS de Málaga, pasa por "reinventar cosas continuamente,

pensar lo que aún no está pensado", sino, también, en una concepción diferente del papel de los movimientos sociales a la hora de hacer política. Frente a la idea de los movimientos sociales como vanguardia, Silvia señalaba -como un aprendizaje central a raíz de las manifestaciones contra la guerra de 2003- que "*la política no está en nuestras manos*", en manos de los movimientos sociales, y que esa pérdida de centralidad obligaba "a salir fuera de ti, a contagiarte con otros, y a pensar que había que construir las cosas de otro modo". Esto abría, en palabras de Panzer, "la posibilidad de cambiar de ser *movimientos sociales* a *movimientos de lo social*, que no tengamos que ser como grupos de especialistas que están pensando las cosas sino que realmente estemos personalmente cada vez más disueltos en dinámicas sociales más amplias". En el mismo sentido, Mario expresaba la importancia de reconocer que hacer política "es otra cosa", que no pasa ya por pensarse como un dispositivo donde la gente se va a agregar y desde ahí enunciar cambios sociales, sino "como una red difusa que está atenta a conflictos que hay en la ciudad y es capaz de producir ideas y producir vínculo". En esta idea insiste Silvia al plantear que,

> es muy distinto pensar el futuro de las ODSs pensando que tú eres quien tiene que enunciar algo, ¿no?, y que eres el sujeto de enunciación válido para... no sé... «abordar las hipótesis políticas que nos darán la clave de tal...», o que eres un espacio que se va inventando a sí mismo, poco a poco, sin una idea preconcebida de lo que tienes que hacer y de lo que tiene que ser la política, y que va sobre todo escuchando qué es lo que está ocurriendo en lo social para ser capaz de construir esos problemas de manera común.

Y es ahí donde toman centralidad los elementos de investigación militante y el carácter experimental de las ODSs, redefiniendo constantemente las herramientas y poniendo en tensión los propios límites de la ODS a partir de su funcionamiento. Investigar, dice Sebas, para "entender la coyuntura, para saber cómo intervenir; hacer mucha prueba y error, probar diferentes técnicas: el audiovisual, la investigación, la autoformación, las redes barriales. Uno va probando todo el rato qué cosa puede funcionar y qué no".

Grupo de trabajo en el taller con la RASP de Zaragoza y la ODS de Iruña/Pamplona, julio 2011.

Un quinto elemento a considerar son las herramientas específicas: lo que se hace en y desde una ODS. La primera de estas herramientas es la asesoría jurídica, centrada fundamentalmente en temas laborales, de extranjería y de vivienda. Lo que caracteriza a estas asesorías es su voluntad de abrir procesos que vayan más allá de las problemáticas individuales y ensayen dinámicas colectivas y de auto-organización social; como plantea Guillermo, el objetivo es "romper esa dinámica individual de resolver los problemas porque precisamente son problemas sociales, y los problemas sociales solamente tienen solución cuando son abordados de forma social o de forma colectiva". Lo que ponen en juego las ODSs es el intento de desbordar, como dice Vane, los límites de la intervención social, los modelos asistencialistas de atención, y pasar a la acción para construir y exigir derechos "porque no te los dan, se conquistan". En este sentido es —o quiere ser- una herramienta de politización, un instrumento como dice Amanda "para problematizar cuestiones; no se trata de solucionarte el problema sino de cambiar las condiciones para que ciertas situaciones no se vuelvan a dar", y eso es lo que las diferencia de otras asesorías que —añade- "jamás politizan determinadas demandas". Esta herramienta ha servido, como señala Carlos, de punto de "enganche" para que la gente se acerque a las ODSs y tejer redes y relaciones, pero el tránsito de lo individual a lo colectivo a través de la asesoría no ha sido sencillo, y ha habido una tensión importante en relación a los usos más instrumentales y a los riesgos de reproducir aquellas lógicas asistencialistas de las que se pretendía huir como principio de intervención. Así, se han ido ensayando otras herramientas y metodologías más colectivas, y han ido tomando cada vez más relevancia (sustituyendo a las asesorías individualizadas en algunos nodos de la red) los talleres grupales "conoce tus derechos", que han funcionado como espacios de autoformación y politización en torno a problemáticas diversas: acceso a papeles, contratos y conflictos laborales, expulsiones y Centros de Internamiento de Extranjeros (CIEs), régimen de trabajo doméstico, top-manta, etc., planteando la importancia de la autoorganización como mecanismo para articular respuestas efectivas.

Es necesario destacar, sin embargo, y recordando que cada nodo tiene sus especificidades, que las ODSs son experiencias de lucha contra la precariedad articuladas *desde* la precariedad; son iniciativas ellas mismas precarias, lo que dificulta estabilizar los dispositivos en términos tanto de recursos materiales como de grupos de trabajo, incidiendo en la efectividad y la solidez del proyecto. Como señala Sebas, "todo este tipo de cosas salen del dinero que ganamos fuera de estos proyectos, sale de nuestra propia precariedad"; e Inés, de la ODS de Patio, añade

> sales a las seis, a la siete, a las ocho de trabajar y te vas a la ODS, entonces... pues es lo que hay... o sea, a no ser que cambiemos y que encontremos otra manera de funcionar y de sacar financiación y de liberar gente pues... la gente somos la que somos y podemos tener ganas de hacer doscientas mil cosas, pero...

Aún así, además de las asesorías jurídicas y de la organización de los talleres de derechos, en los diferentes nodos de la red de Oficinas de Derechos Sociales se han promovido y acompañado procesos de auto-organización de inmigrantes sin papeles, que se concretaron en procesos asociativos/reivindicativos en Terrassa, Sevilla, Zaragoza y Madrid; se han acompañado procesos de auto-organización de trabajadoras del servicio doméstico; se han puesto en marcha clases de castellano y catalán, apoyándose en la tradición y en las metodologías de la educación popular y de las escuelas populares de personas adultas; se han acompañado conflictos laborales en los ámbitos de la hostelería, la construcción y el sector agrario (como el caso de la mesa de temporeros de la fresa en Huelva); se han puesto a circular saberes, discursos e imágenes que han resonado en otros movimientos; se han construido espacios mestizos, limitados pero reales; se han organizado pequeñas comunidades y máquinas de desprecarización: redes de intercambio, talleres, iniciativas de trueque, "tiendas gratis"; se han montado rapeaderos y encuentros de hip-hop, grupos de teatro, etc.; se han armado pequeñas cooperativas de empleo y cajas de resistencia que permitan sostener dinámicas de apoyo mutuo; han servido como espacios de politización de mucha gente sin experiencia previa; se ha participado con éxito, parcial pero contundente, en la campaña por la despenalización del top-manta, y se mantienen abiertas líneas de trabajo contra los CIEs y las redadas. Se ha mantenido además la apuesta por fugarse de esa política más identitaria y auto-referencial, el deseo de esa composición heterogénea que desborde los ámbitos más militantes, la voluntad de trabajar y pensar *con otros* evitando hablar *por otros*, y han sostenido y ampliado esta comunidad de afectos y proyectos compartidos; como señala Silvia,

> lo que sí se ha mantenido, y lo que ha sido muy muy positivo, es que sí que creo que no hay vuelta atrás en esta idea de que es necesario -y además nos hace más fuertes, y le da una consistencia mayor a la política- hacer las cosas de este modo, ¿no?, aunque quizás sea algo mucho más complicado de lo que pensábamos, pero sí que estamos en ello. [...] con todas las dificultades que eso entraña, con todas

las incertidumbres, con todas las dudas, por lo que te digo, de que es un momento muy experimental, o sea, en realidad no hay fórmulas, y entonces pues vamos probando, vamos viendo y tal, pero con todo eso... hay una apuesta clara de que hay cosas que ya no se pueden hacer como se hacían antes.

En este contexto, resulta difícil medir el éxito de la red de ODSs en clave convencional: una red difusa, que no tiene una identidad fuerte ni quiere tenerla, que entiende la política en clave de un caminar preguntando experimental e hiperreflexivo, que muta en función de los cambios en la situación en la que opera, que se escapa de algunos de los lugares comunes del activismo tradicional, que descentra el papel de los movimientos sociales y se declara retaguardia (que escucha lo que socialmente está pasando) y no vanguardia, cuyo objetivo no es tanto crecer en número como proponer, compartir y contagiar determinadas formas de hacer, ¿cómo se mide si un movimiento así funciona o no?

Para profundizar en este punto me centraré a continuación en la dimensión de sindicalismo social o biosindicalismo de las ODSs, observando los contornos de la propuesta y los límites con los que se ha ido encontrando.

La dimensión de sindicalismo social de las ODSs

¿Qué significa sindicalismo social?, pues... de alguna manera gestionar nuestras vidas con una estrategia sindical pero que no pasa por dentro de las dinámicas de los sindicatos.

Entrevista con Sebas, ODS Exit

La experiencia corporeizada de fragilidad ante la que nos sitúa la precariedad/precarización cataliza la creación de experiencias que, apoyándose en la tradición de lucha del sindicalismo, buscan superar las limitaciones de su forma actual, en un modelo que, según Tsianos y Papadopoulos (2006), "preservará las virtudes más valiosas e irremplazables de la forma sindicato tradicional -los cuidados, la solidaridad y la cooperación- y las elevará en nuevas formas más complejas de organización". Así, en el sindicalismo social, los movimientos sociales actualizarían los saberes y las herramientas del sindicalismo para incorporarlas a sus repertorios de acción, desplegando su potencia en un contexto en el que, como decía antes, es la propia condición del trabajo asalariado lo que ha cambiado de manera irreversible. Cuando las trayectorias no son más las de 'un trabajo para toda la vida' propias del fordismo, sino la intermitencia entre trabajo y no trabajo que define al capitalismo flexible, los dispositivos políticos deben responder a esta nueva realidad. ¿Qué formas organizativas sirven para este propósito?, ¿cómo desarrollar herramientas y alianzas que permitan modificar la situación, abriendo dinámicas desde las que inventar y conquistar colectivamente nuevos

derechos?; como señala Ingrassia (2005),

> Si el sindicato de masas constituía su potencia en base a la homogeneidad creciente de las condiciones de vida de los trabajadores, el sindicalismo biopolítico deberá encontrar su fuerza en la riqueza de las diferencias, en la capacidad de articular políticamente la heterogeneidad contemporánea, en la voluntad de llevar este proceso de heterogénesis más allá de la lógica y los proyectos del capital.

Como vengo presentando, las ODSs intentan responder a estas preguntas a través de la reinvención de los vínculos (trabajo de base, desde lo cotidiano y a partir de problemas comunes) y la articulación política desde la heterogeneidad (organizarse con otros y otras, apertura, composición diversa). Como plantea Amanda, "si el conflicto ya no puede producirse en un mundo del trabajo fractalizado, entonces ¿dónde?, y ahí entra el centro social y los dispositivos como las ODSs como espacio de contagio". Las Oficinas de Derechos Sociales se convierten así en herramientas concretas, territoriales, desde las que ganar pequeños conflictos poniendo en marcha procesos organizativos relacionados con el acceso al trabajo, renta, vivienda, etc.; es decir, enfrentan problemáticas sindicales sin ser exactamente un sindicato, sino, como dice Nico, un dispositivo "al servicio de los movimientos, de la gente que quiera articularse de forma colectiva, que la gente lo pueda replicar en su barrio, en su conflicto, como una renovación de lo que en su día fueron los sindicatos, ¿no?". Con este horizonte, la dimensión de sindicalismo social intenta actualizar el carácter último de las herramientas sindicales: la construcción de dispositivos de apoyo mutuo y la defensa y conquista de derechos; y en este contexto las ODSs conectan, como señala Sebas, con sectores sociales que están muy afuera "de lo que es la gente que entra dentro de lo que defiende un sindicato, o el usuario típico de un sindicato, como son los migrantes, los precarios, las trabajadoras del hogar", cubriendo un espacio donde el sindicalismo tradicional no llega. Como afirma Gerardo, "la gente sabe que para determinadas cosas recurre a nosotros, o sea, para lo que es defensa de derechos... y luego saben que para cursos y ese tipo de cosas recurren a los sindicatos".
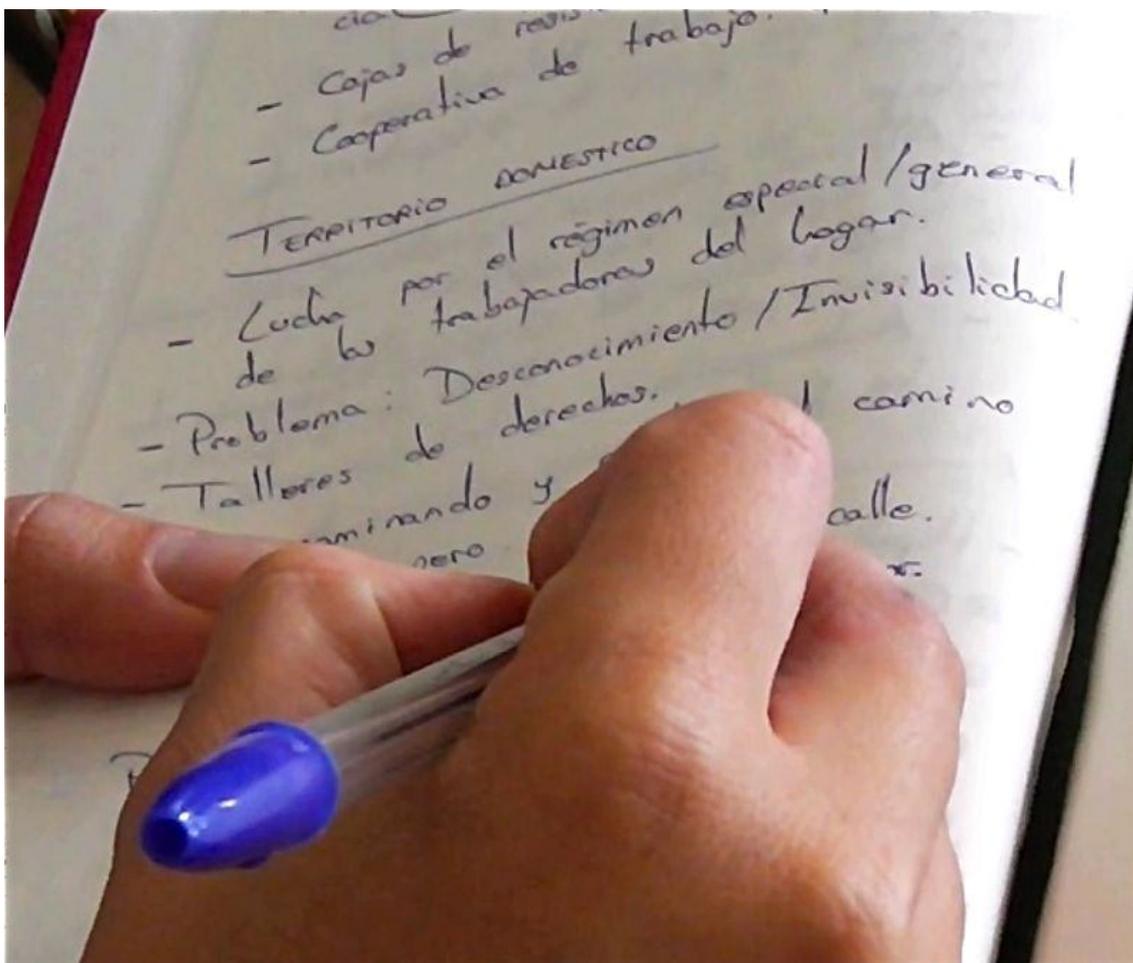
Encuentro/taller del Ferrocarril Clandestino, Madrid, octubre de 2011.

Los límites de la propuesta y la necesidad de reinventar los dispositivos

¿Ha funcionado esta propuesta? En las entrevistas son recurrentes dos puntos de autocrítica (hay mucha más autocrítica que valoración de lo conseguido) que me parece relevante señalar. Primero, se considera que la hipótesis —central en el proyecto de las ODSs- del trabajo conjunto entre precarios autóctonos y migrantes no se ha cumplido, o al menos no al nivel deseado. El trabajo de las ODSs se ha desarrollado fundamentalmente en torno a las problemáticas de extranjería, y como señala Mario, "nos están viendo mucho como especialistas de migración [...] pero es que nosotros, bueno, yo en mi caso, creo que no queremos tampoco ser especialistas en migración". Las razones son diversas; por un lado, las herramientas puestas en marcha -las asesorías, las clases, etc.- han hecho que las ODSs convocaran en mayor medida a migrantes, debido a su situación de mayor emergencia en relación a la falta de derechos, especialmente en el caso de los y las sin papeles. Por otro lado, una vez que las ODSs empezaron a centrar su trabajo en esta temática, su capacidad para intervenir en otras áreas se redujo; así, según Bea, "además de extranjería, queríamos

tratar vivienda, renta, derechos reproductivos y derechos culturales. Entonces empezamos con extranjería, con las clases de castellano, la asesoría jurídica, y la verdad es que nos absorbió totalmente la capacidad de trabajo". Y parece difícil cambiar esa inercia una vez que ya está en marcha; la urgencia de las situaciones que se viven hace que falten recursos y tiempo para proponer a la vez otros temas, aunque ese sea el horizonte al que se aspira, y se extiende la sensación de estar "todo el rato apagando fuegos", o de estar trabajando —como plantea Juan, del Punto Mantero- más lo represivo (CIEs, redadas, expulsiones) que lo constitutivo. Esta idea aparece de nuevo en palabras de Alcira, cuando dice que

> hubo momentos el año pasado que era gente detenida pues cuatro o cinco semanales quizás, con lo cual... que detuvieran a gente que es tu gente colega, tu gente que está ahí, era como de no frenar... y a la vez cuidarte porque te das cuenta que vas a petar, que esto no es política y... no es política pero es que están deteniendo a... y es: ¿cómo se hace?

Y en esta misma línea Cristina, de la ODS de Patio, añade que

> la realidad con la que nos hemos encontrado ha desbordado... o sea, es que la mayoría de las veces no estamos trabajando cuestiones de derechos sociales, es que muchas veces hemos estado trabajando cuestiones que son de tortura directamente: derecho a que no me peguen, derecho a que no me deporten, derecho a que no me... así de claro, vamos. Y cuando la realidad es esa dices: pues sí, pues los derechos sociales y la precariedad vamos a ver si luego ya...

Pero dentro de este primer punto hay otro elemento a destacar, y es que más allá de las complicaciones arriba mencionadas, se expresa en las entrevistas una dificultad específica en movilizar al "precariado autóctono", un territorio que por su amplitud se percibe como más difuso que el ámbito de extranjería. Tal vez estos sectores encuentran aún cierta utilidad en dispositivos de defensa más tradicionales, y además podrían —en principio- disponer de redes familiares o informales de apoyo para enfrentar las situaciones de precariedad; pero por otro lado, como dice Nico ante la falta de respuesta social a la crisis (en el momento en que se realizaron las entrevistas), ese precariado autóctono parecería mostrar una subjetividad "alejada de pensarse desde lo colectivo, ajena a la posibilidad de cambio de la situación desde la movilización". En cualquier caso, se trata de un problema importante, y varias entrevistas señalan la dificultad para conectar las ODSs a conflictos laborales que ya se estaban dando en el ámbito de la intervención social y de los becarios y becarias de investigación, colectivos que además respondían en cierto modo al perfil de la gente que compone las ODSs, pero con la que no se estaban pudiendo o sabiendo crear los vínculos necesarios.

El segundo punto fuerte de problematización de la propia práctica, conectado con lo anterior, es el problema de la escala, que remite a lo que Bea nombra

como "el desfase entre lo que efectivamente conseguimos y lo que decimos que queremos. Quizá sí que estamos muy, muy, muy en lo micro, ¿no?", y que Diego expresa diciendo que "hacemos muy bien el trabajo de base, pero todo eso lo que tiene que redundar es en ganar, en avanzar, en conquistar derechos, ganar espacios…". La sensación generalizada en las ODSs es que sería necesario multiplicar la experiencia a niveles más amplios, posibilitar un "devenir más movimiento", una comunidad de lucha con una dimensión de movilización que vaya más allá de lo construido hasta este momento; en palabras de Panzer,

> por ahora lo que hemos levantado son comunidades que de vez en cuando se mueven a campañas, reivindican, discuten, pero falta como ese punto de lucha que puede ser una reivindicación o puede ser tener un armazón de redes de trabajo o de cajas de resistencia fuertes que realmente respondan a problemas grandes.
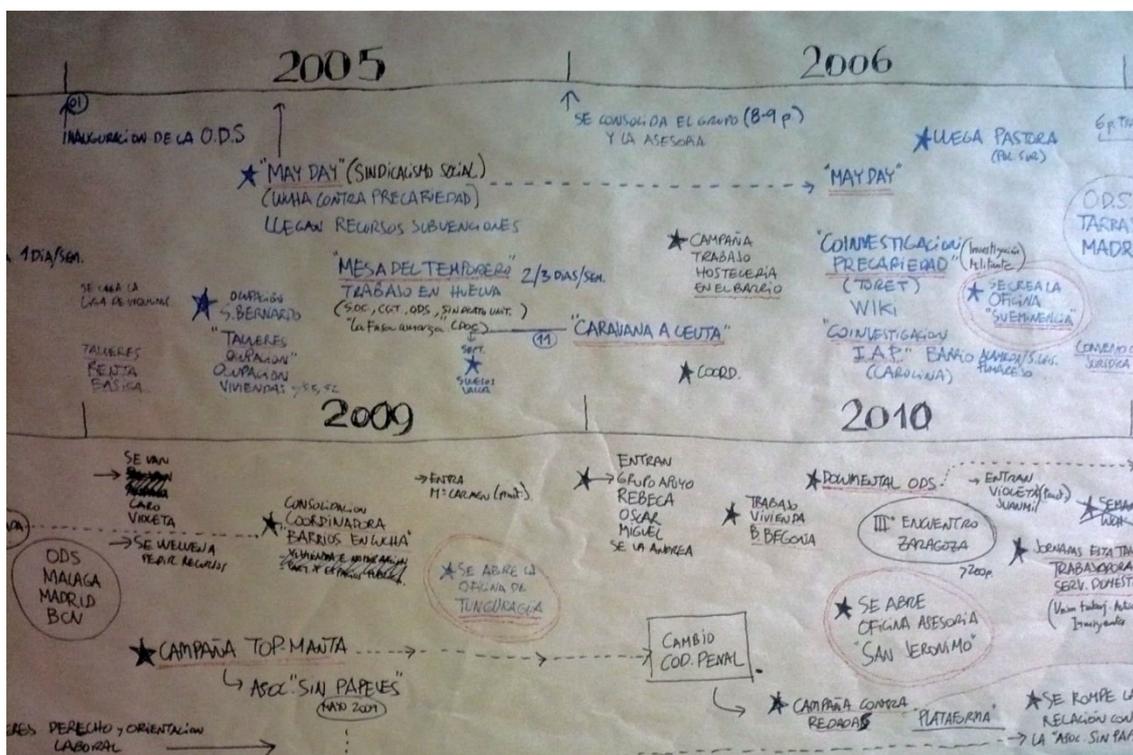
Línea de tiempo elaborada en el taller con la ODS de Sevilla, C. V. El Pumarejo, enero 2012.

Esta sensación se profundiza en el actual contexto de crisis, abriendo una situación de impasse -una imagen común de cierta parálisis- en los dispositivos, lo que obliga a su redefinición a partir del ensayo de nuevas líneas de experimentación y nuevas invenciones colectivas. Al finalizar la primera fase de trabajo de campo, en otoño de 2010, el análisis en los diferentes nodos de la red era compartido: hacía falta volver a abrir los dispositivos para —sin abandonar el

trabajo realizado- poder problematizar cuestiones que vayan más allá del eje fronteras/migraciones, retomando las temáticas que permitieran activar esa conexión —esa hipótesis de construcción de un común- entre migrantes y precarios/as; y era necesario repensar las dificultades que se encuentran en la práctica para desplegar una dimensión articulada en clave de movimiento, con mayor capacidad de intervención y en una escala ampliada. Y todo esto sin perder de vista, como afirma Alcira, que "los cuerpos dan lo que dan, individualmente y... los cuerpos comunes, los cuerpos colectivos".

Algunos meses más tarde, en la primavera de 2011, las plazas de ciudades y pueblos se llenaban de miles y miles de personas que querían encontrarse/hablarse/escucharse y compartir la construcción de un (laboratorio del) común hermosamente caótico, delirantemente potente, alegremente heterogéneo. Inteligencia colectiva puesta a trabajar, comunidad imposible abriendo posibles.

No es éste un artículo para escribir sobre lo que pasó en y desde aquellos días, pero hay elementos que es importante comentar. En primer lugar, lo sucedido en torno al 15M verificaba algunas de las nociones que se venían poniendo en discusión (y en práctica) en la red de ODSs. Al igual que había pasado anteriormente con las movilizaciones de V de Vivienda, la convocatoria por parte de Juventud Sin Futuro de una manifestación en Madrid en abril de 2011 con el lema: "sin casa, sin curro, sin pensión, sin miedo", y la iniciativa de Democracia Real Ya convocando ese 15 de mayo bajo el lema: "porque no somos mercancía en manos de políticos y banqueros", remitían con fuerza a un imaginario y a un lenguaje abiertos, y presuponían la posibilidad de una comunidad no identitaria, no definida de antemano por la segmentariedad dura de los polos ideológicos tradicionales. Eran lemas que llamaban a muchos y muchas, que invitaban a producir otra cosa —otros modos de hacer- y a inventar una política por y para el 99%. Potencialmente cualquiera podía sentirse convocado por una protesta contra el bajo perfil de la democracia española: una ley electoral discutible, altos niveles de corrupción, tendencia al bipartidismo, escasos canales de participación política más allá de las elecciones... había múltiples puntos de enganche que podían activarse para gente con situaciones y trayectorias muy diferentes; cualquiera podía sentir también que había que responder de algún modo a la creciente precarización de la vida, y cualquiera sabía y sentía que esa posibilidad exigía fugarse de la resignación, sacudirse de los cuerpos individuales y colectivos el miedo, el cinismo y el oportunismo. Lo que pasó en torno al 15M pasó por afuera de los movimientos sociales, pasó por otro(s) lado(s), poniendo en el centro otras imágenes que no formaban parte del repertorio al uso, tomando y lanzando palabras que venían de otras partes y llevaban, también, a otros lugares, refrendando así con precisión la idea que lanzaba Silvia en su entrevista: la (reinvención de la) política no está en manos de los movimientos sociales.

De este modo, el intento de apertura de ese escenario político post-ideológico -o que intenta descentrar las ideologías en relación a las prácticas concretas, evitando así que prefiguren el encuentro- es uno de los puntos de conexión más

claros entre la red de ODSs y los procesos inaugurados, a otra escala, con otro ritmo y otra dimensión, a partir del 15M. Pero si ése es el punto de conexión, y aparece íntimamente ligado a las reflexiones sobre el impasse de los dispositivos que mencioné antes, el punto de máxima distancia era la ausencia notable de las comunidades y de las problemáticas migrantes; el proceso donde los múltiples sujetos precarios "autóctonos" se sentían (auto)convocados no interpelaba a los y las migrantes: el 15M era abrumadoramente blanco. Y serán estos dos elementos, el de máxima conexión y el de máxima lejanía en relación al nuevo contexto político, los que funcionarán como ejes de redefinición de las prácticas de la red a partir de la primavera de 2011, en un interrogante que se abría en dos direcciones: ¿cómo diluirse en esa vivencia de "lo social en movimiento"?, ¿cómo dejarse atravesar (en términos individuales y colectivos, en términos de los dispositivos y de las redes) por esas intensidades, cómo sostenerlas, cómo expandirlas?; y, por otro lado, ¿cómo contagiar al 15M de los saberes y los deseos mestizos de las ODSs?.
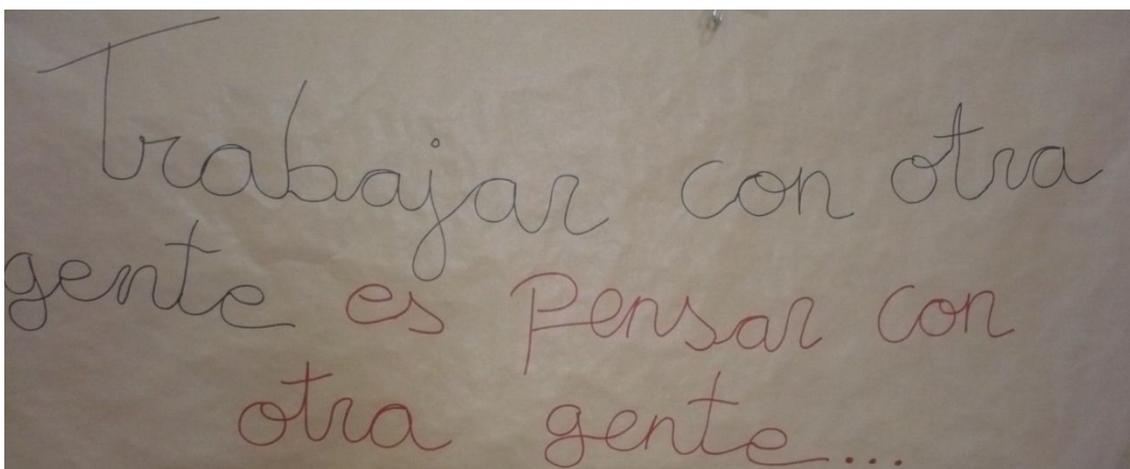
Materiales del encuentro del Ferrocarril Clandestino, Madrid, octubre de 2011.

La segunda fase de trabajo de campo de esta investigación giró en torno a esa nueva situación, usando las entrevistas para cartografiar las trayectorias de la red (lo hecho/vivido/pensado hasta ese momento) e introduciendo esos materiales en las discusiones que se estaban dando sobre cómo redefinir y adaptar las hipótesis y los dispositivos.

Narrar todo ese proceso excede las posibilidades de este artículo; lo relevante es subrayar cómo los diferentes nodos han sostenido su lógica de experimentación y transformación continua de las herramientas. Por un lado, el entramado de redes en el que se inserta la red de ODSs ha mutado su arquitectura, buscando dotar de mayor consistencia a las diferentes experiencias que la componen, y varios de los nodos han constituido -junto a nuevas alianzas- la Fundación de los Comunes. Por otro lado, continuando con esa línea de producción y difusión de materiales que caracteriza a esta red de redes, Traficantes de Sueños

publicaba en 2011 diferentes investigaciones desarrolladas por el Observatorio Metropolitano: *La crisis que viene. Algunas notas para afrontar esta década*, y *Crisis y revolución en Europa*; y editaba también, en otoño del mismo año, *Cojos y precarias. Haciendo vidas que importan. Cuaderno sobre una alianza imprescindible*, que presenta los encuentros y conversaciones entre integrantes del Foro de Vida Independiente y de la Agencia de Asuntos Precarios. Del mismo modo, en relación a la autoformación, el proyecto Nociones Comunes se ha extendido al interior de la red, creando un circuito de cursos y seminarios que ya incluye a los nodos de Málaga y Zaragoza. Y finalmente, integrantes de distintas ODSs han participado en la creación de nuevos dispositivos, como los programas de radio de *ondaprecaria* o el blog *madrilonia*[19]. Y mientras esto sucedía, los nodos de la red han seguido reinventando sus prácticas en cada territorio. Continúan los talleres de conoce tus derechos; se diluyen las herramientas en otros dispositivos que nacieron tras el 15M; o se trabaja en conexión estrecha con la Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH), uno de los espacios políticos donde con mayor claridad esa frontera entre autóctonos y migrantes queda desbordada por la práctica cotidiana. De este modo, en múltiples direcciones, el mapa de la red -el entramado de afectos, prácticas y saberes compartidos- sigue en movimiento, sigue en construcción.

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[19]   Ver: www.traficantes.net/index.php/editorial, http://nocionescomunes.wordpress.com, http://ondaprecaria.com, y http://madrilonia.org/

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Sobre el autor

Alberto Arribas Lozano estudió Sociología en la Universidad Complutense de Madrid hace muchos años, y después se alejó de la academia todo lo que pudo, porque ser activista era más divertido, más interesante y se aprendía mucho más. A los diez años volvió, cambiando la cadena de montaje en la que trabajaba por un MA in Culture and Colonialism en la National University of Ireland – Galway. Hizo después un programa de doctorado en Historia Social y Política Contemporáneas en la Universidad Internacional de Andalucía (UNIA), y un Master en Estudios de Desarrollo en la Universidad de Granada (UGR). Ahora realiza su tesis doctoral en el Departamento de Antropología Social de la UGR, sin ninguna beca ni nada que se le parezca. Ha formado parte del proyecto "Diálogos entre ciencias sociales y movimientos sociales. Miradas, preguntas, (des)encuentros" (http://www.des-encuentros.quentar.org/actividades); y recientemente ha co-editado, junto a Nayra García-González, Aurora Álvarez Veinguer y Antonio Ortega Santos, el libro *Tentativas, contagios, desbordes. Territorios del pensamiento* (2012, editorial eug). Email: aarribas AT ugr.es

Liberation of, through, or from work?
Postcolonial Africa and the problem with
"job creation" in the global crisis

Franco Barchiesi

Abstract

The precarity of employment in an age of globally financialized capital cannot be reduced to the sociological problems of erosion of stable jobs with benefits and proliferation of insecure occupations. It is rather a political issue that interrogates the ability of state and capital to turn multitudes into governable and productive subjects. As such it is underscored by attempts by financial capital to "capture" living labor beyond the confines of production and across the social spectrum. It is also characterized by the widening gaps between official norms that center social inclusion around work ethic and economic activity and material realities where jobs, regardless of how "stable" they are, are no longer conducive even to the satisfaction of basic needs and necessities. By positioning itself as a concept along these lines of fracture, precarity is thus not only a condition of domination and disempowerment, as sociological discourse and left politics alike tend to present it, but reveals innovative political potentialities. A look at the transition from colonialism to postcoloniality in Africa sheds light on the possible impacts of precarity as a force that subverts the normativity of capitalist employment. Since well before the advent of neoliberalism and the current wave of financialization, in fact, capitalist strategies of asserting work ethic as a disciplinary condition for African workers have been met with the articulation of struggles and life strategies around casual and "informal" jobs as conditions to negotiate, alleviate, or refuse capitalist work discipline.

Labor and social conflict in the global crisis of neoliberalism

In her recent *The Problem with Work*, Kathi Weeks has critically scrutinized the contrast between realities of employment under global neoliberalism – as characterized for growing numbers by insecure, oppressive, and unrewarding conditions heralding a return to earlier epochs of hyper-exploitation – and a public imagination that more than ever places work at the core of normative and policy-based representations of human fulfillment. She nicely captures the gap with a quote from André Gorz:

> Never has the 'irreplaceable', 'indispensable' function of labour as the source of 'social ties', 'social cohesion', 'integration', 'socialization', 'personalization',

'personal identity' and meaning been invoked so obsessively as it has since the day it became unable any longer to fulfill *any* of these functions (cit. in Weeks 2011: 77).

It is a useful perspective because it allows us to understand precarious employment not as a mere problem in the sociology of work, or a condition of instability predominantly experienced in the workplace or the labor market and solvable through technical fixes and social compacts, but as a challenge of a political nature, or a force that destabilizes the capacity of the existing socioeconomic order to produce governable subjects. The precarity of jobs in fact has much to do with the inability of a work-centered official imagination to make sense of experiential worlds where work, regardless of how "stable" it is, can no longer satisfy basic needs and necessities, let alone act as a conduit of social solidarity and emancipation. Being able to continuously direct conducts, desire, discipline, and ambition toward employment emerges therefore as an urgent problem of governance for an increasingly financialized capitalism.

My own research on South African black workers in the postapartheid transition, for example, has critically interrogated the persistence of "job creation" as a signifier of progress in the imagination of the country's government, left forces, and the discourse of unionized workers (Barchiesi 2011). In that case, faith in employment-based views of development and empowerment contrasted markedly with the material decay in the conditions of work for most of the country's labor force. In their daily lives, interviewed workers kept their own jobs in extremely low esteem as avenues to basically decent lives even when they extolled the virtues of economic participation as the solution to society's ills. As an explanation for such a seeming contradiction, the study proposed that workers defined the "jobs" whose "creation" they still deemed desirable not only in terms of economic transactions or productive activities, but as metaphors of a romanticized future with reassuringly conservative overtones. It was a vision of stable employment – provided by an authentic workers' government under a decisive, competent leadership – laying the ideal foundations of a desired social order infused with gendered, age, and national hierarchies. "Decent jobs" thus stood for breadwinning masculinity, disciplining the youth out of unruliness and work avoidance, and keeping women within the unpaid tasks of reproduction instead of having them seek complementary sources of income, which could lead to claims for control of household resources. For some respondents, decent jobs also meant national jobs, as they accused "illegal" immigrants of contributing to the downgrading of their own, resented, actual occupations.

The massacre, on August 16, 2012, by the South African police of thirty-four black workers striking for decent wages at the Lonmin Marikana platinum mine dramatically confirms this line of analysis. On one hand those tragic events revealed how having a "formal" job in a context of widespread poverty and extreme social inequality hardly provides the social inclusivity and political stability the postapartheid liberal-democratic constitution promised. On the

other, as the strikers formed their own militant union organization, most mainstream labor bodies, especially those aligned with the ruling African National Congress (ANC), came out in opposition to radical wildcat industrial actions and workers' demands they deemed "unreasonable". The strike's ultimate success in achieving substantial wage increases did not deter the ANC-aligned Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) from reiterating its concerns that "unprocedural" strikes can undermine orderly industrial relations and the productivity required by national development (Letsoalo and Molele 2012, 6).

Such discursive modalities are conservative not only in their political utterances but also in their reverence for an idealized world of work – resting on the results of past struggles and unionization – which prevents a critical reflection on the current precariousness of employment, including its fragility, poverty wages, and inadequate benefits. It can be defined as a politics of, paraphrasing Judith Butler (1997) and Wendy Brown (2000), "working-class melancholia". Butler discusses melancholia as a type of grief that thwarts self-reflection on a loss because the grieving subject flagellates itself rather than criticizing the object that is lost, in this case the idea that under capitalism labor's meaning is to provide an avenue to a dignified life. For Brown, melancholia has thus come to crucially recode the emancipatory imagination of the left, which comes to be characterized by "a mournful, conservative, backward-looking attachment to a feeling, analysis, or relationship that has been rendered thinglike and frozen."

In South Africa's case working-class melancholia found an outlet in 2007, when what is usually described as an organized labor's insurgency at the annual congress of the ANC launched Jacob Zuma onto a path leading to the nation's presidency two years later. Zuma directly assuaged longings for a work-centered social restoration by self-consciously boosting his masculine persona, emphases on law, order and border controls, injunctions for the youth to be taught by force and for "girls" to stop claiming state child support for frivolous expenses. Despite the widespread enrichment of new, ANC-connected postapartheid elites, popularly mocked as "tenderpreneurs", through state contracts and political favors, the centrality of employment and job creation in the ANC's discourse – both as policy remedies to social emergencies and as moral predictors of the nation's soundness – remained unassailable. If anything, the abstract normativity of "job creation" and economic participation has never been as central as in the current context, where in practical terms the idea of honest and dignified jobs is undermined by the more socially disruptive examples offered by government-supported rent-seeking.

South Africa is, of course, part of a broader scenario where the imperative of "job creation" underpins, reproduces, and sanitizes all sorts of regressive discursive modalities in the public arena. "Job creation" provided crucial legitimizing ammunition to the ferocious austerity with which European and American elites have rescued corporations and financial capital in their current crisis. In the debates preceding the 2012 presidential elections in the United States, unprecedented corporate power is reclaiming credibility as financial

oligarchs present themselves as "job creators"; extreme social inequalities, tax cuts for the rich, draconian slashes to social programs, environmental devastation, and the constant downgrading of workers' living conditions get a pass all in the name of "job creation"; the injunction to "go back to work" underwrites the blatant racism of arguments that equate receiving welfare benefits with "ghetto values". But unions and social movements too, including much of the celebrated "Occupy Wall Street", find it difficult to articulate any claims without feeling compelled to justify them in terms of their contribution to employment. It seems indeed that almost no basic vocabulary of social justice – let alone change – that is not centered on the labor market is imaginable and speakable in the American civil society. To the extent "job creation" has signified a massive displacement of desire that paralyzes systemic critique, it can well be the case that "the continuous, stolid attachment to production and employment in discourses of social justice would then enable critical powerlessness and renewed subjugation" (Barchiesi 2011: 247).

The left has historically presented its advocacy for economic participation as different from capitalist job creation by echoing a classical distinction between "work" as multifarious, cooperative human productive activity and "labor" as the reproduction of biological life under capital's dictates. Weeks (2011: 15) has convincingly argued, however, that the distinction between work and labor is irrelevant to critiquing a reality where capitalist work ethics legitimizes itself by fusing economic necessity and normative values. Assuming that unalienated and unexploited work is achievable within the existing order of things would thus run the risk of focusing contestation on the meanings of employment values rather than on the social relations that produce and benefit from them. Liberal, socialist, or social democratic left forces have long argued that job creation, possibly to the point of full employment, constitutes an objective limit on capital's ability to compress wages and benefits.

The possibility seems however to emerge, on the contrary, that the centrality of "job creation" in an imagination that calls itself progressive, but is increasingly unable to argue for radical redistribution and the types of conflict that makes it possible, normalizes indeed the precarity not only of jobs but of the very existences that are forced to depend upon them. The convergence of left and right around "job creation" has given it an unassailable centrality in policy responses to the current global capitalist crisis. As Archimedean points of the policy discourse, it is then little wonder if productivism and work ethic underpin both the right-wing populism of the "Tea Party" and the Obama administration's embrace of fiscal favors to corporations. Yet, as the "middle class", American shorthand for workers with decent, stable jobs with benefits, has eroded and faded into a purely imaginary construct, productivist rhetoric has provided scant solace to the swelling ranks of the working poor navigating their way through widespread downward social mobility.

Meanwhile, the recent Treaty on Stability, Coordination, and Governance in the European Union envisages austerity, labor market liberalization, and the automatic reduction of public expenditures as principles to be inserted, with no

possibility of parliamentary modification, in the constitutions of member states. In line with the European Union's "active labor market policies", austerity pushes under duress multitudes into the labor market, where many will find themselves to have become utterly disposable, instead of offering protection from its deprivations and inequalities.

But also experiments — followed with interest by a left eager to break free from the limitations of the "Washington consensus" — in the emerging economies of the southern hemisphere have hardly departed from a script that prioritizes economic activity and labor market participation. India's "employment guarantees" projects and Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* are the two most celebrated examples of this kind, consisting of conditional and limited public provisions such as periods of casual, underpaid work in the former case and cash payments for poor families sending children to school in the latter. Their rationale is to provide recipients with tools, especially job experience, basic skills, and education, to replenish their human capital and become employable, but in practice they operate as active inducements toward precarious work. They then peddle working for low wages as part of the solution to poverty, whereas it is a crucial facet of the problem.

The global economic elites and the international financial institutions have enthusiastically endorsed such projects as they combine political stability with limited budgetary and fiscal burdens for the upper classes (World Bank 2001, 2004). The left's support, on the other hand, praises these interventions as progress in terms of uncritically accepted indicators defined by development technocrats on often quite conservative bases, like the two US dollars per day that for the World Bank are the thresholds of poverty (see Seidman 2010). Thus, in some of the most unequal societies in the world, progressive discourse ends up abetting experiments educating the poor to accept as the only viable, realistic choice the one between utter destitution and a level of pure biological reproduction adequate for labor market activation. The preservation of *zoë*, bare life as the receptacle of human capital — often disguised in the newly fashionable idiom of "resilience" — supersedes in this way the possibilities of the social *bios*, or common "forms of life", to structurally criticize relations of power and resources. In other words, biopolitics marks the end of politics.[1]

Taking aim at the centrality of work in the governmental norms of societies where jobs as such are the constitutive condition of precarity highlights two important political tasks. First, one has to recognize that employment-based understandings of emancipation have to be discarded as their recentering of desire around employment is indeed a uniquely effective enabler for authoritarian identifications and collective realignments along governmental rationality. Second, the precariousness of employment, rather than its idealized celebration, must be placed at the core of a new grammar of politics and

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1   Bonnie Honig (2011) well captures the opposition between "mere life" as the only ethical and political horizon allowed by neoliberal governance and "more life" as a hypothesis for a politics of liberation.

modalities of conflict, which can counteract the socially pathologizing representations into which the sociology of work and technocratic policymaking have cast precarity.

With such critical tasks in mind, the rest of this paper pushes the problematization of "job creation" discourse a step further by questioning its position within the current global capitalist crisis. What motivates my analysis is not only the fact that creating employment has retained, in solutions to the crisis proposed by the right and the left alike, a far stronger normative centrality than, say, resource redistribution. It is not even the apparent fact that the systematic degradation of existences forced to rely on, or hope for, capitalist employment for their survival is one of the most evident and painful manifestations of the crisis itself. To be satisfactorily addressed, in fact, those developments require a deeper theoretical and political interrogation of contemporary imageries of progress that have kept economic activity and labor market participation as decontextualized signifiers of empowerment and social virtue regardless to all empirical counterevidence.

The issue, in other words, is not of weighing the normative centrality of employment against its relative desirability or its practical, sociologically discernible consequences of improving people's lives, which often makes the choice between a bad job and no job at all the only admissible and significant alternative. I am rather interested in the *governmental effects* of "job creation" discourse, its capacity to deploy languages, knowledges, and representations that produce a social order by orientating values and conducts, signifying social existence, and structuring social conflicts.[2] Removing "jobs" from the normative abstraction of policy categories allows one to study how ideas of economic activity practically make subjectivities and social relations governable by normalizing and ensuring predictability to the tensions, inequalities, and violence of market relations. An alternative — reductive and misleading — approach would be to assume the society in which "jobs" are to be "created" as natural and given rather than the result of political contestation and the policies that create such jobs as mere techniques rather than manifestations of discursive forces laden with power.

The global crisis and its social impacts foreground what Christian Marazzi (2010) calls the "violence of financial capital." By that expression he means that profit-making in the current context of corporate globalization depends on the colonization and capture of life by finance, which turns life into an immediate factor of production, subject as such to the full destructive impacts of fluctuations in financial markets. Echoing a philosophical trajectory spanning from Baruch Spinoza to Gilles Deleuze and Giorgio Agamben, "life" does not mean here just *zoë*, mere biological subsistence, but rather "life forms" as the relationships of *social cooperation* bodies have to one another in order to increase their potentials to transform material reality (see Armstrong 1997).

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[2] My use of "governmental effects" follows the use of "dispositif" and "apparatus" in Foucault (1980) and Agamben (2009).

Therefore, financial capital colonizes life through the appropriation and commodification – or the transformation into profit and private property – of the constitutive elements of social cooperation: knowledge, language, and desire, which are part of what Hardt and Negri (2010) call "the common."

Under the specific profit expectations of financial capital, Marazzi continues, the labor force has undergone a profound transformation as the commodification of knowledge, language, and desire has created a "cognitive proletariat" for which old distinctions, such as that between workplace and society, or between producer and consumer, no longer apply. Older unionized constituencies are fragmented along differentially precarized employment relations with variable duration and juridical status. The erosion of jobs goes hand in hand with the decentralization towards the consumer – or, at this point, "prosumer" – of parts of product development (as in the online testing of new software) and actual production and distribution processes (as in the transportation and assembly of furniture or the self-scanning of purchases in megastores like Ikea or WalMart), which reduce the demand for stable employees. More generally, companies appropriate the cognitive, linguistic, and communicative skills individuals develop throughout their social life course while striving to become employable in a context of declining guarantees and protections. A case in point is the exponential expansion of "internships" as a mode of first employment in developed and developing countries alike (Ross 2010, Perlin 2011).

But financial capital does not only precarize labor through its restructuring of manufacturing and commerce. It has also indirectly put forms of life to work by, for example, recasting desire into consumption backed by personal debt and securitized home equity loans, in themselves major factors of the current crisis. Non-wage assets, of which personal and household debts are a large share, have by now surpassed wages as the driving force in the realization of profit through the sale of products incorporating surplus value (Marazzi 2010: 30). As a move towards accumulation based on finance, neoliberalism was a response to both the shrinking profit margins caused by militant working classes with a "social wage" in the postwar manufacturing economy and the constraints of low-wage labor regimes in realizing value within the subsequent context of globalization. Financial capital thus finds new profit avenues less by directly employing workers than by capturing and commodifying the living across the workplace-society continuum (Morini and Fumagalli 2010, Roggero 2010).

We are dealing, in other words, with a pervasive process of enclosure, not dissimilar from the "primitive accumulation" observed in previous capitalist transitions. Contrary to the "old" enclosures, which focused on natural resources like land and water, the new enclosures of financial capital, its processes of turning the common into property, has life – desire, language, knowledge, social cooperation – as its object (Hardt 2010). The producers of capital are thus no longer encompassed by the direct production process, the workplace, and the waged working class. Capitalist valorization relies in fact less and less on measuring, negotiating, and appropriating labor power according to quantifiable entities, such as work effort, the duration of the working day, the

cost of workers' reproduction. Rather, as life is put to work under the aegis of finance, capital incorporates at virtually no cost the productive potentials of an everyday social cooperation that *pre-exists* capital, is autonomous from it and, most importantly, is capable of *discursively and linguistically signifying* its autonomy. The move implies a few decisive consequences.

First, once capital's enclosure and appropriation of common living labor exceeds the wage relation, the distinction between the traditional Marxian categories of profit and rent tends to disappear (Vercellone 2010). Second, the precarization of employment is thus not primarily determined, as in the conventional wisdom of much productivist sociology (Bauman 1998; Beck 2000; Sennett 2000), by the breakup of existing working classes forced to lose protections, collective organizing, and rights, which underpinned welfarist ideologies of work with dignity. Instead, precarization consists of making labor's living substance – which otherwise deploys its productive powers in its autonomously pre-existing capital – depend on market competition and the imperatives of value creation. I am using here the word "pre-existing" in a non-essentialist manner; it does not refer to a social realm that comes "before" capital (as in "pre-capitalist modes of production") or stands "outside" it (as in experimentations with alternative lifestyles or the idealization of "noncapitalist" subsistence economies in some activist literature; see Bennholdt-Thomsen; Faraclas, and von Werlhof 2001).[3] It rather means that capitalist development, including its most recent version as the globalization of financial capital, is a *response* to the challenge of turning the common into private property and rent/profit.

By addressing that challenge through the direct colonization of life – which disposes of the prior passages of turning life into "abstract labor" and waged employment – capital also exposes itself to new potential fractures and instabilities. As a source of value, living labor is different from waged work: the latter is created by capital, the former is not. Rather, the cognitive (linguistic, discursive) autonomy of living labor defines precarious employment, with its attendant expectations, claims, and needs, as a *contested field of signification* (Barchiesi 2011: 6-12). Furthermore, turning social cooperation into profit and subjecting it to market discipline, both necessary functions of capital, also profoundly destabilize capital. They in fact require a "freezing" of the creative potential of social cooperation into the narrow, and usually painful and anxiety-ridden, path, of market competition.

That "freezing" of living labor around the imperatives of survival in a context of growing insecurity, cutbacks of public services, and socioeconomic inequality ignites thus new conflicts where, as it surfaced in some of the Arab revolutions of 2011 or the insurrections against austerity in Southern Europe and the United

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3   In the case of South Africa, Prishani Naidoo (2010) and Shannon Walsh (2008) have documented a variant of this discursive modality in the ways in which academics close to social movements have idealized the community life of the poor and shackdwellers as an embodiment of truth, purity, and authenticity.

Kingdom, demands for "dignity" autonomize themselves from the labor market and the requirements of production. Conversely, such movements unpredictably displayed the capabilities of cognitive labor in structuring, for example though the use of electronic media, the space of confrontation (Revel and Negri 2011). Social contestation can now hardly be explained by the dialectical modalities dear to the old left, where the development of the forces of production clashes with prevailing relations of production. It is rather that, as capital tries to incorporate pre-existing relations of social cooperation into its forces of production, these latter find a terrain of struggle by defining their productive capacity in antisystemic terms.

The "job creation" imperative as a modality of capitalist appropriation of the living

It is common for the left to regard the precarization of employment mostly as the result of a successful neoliberal offensive on stable, secure, and unionized working classes. By doing so, the left has cast on precarious workers the socially pathological marks of defeat, domination, and disempowerment. Short of victorious, and often utterly improbable, attempts by labor movements to "organize the unorganized", precarity is represented as a condition of invisibility, anomie, and speechlessness. Thus Axel Honneth (2004), for example, contrasts the atomized, purposeless emptiness of insecure jobs with what he imagines as the warmth and solidarity of the Fordist social contract. For Richard Sennett (2000) flexible jobs amount to nothing less than a "corrosion of character", a loss of sense and meanings coincidental with the decoupling of individuals from socially useful, community-nurturing productivity. Even scholars who, like Guy Standing, propose a non-productivist approach to employment insecurity remain focused on the aim of rescuing – within capitalism, which they do not criticize as a system – an ideal of humanly fulfilling "work" – including volunteerism, cooperatives, and "green jobs" – from the clutches of alienated labor. Standing (2011) evokes instead age-old ghosts troubling governmental imagination as he sees in the "precariat" a "new dangerous class" that, unless brought to the fold of progressive politics premised on socially useful work, can become fodder for all sorts of reactionary and authoritarian adventures. In countries, like South Africa, where poverty wages is all the market has to offer, Standing has indeed advocated universal basic income not as a substitute for the compulsion to take precarious jobs but as "a greater incentive to search and to take jobs, *particularly low-wage jobs or low-income, own-account activities*" (Standing 2003: 13, emphasis in text).

In a quite ironic leap away from early proletarian deprecations of "wage slavery" and the "tyranny of work over life" (Joyce 1980: 125), the hegemonic discourse of productivism that has accompanied the ascendant lefts of the twentieth century – welfarist social democracy in Europe, liberalism in North America, nationalism in the postcolonial world – has made waged employment the fulcrum in a grammar of dignity, rights, and emancipation. The idealization of stable and decent jobs has thus encapsulated both the left's capacity to make

claims independent of neoliberal rationality and its last bastion of relevance against the ravages of market forces. Such a symbolic investment on work has underwritten the left's critique of neoliberalism as determining a chasm between precarity and dignity, which makes it impossible for labor to provide existential meaning and social stability (Strangleman 2007). By casting precarious employment as a condition that obliterates the wholeness of personality and political agency, however, the left has achieved the result of silencing precarious workers' strategies, autonomy and signifying practices as effectively as the economic liberalization it deprecates (Barchiesi 2011: 202).

Not only does the representation of precarity as a social problem fail to politically contest the productive and cognitive potentials of precarious workers, thus consigning them to neoliberal narratives of individual entrepreneurship. It also simplifies and reifies precarity into a mere occupational category and labor market position, which misses the broader political implications of precarious jobs as they pry open the line of fracture, well captured by Claus Offe (1997), between the declining significance of work as a foundation of decent life and its normatively enforced centrality in a social order averse to social equality and redistributive provisions.

As a result of their celebration of productive employment, left and right forces alike have ended up sharing a policy emphasis on "job creation". In the encounter, the left's demands for "decent jobs" have melancholically longed for a lost world where capitalism could be allegedly attuned with solidarity and social justice. The move could do little to counter capital's definition of jobs as dependent variables of market laws, which allowed corporate discourse to assert "job creation" as a hegemonic theme under rather different pretenses. For globalized and financialized capital, in fact, "job creation" does not even mean, as Paolo Virno (2004) aptly put it, the actual purchase of labor power, let alone its recruitment under "decent" conditions. Job creation is rather shorthand for a discourse of self-responsibility and employability where occupational opportunities rely on individual initiative and the dismantling of fiscal and redistributive burdens on private enterprise.

As jobs and social provisions stand thus in direct opposition to each other, with the former ascending to the role of master signifier of social existence, the policy emphasis on job creation has come to operate, in the micropolitics of everyday lives, as a pedagogical technology, a mode of biopolitical governmentality in the Foucauldian sense. Its effect is that of directing the conduct of populations towards imagining themselves as workers in waiting, factors of production and human resources constantly optimizing and fine-tuning their potential for labor market competition, the reliance on which becomes the only virtuous modality of social inclusion. A left discourse that shares the right's emphasis on economic activity and its pathologization of the "dangers" of not working or working intermittently has thus put little in the way of waves of pro-business interventions – including reduction of corporate taxes, the systematic degradation of employment conditions, cutbacks in social services and safety nets – implemented in the name of job creation. More troublingly, the left has

been consequently incapable of opposing the ideological drifts that gave demands for jobs the sound of working-class nationalist closure, cultural resentment, xenophobia, and anti-immigration hysteria.[4]

The policy centrality of job creation operates as a device that disciplines popular values and conducts while fusing the imperatives of accumulation and governance. It makes the precarious multitudes generated by the systemic violence of globalized corporate capital governable by recoding desire around production and displacing it from a critique of that very violence. Should such a critique express itself, it might conversely lead to claims for a decent life, sustained by adequate forms of redistribution and decommodification, regardless to one's employment status. The idealization of employment as the cornerstone of inclusive citizenship is premised on a combination of moral and socio-scientific reasoning – the praise of self-reliance and responsibility blended with purportedly self-evident considerations of social and fiscal sustainability – that for Margaret Somers and Fred Block (2005) defines its "epistemic privilege" as impervious to empirical counterevidence. It is on these premises that, despite the unrewarding, insecure, and fretful reality accompanying for the precariat the job-seeking imperative, "decent work" has acquired center stage in the imagination of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and many self-defined progressive governments as a sensible, practical policy option.

Yet, as Peter Waterman (2005) argues, the "decent work" agenda is a purely normative and prescriptive assertion, bankrolled by trade unions and left-liberal technocrats in the desperate quest for policy relevance after having been overwhelmed by the ruthlessness of economic liberalization. It consists of the protestation that a return to a mythical, universalized protected labor force with benefits and rights can indeed square the circle of enhancing human dignity, enabling growth, building communities, and equipping workers with tools to compete in unforgivingly flexible labor markets. One can indeed doubt, Waterman continues, the historical plausibility of this working-class mythology as its ostensible protagonists were often instead, in practical terms, male and white producers of imperial societies that imposed unfree labor to colonized peoples and unpaid women in the household. Instead of taking stock of this problematic genealogy, Waterman concludes, the "decent work" idea projects into the future its assumptive logic according to which it is in the nature of capitalist globalization to obviously evolve, in conditions of liberal democracy, in a gender-sensitive, worker-friendly, environmentally sustainable direction. At the same time, precisely because it draws its legitimacy from the purely imaginative premise of a capitalism with a human face and a moral conscience, "decent work" disallows an understanding of the power relations underpinning actually existing liberalization and the reasons why it makes work indecent for

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[4]   See Cowie (2010) for a brilliant discussion of how in the 1970s United States the defense of labor identities by older working classes took the form of a politics of "cultural pride and social resentment", which, by obscuring the class dimensions of economic inequality, opened the way for white workers' ill-fated alignment with conservatism and the "Reagan revolution" of the 1980s.

so many. It therefore forecloses other discursive virtualities — such as the idea that a decent life can be autonomous from labor and work ethics altogether — as it dispatches the liberation "from" and not only "of" work to the ranks of utopian reasoning. "Decent work" is thus a typical example of a "feeling, analysis, or relationship that has been rendered thinglike and frozen", the "mournful attachment" to which constitutes for Wendy Brown the stuff of progressive melancholia.

In more practical terms, the glorification of work in the decline of neoliberalism maintains a sturdy allegiance to old narratives of modernity as the unlimited development of the forces of production, whereas a crisis of employment is essentially defined by joblessness and measured through the unemployment rate. It is, conversely, hard for this modality of thought to locate employment crises in the predicament of the working poor and the unyielding policy-determined compulsion to rely on poverty wages as the primary means of survival. It is even harder for the left, as long as it confines itself in such policy and discursive strictures, to differentiate its demands for work from a mainstream rationality and commonsense exalting low wages as a path from poverty to personal responsibility and empowerment. It is precisely in such a conundrum that ideas of "decent work" show their practical and political limitations as they are constantly expected to recede in front of what conservative opinion calls the more realistic alternative between any job, at any condition, or no job at all.

South Africa is an interesting arena for these debates, as the sheer vastness of social inequalities, the current fragility of the ruling party, a reality of deep social confrontations, and significant vestiges of working-class assertiveness stand in the way of a coherent governmental biopolitical project. The country has a remarkable policy "discursive heritage" centered on the virtues of employment, which even during the harshest conflicts between the apartheid regime and the liberation movements provided a shared horizon for divergent views of modernity, progress, and nation-building (Barchiesi 2011: 135). It is also a country where two-thirds of workers, overwhelmingly black, live in poverty and only between one quarter and one third of the economically active population has access to regular jobs.

The New Growth Path (NGP) announced in 2010 by the Zuma administration claimed, reassuring its powerful labor allies in COSATU, to be a revision of the free-market utterances of its predecessor, the 1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. In presenting the NGP to the ANC, president Zuma, in particular, acknowledged that the jobs created in the wake of rapid economic growth during most of the 2000s did not have a satisfactory poverty-reducing impact. Yet, despite the centrality of "decent work" in the NGP, COSATU (2011) blasted the strategy as an updated version of neoliberalism and a betrayal of the workers' mandate that underpinned the rise of Zuma's leadership in 2007. The labor federation is particularly critical of the absence, in the strategy, of concrete redistributive social policies apart from the priority on the employment-orientated areas of education and skills.

It is, on the other hand, to be noted that such a comprehensive subordination of social policymaking to the requirements of labor market participation has deep roots. It goes back at least to the social policy debates of the early 2000s, when for the first time in the history of the country the idea was advanced of a universal basic income grant independent of individual occupational status. The proposal was eventually killed by the ANC's and the government's resolute opposition to any generalized noncontributory provision that could be remotely perceived as a "disincentive" to seeking jobs. Despite its firm support for the basic income grant idea, however, COSATU too regarded it as a measure to facilitate economic participation rather than a form of income replacement for working-age unemployed, precarious workers, and the working poor (Barchiesi 2011: 117-120).

Organized labor's lack of imagination as to how redistribution can play a role in opposing the compulsion to poverty jobs, rather than just being an inducement towards them, greatly contributed to evacuate the proposal for a basic income – the amount of which was set at a paltry R100 (US $18) per month – of all transformative potential before its eventual demise. As a result, even if the 2002 governmental Taylor Committee in charge of restructuring the country's social security system endorsed such a minimalist framing of the grant, the most important outcome of that debate was a paradigm that reasserted once and for all the centrality of employment and self-entrepreneurialism as the only salvation for the poor and the inviolable boundaries of the policy discourse (Ferguson 2007).

The demand for "jobs" has, on the other hand, also characterized the imagination of redress of social movements – like the Anti-Privatization Forum and Abahlali baseMjondolo – that in the 2000s opposed the ANC from staunchly "anti-neoliberal" positions, before slowly declining once confronted with the ANC's renewed familiarity with left-sounding populist posturing in the age of Zuma and the impetuous leader of the ANC Youth League, Julius Malema. In 2006 a social movement think-tank, the Alternative Information Development Centre (AIDC) even launched a campaign for the recognition of the "right to work" as a state-sanctioned human right, thus giving new life – by bathing it in the stream of liberal-democratic constitutionalism – to a phrase elsewhere associated with the union-bashing right wing. The centrality of economic participation to ideas of freedom is not here, nonetheless, a mere byproduct of a contingent conversion of South Africa's democratic experiment to the seductions of neoliberalism. It is rather the manifestation of deep historical trends that on one hand reflect the country's colonial incorporation in global capitalism and on the other speak to the contradictory and contested position of work in Africa's postcolonial modernity. It is to this latter aspect that I will thus turn my attention, which will then allow me, in my concluding observations, to bring into sharper focus my initial question on the relationships between jobs and emancipatory imagination.

Africa and the future history of living labor

In conclusion of his survey of the marginalization of Africa in mainstream narratives of globalization, James Ferguson wonders whether, instead of being a context of backwardness finding no place in the triumphalism of conventional globalization theory, Africa is indeed an "advanced mutation" from which the global appears

> not a seamless, shiny, round, and all-encompassing totality. . . . Nor is it a higher level of planetary unity, interconnection and communication. Rather, the "global" we see in recent studies of Africa has sharp, jagged edges; rich and dangerous traffics amid zones of generalized abjection; razor-wired enclaves next to abandoned hinterlands. . . . It is a global not of planetary communion, but of disconnection, segmentation, and segregation" (Ferguson 2006: 48-49).

The description recalls, and indeed allows us to globally locate, the many wastelands of deindustrialization and environmentally destructive industrialism that, in affluent and emerging capitalist economies alike, have been the stage for the collapse of older working classes and the rise of new productive multitudes, employed or not, in conditions of generalized precariousness.

Underscoring Africa's prefigurative potential is the fact that one has here hardly to wait for neoliberalism, financialization, and their crises to see precarization emerge as a mode of appropriation by capital of the social cooperation of living labor. Rather, part of the narrative of progress and modernity shared by colonial and postcolonial governments is the assumption that waged work can make unruly multitudes, recalcitrant to capitalist discipline, governable by turning them into "a predictable and productive collectivity" (Cooper 1996). Central to the elaboration of this vision has been the role of international NGOs, aid agencies, trade unions, and bodies like the International Labour Organization.

The "dignity of labor" was indeed a recurring rhetorical device for the colonial state to subjugate African labor power and was initially translated into overtly coercive and repressive practices (Penvenne 1995; Isaacman 1996). The link between capitalist market discipline and Western modernity relied then on a moralistic understanding of civilization that represented Africans as falling short of the humanity guaranteed by whiteness and the imagined rationality of the *homo economicus*. It was only in the experience of late colonialism, confronted with incipient nationalist movements and working class insurgencies, that the imperative of working for wages relinquished its purely didactic and paternalistic accoutrements and became instead part of colonialism's self-presentation as a social and economic force conducive to "development". Under the stimulant of late colonial social reforms, waged employment, which remained confined to small minorities of the non-white population, propagated nonetheless Western ideas of social integration premised on productivity pacts and industrial relations, albeit on unequal footings between African material realities and European citizenship rights. The

legalization of African trade unions, the regulation of employment conditions, and new social provisions represented not only the reluctant recognition by European employers and administrators of their dependence on black workers, the acquiescence of which could no longer be the result of overt coercion. They also provided African elites and nationalist leaders with images of social discipline, infused with gender and age authority, predicated upon the respectability of male breadwinning and its capacity to keep non-docile women and youth under control (Lindsay 2003).

The colonial project of governmentality through work faced two insurmountable contradictions. First, as Fred Cooper (1996) has shown, within a politically illegitimate system of rule African workers used the openings of colonial reforms to expand rather than settle their radical claims. Capitalist work could not thus bridge the chasm between the proclaimed universality of its values and the material hierarchies, inequalities, and oppressions it actually reproduced. Second, it is ultimately impossible to deploy labor as a condition of human dignity, agency, and claims within a structure of social relations that makes blackness a less than fully human condition, or a position that disallows the autonomous definition of its own humanity (Wilderson 2010). The humanist and universalist pretensions of white civil society as a governance project in colonial and settler contexts did not, in fact, only justify the exploitation of non-white workforces. They also corralled with the imperatives of colonial production the meaning of black personhood. The idea of "free labor" as the end of slavery and personal subjection went hand in hand with policies of unfreedom — like legislation punishing vagrancy, desertion, and the refusal of work — geared to turning black bodies into producers of capital (Eudell 2002). Like nowhere else, the association of labor to ideas of decency revealed in colonial Africa problematic tangles — constitutive of the capitalist imagination of work — of progress and domination, emancipation and subjection, while a rhetoric of civilization (moral first, socioeconomic later) disciplined black bodies and desires.

The African connection between work and decency as an overt project of disciplining beings considered less than human is troubling for the current normative imagination of work-based social inclusion, within and outside the continent. It is not only an unsavory but ultimately historically contingent precedent. Colonial Africa and postemancipation societies in the western hemisphere were in fact also laboratories for experimenting with ideas of market initiative, freedom, and rationality as ways of governing populations that eschewed capitalist employment and expressed their unruly desire through the subversion of labor market discipline and the defense of independent agriculture. Far from seeing proletarianization as a necessary process or the condition for more advanced forms of consciousness and organization, colonized workers have historically resisted working for wages. Faced with the violence, racism, and inadequate rewards of the capitalist workplace, even the minority with access to wage-earning occupations often preferred casual employment, which, despite its insecurity, cushioned the impact of capitalist production discipline and preserved multiple modes of livelihoods, cultural

practices, and support networks across urban and rural spaces.[5] The refusal of waged work as a structuring principle of life was — for unemployed and striking workers from Dakar to Mombasa, from Freetown's dockworkers to Dar-es-Salaam's *lumpenproletariat* — as important as expectations directed at labor and unionization.

As a result, and to the great disappointment for their dreams of social discipline, "capital and the state had not created a reserve army of the unemployed but a guerrilla army of the underemployed" fighting with the weapons of "desertion, slowdowns, and efforts to shape their own work rhythms" (Cooper 1993: 134). Instead of being a condition of disadvantage, as currently portrayed in progressive narratives of productivism, precarious jobs profoundly subverted Western modernity by exploding the contradictions of labor-centered fantasies of social integration. Eventual European decisions to decolonize Africa and put local elites in charge of their countries' labor and social conflicts had thus much to do with the reluctance of the colonized to identify themselves with the laboring subjects desired by the colonizers. The newly independent states inherited these multifarious social subjectivities steeped in the refusal of work as well as the challenges they implied for governance. As former colonial subjects acceded to civil and political equality, the new rulers also had to rely, for their ability to govern, on a shaky nexus of work and citizenship shaped by the contradiction between the universal values of employment and the social hierarchies it creates. Those hierarchies were indeed deepened by the fact that only a minority of postcolonial workers could actually enjoy the stability and benefits of regular waged employment.

In the political orders of postcolonial Africa, the precariousness of work as a condition of stability kept undermining both the reach of governmental authority and its attempts to discipline working classes through the cooption of trade unions (Freund 1988: 81-109). For the minority of regularly employed workers, the incorporation of organized labor in the political system was nonetheless central to defuse social conflicts, depicted as inimical to general prosperity and to the uplift of the poor and unemployed. For the majority of workers excluded from wage earning — many of which on their way to what expert and policy parlance would define as the "informal economy" — the modernizing promise of work turned into the injunction in developmentalist discourse to forgo redistributive claims and moderate expectations for the sake of nation building. For both, the rhetoric of production and development determined the boundaries of agency in relation to the political order and their respective, unequal social positions within it.

Maybe the nationalist-developmentalist promise of job creation did outline, in the imagination of the elites, what Carmody (2002: 53) calls a "postcolonial social contract". But once governmental practices are apprehended from the standpoint of ordinary lives and vernaculars, such a social contract and its

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[5]   Country-specific examples are provided in Cooper (1987), Burton (2005), and Lubeck (1985).

underlying discipline of work took distinctively repressive forms. African states have used the register of work ethic and measures derived from colonial anti-vagrancy legislation to impose compulsory employment programs on newly perceived "dangerous classes", usually "work-shy" youth (Shaidi 1984, Momoh 2000, Droz 2006). The fact that such interventions often remained limited and symbolic – also because in Africa the state's "power to inflict violence did not match the power to force people to work" (Bayart 1989: 23) – is beside the point of how they signified their avowed targets. First, the discipline of work is integral to techniques "producing", as Basile Ndjio (2005: 266) argues, "violence and coercion through which the state authority attempts to bring the bodies of its subjects under an endless process of tight discipline, subordination and servitude". The process stands in an antagonistic relationship, he continues, with the "popular practices of insubordination and impoliteness" of multiple actors deemed as the *detritus* of neoliberal structural adjustment. They include laid off workers whose hopes of state-driven development were sorely frustrated and jobless youth for which such promises are hollow and inessential to begin with. In Ndjio's study of the *carrefours de la joie* ("crossroads of joy") in Yaounde' (Cameroon), the state's monumentality of production and order contrasts therefore with cultural, aesthetic, and musical expressions in which drunkenness and ostentatious sexuality feed irreverence towards power.

Second, the centrality of regular employment as the imagined foundation of virtuous identities provides the African state with ammunition to repress subsistence activities, as in the case of women running "informal" markets, especially as they reclaim autonomous control of space and its organization (Lindell 2010). What Bayat (2000) terms "quiet encroachments of the ordinary", for example urban or rural land invasions, are thus "quiet" not in the sense of "hidden" forms of resistance but because they produce political effects – they affect the distribution of power and resources – as immanent to their very social cooperation rather than as a result of self-consciously political action. Such political spaces are, for sure, often rife with violence, subjugation, inequality, and chauvinism. Besides, their autonomy from the state and capital is always relative and contingent to opportunistic negotiations and dynamics of capture, which, if anything, highlight their relevance as a conflictual terrain of engagement. From this paper's point of view it is, however, more important to underline that these spaces' *potential* for autonomy resides in their participants' "signifying practices", in Ferguson's (1999: 66) sense as "a capability to deploy signs" that position actors in relation to realities of exploitation, duress, and economic necessity.

As I have argued elsewhere (Barchiesi 2011: 16), "signification also reclaims a political space out of what would otherwise be mere survival: it expresses the subversive claim that the work-citizenship nexus of official discourse is incommensurable with, and untranslatable into, workers' quotidian experiences". Spaces of political potentiality in the form of spaces of incommensurability, finally, disrupt the neoliberal attempt to fill the void left by the collapse of authoritarian developmentalism with new narratives celebrating entrepreneurialism in the "informal economy" as a building block of a liberal-

democratic "civil society". Left projects and social movements are, however, seriously wanting to the extent they contest that void with a melancholic longing for jobs and economic participation that – apart from being surpassed by the potency of the multitude's living labor, its "uneconomical economies" and ways of "doing things" (Simone 2004) – reflects liberal premises of order while addressing none of the social precariousness and vulnerability they produce.6

Conclusion

As the postcolonial promise of decent work has faded in neoliberalized Africa, its inhabitants have responded to the precariousness of employment by detaching economic activities and life strategies from the sites of production. Escape from the compulsions of work, determined by both governmental injunctions and the erosion of social safety nets, has often taken the form of accumulation dependent on more or less undocumented circulation of goods and people or overt smuggling and counterfeiting. As "citizens are those who can have access to the networks of the parallel economy" (Mbembe 2001: 84), the meaning of work within such a composition of living labor has increasingly come to rely on networks operating in the crevices between legality and illegality. In its attempt to discursively absorb informality and precarious work within its entrepreneurial template, neoliberalism has paradoxically contributed to the implosion of work as a realm of predictable conducts and reproducible industrial relations. The poor may well demand "job creation" to make their claims visible to those in power, but a tactical appropriation of official discourse by no means indicates an embrace of its underlying imagination of discipline and social order. The conditions in which communities survive the structural violence of corporate globalization are complex enough to caution both against the idea that "decent work" is a feasible prospect and the assumption that social emancipation can be equated with employment.

Conversely, the devastating impact of neoliberalism on African labor organizations does not necessarily hamper the capacity of precarious work to disrupt capitalist discipline, a capacity that, it is worth emphasizing, has largely preceded the neoliberal wave as a challenge for the continent's rulers. To grasp and conceptualize such capacity in *political* terms, however, one needs to move beyond the metaphysics of labor organizing as the core agent of a *transcendent* transformation and engage with potentials that are – in forms that are surely

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6   A recent collection edited by Ilda Lindell (2010) is indicative in this regard. The editor's introduction emphasizes the complexity, fluidity, and contingency of informal work against the dangers of prescriptive idealizations, but then moves to reassure the reader that what informal workers want is to be "recognized as workers", rest their claims in trade unions and have the ILO's promise of decent jobs fulfilled. This contradiction between the anti-normative pretenses of empirical analysis and the normative longing for employment-centered discourse is, on the other hand, amplified in most of the book's country-based chapters, which document production-based organizations and identities recurrently subordinated by states and NGOs or succumbing to chauvinism and xenophobia, or international connections that mostly benefit the conservative and free-trade agendas of "informal" employers rather than their workers.

controversial, messy, ambiguous, when not unpalatable – *immanent* to the social and significational practices of living labor. A survey of the postcolonial predicament enriches and gives historical depth to current modalities of social conflict, where capital's capture of living labor and its common – knowledge, desire, language, social cooperation – rather than the mere liquidation of traditional working classes, defines the precariousness of work and its lines of fracture. A politically progressive discourse that is focused on "job creation" (no matter how "decent") forecloses this terrain of contestation and opens the way to its being pathologized as disorder or sociologized as "marginality". Silencing the political potentials of precarity plays indeed a crucial role in a broader critical capitulation, which opens the way to all sorts of reactionary interventions that reinforce corporate power in the name of "job creation". It is thus not the precariat as the "new dangerous class", as Guy Standing wants us to believe, that provides ammunition to right-wing and authoritarian politics, but a fixation with employment and productivism as norms of social order while these buzzwords are less and less capable of signifying decent existence for the employed and the jobless alike.

Moving, instead, from a normative terrain to one of critical analysis would require one to recognize that at stake is not only (or not necessarily) whether "decent" work is preferable to "indecent" jobs, or whether a reduction in the rate of unemployment can constrain capital's options, or whether having a job can make the difference between extreme, paralyzing, despairing and tolerable, resilient, and self-activating poverty. In fact, contrary to normative rationality, critical analysis has to recognize the complexities of emancipative, progressive discourse as characterized by the indissoluble knot of liberation and subjection and the simultaneous enabling and foreclosing of possibilities. Then demands for "job creation" can be tackled from a different angle: as they strive to negotiate capitalist relations of production they miss how capital valorizes itself not only by directly employing people but by turning into property, profit, and rent the social cooperation of living labors that capital does not "create" but nonetheless continuously appropriate. Defining this as a "job creation" issue would mean that social cooperation is relevant and politically visible only once it has been incorporated in the creation of capital-reproducing value. The result would be to subordinate imaginations and practices of liberation to the capitalist dream of freezing the social into the production of commodities while rendering all exceeding autonomy of living labor invisible and speechless.

As a condition of political possibility that problematizes work-centered normativity and productivist views of emancipation, precarity discloses instead radically alternative terrains of imagination and claims. It allows us, for example, to think decommodification and redistribution, including forms of non-work related universal income, neither as incentives to work, as neoliberalism and part of the left celebrate, nor as "handouts", as they deprecate. They would rather constitute a reappropriation at a society-wide level of livelihoods that otherwise capital appropriates at no cost. At stake would thus be a shift from "welfare" to "commonfare" as a horizon of contestation to reopen across the social fabric the battle deferred (when not lost) at the point of

production (Fumagalli 2007). As Mario Tronti (1980) once argued, the old factory working class effectively challenged capital when it struggled to abolish itself as a producer and deliverer of capital, not when it allowed to be idealized under the keywords of work ethic, occupational pride, citizenship, and productivity. Demands for a "living wage" were about refusing the compatibilities of capital as a regulatory principle of life. Those who fought for the eight-hour working day did so as a response to what was then called "wage slavery", not for the sake of orderly industrial relations and collective bargaining. As the subjugation of living labor worldwide is reverting to the extremes of that age, social struggles are thus coalescing around the question of what the "living wage" of precarious multitudes would look like today.

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About the Author

Franco Barchiesi is Associate Professor in the Department of African American and African American Studies at the Ohio State University and Visiting Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Brooklyn College, City University of New York. From 1996 to 2002 he taught in the Department of Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (South Africa). His last book is *Precarious Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa* (State University of New York Press, 2011), winner of the Working Class Studies Association's 2012 CLR James Award. He can be contacted at barchiesi.1 AT osu.edu.

A Common Assembly: Multitude, Assemblies, and a New Politics of the Common

Elise Danielle Thorburn

Abstract

Contemporary experiments in organising the "multitude" have proliferated of late – from the encampments of Occupy to the Quebec student strike, the Arab Spring, and the European anti-austerity movements. These experiments, all appearing highly networked, have a political form in common – the assembly. This organising model, the "assembly" as form, now seems to provide a point of convergence for a variety of left tendencies – including both jaded transversal activists who want a bit more vertical organization and vanguardists who have been forced to learn the lessons of horizontality. It is a politics no longer split along traditional lineages, but rather opens us on to a politics of the common – something shared between people, not mediated by the State or capital. Using concepts drawn both from concrete activist experience and from the tradition of autonomism. This paper explores some of the genealogy of the assembly as form, and examines the autonomist notion of the common in order to see the convergences between emergent assembly projects – such as the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly – and theoretical tools that Autonomist theory has provided in order to being the project of thinking about how we can structure, coordinate, and organise movements so that they get us closer to the creation of a new world.

In the fallout of the financial crisis of 2008, there was a moment of silence. When global financial services firm Lehman Brothers folded, filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the wee hours of September 15, 2008, it seemed that the left held its collective breath. As the financial crisis – coming on the heels of a burst housing bubble in 2006 and a global food price crisis in 2007 – spiralled, the imagined spontaneity of multitude that Hardt and Negri (2000; 2004) had ecstatically theorised at the turn of the century did not immediately appear. History, it seemed, was not on the radical left's side. Mass industrial production had ceased, in many ways, to be the prime economic driver of North American economies in the years preceding the financial crisis, and many of those living in the United States and Canada quickly became part of an increasingly disposable working class in its aftermath. Thrust into the interstices of a crumbling economy, by 2008 many were struggling to survive on part-time jobs in the retail and service sector, on low-wages only about to get lower, and on an increasingly

weaker labour movement. While the decade leading up to the crisis, and its aftermath, had seen cycles of struggles - including the 2006 immigrants' rights marches which brought half a million demonstrators to the streets in Los Angeles (and more across the US) and an anti-war movement which brought millions of people to the streets on a single weekend[1] - few of these had been centred around strong and networked anti-systemic movements, or were not driven by, or even had the mass participation of, organised labour or radical parties of the left as their institutional bedrock. It is neither unkind nor unfair to assert that in the aftermath of the economic crisis, for a period, all was quiet on one front of the class war. Labour did not engage while capital furiously raged against the working class, reshaping the world in its own favour in the twilight of neoliberalism.

As the world and capital changed, class composition changed with it. What was the working class of the early 20th century was not the working class of the 1950s and 60s; and that mid-century working class is not the working class of today. The institutions, the organisational bodies that have adhered to the composition of the working class in previous eras were to be shaken up in the 21st century; something new and experimental was emerging. The Occupy movement in many ways epitomises this experimentation. An amorphous body attempting to challenge the hegemony of financial capital whilst simultaneously attempting to create a reproductive common[2] centred on shared labour and struggle. It was both the result of transformative politics coming from the struggles of 1968 and earlier experiments in bottom-up organising, and a particular response to the shifting political and technical composition of the contemporary North American working class. But the Occupy movement is only one example of a proliferation of experiments in organisational structure that have been taking place quietly — and not-so-quietly — across the landscape of North America, Europe, North Africa, and Latin America, for the last several years. In this article, because it is the context in which I live and work, I will focus my attention on the experiments taking place in North America, but this is not to mistake the North American situation to be an isolated or even unique one. The model of the assembly — which was central to the organising body of Occupy, to the student strikes in Quebec, and to the new attempt at worker-community organising in Toronto as well as in the American South — is co-extensive with projects of similar infrastructure in

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[1] Millions join global anti-war protests on BBC.co.uk http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2765215.stm and Thousands march for immigrant rights on CNN.com http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/05/01/immigrant.day/index.html

[2] The "common" as a term and concept has a long history that predates modernity, initially signifying the communally held lands that were the basis of European agrarian life. In much Autonomist work — Hardt and Negri (2000; 2009), Federici (2004; 2012), and Caffentzis (2012), for example — the common has been expanded beyond the bounds of the natural world and is utilised to mean the networks of knowledge and communication that reside at the centre of many contemporary modes of production and shape the capacity to think and communicate, to reproduce the social.

the squares of Athens, Madrid, Cairo, and beyond. The radical proliferation of assembly projects across the globe points to an emergent mode of organising in a new era of class composition – one that perhaps surpasses Hardt and Negri's concept of "multitude" (2000; 2004), prefigures the possible infrastructures of the common, and asserts a new organisational form with historical precedent but unique to this particular historical conjuncture. It is in this contemporary moment that old political concepts and practices – such as the vanguard party and the mass – may not be permitted to re-emerge as hegemonic and disrupt or co-opt struggles of the working classes from below3. This moment allows us to examine that which Negri sought to illuminate in his discussion of the transition from the mass worker to the social worker in his analysis of class composition: a framework of incipient new values, existing at a mass level, able to repurpose dissent into a new model for the construction of a communist future (Negri, 1988). In this article I propose that the assembly is an emergent mode of organising in the contemporary class composition. I seek to analyse this emergent mode in detail through the model of the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly, as an example of a political organisation attempting to contend with the changed class composition of the contemporary mode of capitalist production.

Class composition is a dissident adaptation of Marx's organic composition of capital, as discussed in Volume 1 of *Capital*. The organic composition of capital is the ratio of constant capital to variable capital in production or, more clearly, the correlation of materials, tools, and machines for production and the labour-power or workers necessary in that production4. Class composition, on the other hand, represents at a theoretical level the central, historical importance of class struggle. It is the combination of political and material characteristics which make up, on the one hand, the historically given structure of labour-power as configured by the productive forces and relations occurring within capitalism; and on the other, the working class, as a dynamic subject and antagonistic force which is "tending towards its own independent identity in historical-political terms" (Negri, 1988: 209). It refers to "the process of socialisation of the working class, and the extension, unification, and generalisation of its *antagonistic tendency against capital*, in struggle, and *from below*" (Negri, 1991; xi). Class composition defines the power and organisation of *labour* as it is configured antagonistically in relation to capital. It also is the way in which the

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3 An partial list of very recent experiments in assembly politics could include the People's Movement Assemblies growing out of the World Social Forum and US Social Forum, the Southern Movement Assembly, the Southern Workers' Assembly, the People's Assemblies Network alongside the better known Occupy assemblies, the student and neighbourhood assemblies in Quebec's "Maple Spring" and the assembly under discussion here, the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly. This list is in no way comprehensive but provides a sampling of assembly projects that have developed in the last decade alone, most within the last 12-18 months.

4 See Chapter 23 of *Capital Volume 1* "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation."

technical composition of labour (the capitalist organisation of labour power) corresponds to various behaviour patterns constituting particular openings amongst workers which then permit a reading of the forms of action and organisation possible at various historical conjunctures (Negri, 1991; Nunes, 2007; Cleaver, 1998). So, forms of struggle are thus expressed in terms of a particular composition of the working class and the specific historical forms of struggle depend upon the conditions of production. For activists this means that the form or structure of organising class struggle changes alongside changes in the composition of the working class- how one can organise is itself dependent upon the primacy of certain configurations of capital within capitalism. Class composition and their attendant modes of organising are transitory. As struggle pushes capital to change, so class composition and organisational models change with it. In certain transitory periods workers have gone beyond old organisational models "but have not yet reached a new organisation in a vacuum of political organisation" (Tronti, in Roggero, 2011).

In the contemporary conjuncture, I suggest that previously prevailing modes of organising the class struggle (particularly the party model, both revolutionary and parliamentary, and the bureaucratic trades union model) should no longer be considered the exclusive representatives of working class political activity, nor the hegemonic form of working class struggle. We have also passed through the "vacuum" stage of political organising and a new political institution is emergent;[5] that of the assembly. The assembly as it is constituted today — especially in the various Occupy movements, the Quebec student strike, square seizures, and public protests against austerity — is explicitly *not* the General Assembly of the United Nations, nor the assemblies of various states and parliamentary bodies, for they are only representative politics. The contemporary assembly rejects a politics of simple representation and rather seeks to describe and build an actually existent political organisation of the common; it moves beyond multitude, what Hardt and Negri saw as the class composition in a regime of biopolitical production[6] but which was, I believe, a phase of transition.

Multitude as described by Hardt and Negri is lacking. I argue that a

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[5] Truthfully, we could say that the assembly is *re*-emergent: assemblies are not a new form of organising political struggle. There are, though, considerable differences between today's assemblies and their historical forebears, which I will attempt to demonstrate below.

[6] Hardt and Negri see biopolitical production as the new nature of productive labour that moves away from mass production in a factory setting and is centred around more immaterial modes of the production of surplus value, including intellectual and communicative labour power (Hardt and Negri, 2000). This is important for conceptualising the new assembly movements because it signifies a new spatial locale for resistance — no longer situated exclusively in the factory, the sites of resistance become the workers' very bodies, the home, the social realm. All labour, in a regime of biopolitical production, is immersed in the relational elements that define the social, but simultaneously activate the "critical elements that develop the potential of insubordination and revolt through the entire set of labouring practices" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 28). It is both production and reproduction.

description of and impetus to class struggle, and a detailed discussion of the assembly form can provide us with a framework for thinking new modes and forms of class struggle in the present, expanding multitude as a concept or moving beyond it. As we move into an era of ever-increasing austerity and intensified class warfare, the attempt to evince a coherent, non-authoritarian communism capable of producing the common must be simultaneous with the search for a new institutional and political form that is up to the task of such a long term project and programme. This new political form must be able to reassemble and organise the nodes in varying circuits of struggle, so that they are robust enough to become the channels for the circulation of the common. The assembly as a political formation can provide the means for beginning to seriously engage with the production of the common and provide the organisational terrain for the common politics to come.

In order to demonstrate the value of the assembly as an organisational formation coherent in the contemporary, I will begin by laying the theoretical terrain on which I want to situate this struggle. The political and theoretical tradition of *operaismo* or Autonomist Marxism contribute to an understanding of revolution as, by necessity, driven by the producers and reproducers of the social and economic realm; workers, broadly construed. With this theoretical toolbox in hand, the specific historical and contemporary instantiations of the assembly as a constituted political organisation of the common can be made clearer. The possibility that the assembly form holds for potential models of post-party politics comes to life. The assembly form has been used very recently in a variety of struggles, some of which I have direct experience of, and it is from this perspective of experiential knowledge that I wish to write. Thus while I will briefly examine the historical lineages of the assembly form, I will focus on a contemporary one in which I have worked – the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly (GTWA) – in order to make the historical connections and political possibilities clear. With reference to other projects which centred assemblies in their struggle, I will focus on the experiment engaged in by the members of the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly because its aim is to rethink working class organising in Toronto as a project of political experimentation, and demonstrate its contribution to the creation of spaces for networked entities to struggle for a shared, common world.

Theoretical lineages:
Operaismo, autonomism, and the ancestry of multitude.

Autonomist Marxism concerns itself with the autonomy of human subjects. It is a Marxism centred on the conflict between producers and appropriators, between labour and capital, with labour being the active subject in the relation. In elaborating on Marx's account of the relationship between labour and capital, Western Marxisms have tended to focus on the dominant logic of capital itself, but Autonomists sought to affirm the power

of labour and the subsequent responses of capital to class struggle (Dyer-Witheford, 2004), inverting the dialectical relationship between labour and capital. This Copernican turn (Moulier, 1989: 19), first theorised by Tronti (1979), sees all changes in the mode of production within capital as an outcome of workers' struggles. Thus the perspective of Autonomist theory is located in the struggle of the worker and the political history of capital is the "history of successive attempts of the capitalist class to emancipate itself from the working class" (Tronti, 1979, 10 quoted in Trott, 2007:205). For this reason, Autonomism, provides us the best position from which to analyse and examine critical modes of organising in an era of austerity where the common cannot come soon enough. Additionally an Autonomist perspective is crucial to understanding new modes of worker organising which rely not on the state, nor on parties, nor on top down bureaucratic union structures, but rather are self-generative, autonomous, and developed horizontally through networks both technological and biological.

Class composition is also a concept derived from Autonomist Marxist theorising and as noted above, forms of struggle become particular to variations of class composition. In response to these forms of struggle capital attempts to impose several changes designed to restore discipline; this discipline forces a "decomposition" of the class which then gives rise to new struggles and a new class composition (Trott, 2007). In this way, class composition is connected to the circulation of struggles and how these struggles are organised. Multitude is the political composition of the working class within biopolitical capitalism as elaborated by Hardt and Negri in their trilogy *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2004), and *Commonwealth* (2009), but its inadequacies lead us to consider more expansive and directional forms of struggle, such as those we find in the assembly.

In order to understand multitude as the composition of the class in a regime of hegemonic biopolitical production[7], it will benefit us to work through a brief history of class composition, as Negri has defined it. Saying that a regime of biopolitical production – more immaterial, reproductive, communicative forms of labour – is hegemonic is not to suggest that it is dominant in numbers or even that material production is dissipating; it is not to argue that more workers labour in call centres than in automobile factories, for example. Rather, it is to insist that the elements particular to

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[7] Hardt and Negri see biopolitical production as the new nature of productive labour that moves away from mass production in a factory setting and is centred around more immaterial modes of the production of surplus value, including intellectual and communicative labour power (Hardt and Negri, 2000). This is important for conceptualising the new assembly movements because it signifies a new spatial locale for resistance – no longer situated exclusively in the factory, the sites of resistance become the workers' very bodies, the home, the social realm. All labour, in a regime of biopolitical production, is immersed in the relational elements that define the social, but simultaneously activate the "critical elements that develop the potential of insubordination and revolt through the entire set of labouring practices" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 28). It is both production and reproduction.

biopolitical production – knowledge, communication, and affectivity, as well as the ways in which "the results of capitalist production are social relations and forms of life" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 131) – come to structure all of capitalist production. It is to say that the value of material production is "increasingly dependent on and subordinated to immaterial factors and goods" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 132). Hardt and Negri argue that this regime of production shapes the class composition of the present moment, and that different historical periods struggled in different compositions of the working class.

The first composition of the class under capital, as identified by Negri, was the phase of large-scale industry, the late industrial revolution. In this phase the skills and activities of a previously artisanal workforce were beginning to be narrowed and subordinated to the functioning of machine technologies and the "professional worker" was the hegemonic working class subjectivity. The interests of this industrial proletariat were represented by the vanguardist workers' party (Bowring, 2004), organisations with a mass membership and an intellectual vanguard.

Capital responded to the class struggle of the "skilled professional worker" through a decomposition of the workforce with the introduction of Taylorist production practices and Fordist regulation.These practices subdivided labour into simplified, deskilled, and individualised tasks that only together formed a complex whole, and the worker became simply a human appendage of the assembly line., giving rise to what Negri called the "mass worker" (Negri, 1992; Bowring, 2004). The mass workers' labour was truly that of Marx's "abstract labour," ie., "labour which is independent of the particular concrete form it takes at any given time" (Bowring, 2004: 106) as it was so divided and separated from the end product created, "reduced to mere abstraction and activity" (Marx, 1973: 693). The machine rose to new heights of importance in production. As Marx notes, it is not "as with the instrument, which the worker animates and makes into his organ with his skill and strength, and whose handling therefore depends on his virtuosity" but rather "it is the machine which possesses skill and strength in the place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical laws acting through it" (Marx, 1973: 693). Workers, moved increasingly into mass factories in large concentrations, became newly empowered with a class subjectivity and from that novel forms of class organisation developed and new, radical workers' movements came to the fore – anti-reformist trades unions groups and militant workers associations arose alongside older formations such as the Communist party.

The general strikes and mass movements of the mass worker are managed, by capital, through crisis, and through the attempt to "revalorise work through *social command,* ie., to enforce the wage-work nexus and unpaid surplus work over society by means of the State" (Negri, 1992: xii). Responding to the growing power of the mass worker capital aimed to destroy its political composition in two ways. One, by the introduction of

more machine technologies and automated production, leading to further deskilling and proletarianisation, also thereby minimising necessary labour time; and two, by capital extending itself outside of the factory walls, beyond the boundaries of the workplace or the site of commodity production and into the sphere of the social reproduction of capital, into *reproduction itself,* wherein social relations as a whole become increasingly subordinated to a capitalist mode of production. The social itself emerges as a plane of capitalised activity in the development of what Tronti referred to as the "social factory" and the "social worker." Tronti, in 1962, writes:

> The more capitalist development advances, that is to say the more the production of relative surplus value penetrates everywhere, the more the circuit production-distribution-exchange-consumption inevitably develops; that is to say that the relationship between capitalist production and bourgeois society, between the factory and society, between society and the state, become [sic] more and more organic. At the highest level of capitalist development social relations become moments of the relations of production, and the whole society becomes an articulation of production. In short, all of society lives as a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination over all of society" (Tronti, in *Quaderni Rossi*, no. 2, cited in Cleaver, 1992: 137).

As Marx has it, labour becomes merely a "conscious organ" that is "subsumed under the total process of the machinery itself" becoming "only a link in the system" (Marx 1973: 393) which now, according to Tronti, expands well beyond the factory and into the very realm of social life.

With increasing technological advances and decreasing geographical space for capital to colonise, social and even the biological realms of life become sites of valorisation for post-Fordist capital. Labour becomes even more abstracted, in the Marxist sense, in post-Fordism, with its focus on high-tech communication, transportation, and information,Ordered by immateriality, affectivity, and cognition, the mass worker of the Fordist era soon becomes the "social worker" of post-Fordism. The social worker was defined, by Hardt and Negri, as "characterised by a hybrid of material and immaterial labour activities linked together in social and productive networks by highly developed labouring cooperation" (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 274). As Lazzarato notes, today capital draws upon a "basin of immaterial labour" which "dissolves back into the networks and flows that make possible the reproduction and enrichment of its productive capacities" (Lazzarato, 1996:136-7). This is not to say that value is no longer created at the point of production, but rather that the point of production is spread out through the circulatory networks of capital, expanded into varied areas of life, including the production of life itself. As the point of production is expanded beyond the factory so too is the mass of people then considered workers expanded far beyond the traditional scope of "worker". Negri

argues instead that as the process of capitalist exploitation now takes place society-wide, socially and economically marginalised groups such as students, the unemployed, and casual labourers are also part of the proletariat. Autonomist feminists such as Dalla Costa, Federici, and Fortunata also contend that the unpaid domestic labour of women is part of the capitalist production production process and thus also a site of struggle, initiating such ventures as the "Wages for Housework" campaign. For workers in the class composition of the social worker, battles circulated around "anything which bears the work relation without the wage" (Negri, 1992: xii).

Of course, the three distinct phases of class composition as outlined here are never so smooth or distinct. Distinguishing characteristics of one phase flow into the next, as do many of the practices of earlier forms of production find themselves in later instantiations, while new characteristics, compositions, and practices of both the class and capital also emerge. Sergio Bologna, for example, has criticised Negri's "tendency to ignore counter-trends and exaggerate class unity" (cited in Bowring, 2004: 113). The shifts and waves and changes within the working class and leftist political organising are important to note, though, and key to an argument wherein these organisational forms have traded places back and forth, often in line with changes and shifts in the modes of production. Just as elements of industrial production techniques co-exist with biopolitical production regimes, so too – this article argues – are some elements of earlier, more vertical organisational tactics necessary to consider in contemporary, horizontal organising. In the present conjuncture we can see lines of organisational flight converging, in a less dialectical and rather multilateral movement towards some sort of organised yet diffuse, structured yet flexible affinity.

As Hardt and Negri's work progressed the term social worker has been rapidly replaced by the term "multitude". The use of the term multitude is important, because it is in this configuration that the composition of the class ceases to be about traditionally defined notions of class, or about one class in particular, and comes to represent an expanded body of the exploited, thoroughly contemporary and thoroughly embedded into networks of biopolitical production. In multitude the factory worker is intimately connected to the graphic designer, the nurse to the student, the construction worker to the part-time retail worker. All are connected under the hegemony – but not, as discussed earlier, the exclusivity – of the immaterial: through affect and care, through reproduction, communication and symbol manipulation. But, aside from describing an expanded class, what does the term 'multitude' do for us politically?

The coming class: multitude's nascent political form

As noted, multitude is related to the post-modern, post-Fordist, biopolitical workforce, and is made up of workers for whom work time now extends and snakes throughout their entire lives; it is the emergent subjectivity that issues from the class composition of immaterial production. Hardt and Negri offer multitude as a carefully nebulous beast, a largely structureless understanding of social movements and the connections between them as well as the subjectivities that populate them. Coming out of both the aftermath of the much touted "end of history" in the late 1980s and the birth of a militant, transnational, anti-globalisation[8] movement in the 1990s, this new theory of multitude offered both a revitalisation of activist theory and new ways to think about movement configurations and future organising principles. Multitude also, as a concept, was intended to resist the flattening tendencies of "unified" bodies or "unity" in politics and movements (the Hobbesian "people", the Leninist "vanguard") while simultaneously avoiding incoherence and chaos. The aim of multitude is to understand a heterogenous class — what Hardt and Negri called a "general mixture and miscegenation of individuals and populations" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 61) — that is "composed through the encounters of singularities within the common" (Hardt and Negri, 2004:xiii). Moreover, multitude is seen as an "open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can live and work in common" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: xiii). The theory claims that the mere existence, or coming to being, of multitude in a regime of biopolitical production will give rise to the common, through the heterogenous subjectivities that make up the new class, and the cooperative tendencies that are claimed to be part and parcel of immaterial production. Multitude itself will give way to spontaneous and elementary forms of communism as it is itself a "form of political organisation that, on the one hand, emphasises the multiplicity of the social singularities in struggle and, on the other, seeks to coordinate their common actions and maintain with equality in horizontal organisational structures" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 110). But what this organisation and coordination is meant to look like remains unclear.

Contrary to the spontaneity that Hardt and Negri espouse, an examination of past and present political movements makes clear that any political formation — any movement with political directionality — does not arise from nothing but rather it must be consciously moved in this activated, revolutionary direction[9]. New figures of struggle, new subjectivities, *are*

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[8] I use, here, the term "anti-globalisation" rather than the more European "alter-globalisation" or "counter-globalisation" because these terms never really caught on much in North America.

[9] The liberatory possibilities of multitude have already been discussed through critiques of immaterial production (Nunes, 2007; Trott, 2007) and so it remains clear that multitude is not *necessarily* emancipatory, but must be *made* thus (Virno, 2004; Hardt and Negri, 2009). The question then becomes, how?

produced in the latest phase of struggle and capitalist response, but these subjectivities do not in and of themselves necessarily possess any greater impetus to becoming communism. Although effective communication, coordination, and collaboration — hallmarks of the labouring and organising conditions of multitude — may be the source for radically new forms of democracy (Virno, 2004; Hardt and Negri, 2004; 2009), that these conditions are totalising and already immanent to the practices of labour today "appears as nothing more than a tragically flawed proposition" (Trott, 2007: 226). Labour today is much more heterogenous than the immaterial kind so favoured here, and the particular make up of immaterial labour has not yet lead, spontaneously, to this communistic coming together that Hardt and Negri initially predicted it would. It is important to remember that manual labour still exists[10] and the politics implied in the era of the mass worker can therefore still be useful. That this labour remains points us to the absence of a sharp contrast between phases of class composition and regimes of production, and highlights the necessity of invoking internally heterogenous practices of politics and organising, which I will below demonstrate that the assembly model exemplifies.

As well as signifying a new subjectivity for workers in an era of biopolitical production, multitude is also intended to signify a new organisational model for movements of the common. But the specifics of form here is left undefined and ill-described. Here I break from Hardt and Negri's thoughts on multitude, and challenge the notion that multitude, as a radical political force with the possibility of bringing the common into being, can arise through spontaneity alone. This common will arise through struggle, and through the production of alternatives, as Hardt and Negri themselves suggest, but the subjectivities and organisations needed for their creation can only come about through more directional, defined structures such as the assembly; a radical left institution that does not become the "Modern Prince", the erstwhile Party nor the tired vanguard. Riding a line between Leninist discipline and late-Autonomist spontaneity, the assembly suggests itself as the form through which the flaws of multitude can be repaired, and the possibility it holds can be realised. To deny this possibility, to practice the same politics and to avoid necessary experimentation when the vast majority experience life as a mix of powerlessness, confusion, and fear, to concede power to the usual agents at their usual sites — this simply promotes the continuation of that mix of anarchy and oligarchy that marks the rule of capital. I do not seek to re-invent the wheel but rather to understand the contemporary class composition as maintaining within it elements of the old, and seeing our tactics, strategies, and structures as also being both innovative and connected to an historical lineage of struggle.

The common as a political concept redefines the terrain of contemporary struggle, breaking through the duopoly of public versus private, State versus

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[10] Al Jazeera English hosts a regular programme called "Working Man's Death" which seeks to highlight the manual labour that takes place, but is obscured, in today's "technological age".

Market. Hardt and Negri define the common as, first, "the common wealth of the material world – the air, the water, the fruits of the soil, and all of nature's bounty – which in classic European political texts is often claimed to be the inheritance of humanity as a whole, to be shared together" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: viii). But, beyond nature, the common can also be considered even more significantly the sociality necessary for production in post-Fordism; things such as knowledge, culture, language, and historical remembrances (Mattei, 2011). This understanding of the common does not see humanity as a separate entity outside of nature, humanity as the exploiter or caretaker of the common, natural or social; it does not posit a subject (a human, a corporation or a government) which rules over an object (a good, an organisation, or a territory). Rather it sees human beings as impossibly networked into the world around then, as entities which together inhabit in a common world. No longer about a particular life sphere (as is the notion of the commons as natural commons) that can be set aside and preserved; the common is rather about how politically the whole species being can be subsumed to capital and simultaneously how this is open to various practices of resistance; and thus a fitting political project for the multitude whose entire life capital has made productive.

Instituting the common is a fundamental task, particularly in the current era of neoliberal globalisation, and the common (both ecological and social) becomes increasingly obscured through the dominant capitalist ideology and neoliberal state policies. In today's politics of austerity, the turn to privatising the common rapidly increases, and both the natural and cultural elements of the common are increasingly valorised and made into private property. Liberal notions of the commons does not break with this State/Market, subject/object duopoly, and rather risks reproducing "the traditional mechanistic view, the separation between object and subject and resulting commodification" (Mattei, 2011). Elinor Ostrom, for example, has amply demonstrated through overwhelming empirical evidence that cooperative property arrangements do not bring about the tragedy and destruction that Hardin predicted in *The Tragedy of the Commons,* where individual self-interest exploits and destroys common pool resources. Rather, cooperative property arrangements have been quite successful (Ostrom, 1990). What liberal conceptions of the commons do not contend with, though, is that corporations and States, if not individuals, *do* behave in ways that produce the tragedy of over-extraction and exploitation of which Hardin warned. It is markets and States that produce the tragedy of the commons, markets and States that "tend to operate as relentless and merciless maximisers of short term interest" (Mattei, 2011). Property laws, whether public or private, are merely justifications for the power of "dominant sovereigns over weaker subjects in a process of brutal exploitation" (Mattei, 2011). The end result is that liberal notions of the commons such as those forwarded by Ostrom do not overcome commodification but instead contribute to the lineage of modernist thought that denies the possibility of the radical break from commodification from

ever occurring.

Theories of the common propose a different possibility from the public/private or State/market duopoly. It is my contention that a politics of the assembly can help us find an organisational form for these new epistemic and political projects of emancipation. The idea and practice of the common can lie beyond the "reductionist approach of subject-object, which produces the commodification of both" (Mattei, 2011), and lies in the terrain where we see ourselves as the common, as part of an environment whether rural or urban, natural or cultural. In this conception of the common, we can see multitude as inseparably linked to communities, to ecosystems, to knowledge, and to political institutions. The assembly as a political form allows us to do just this — to cut across competing political ideologies, to understand the common as something that develops together through collaborative efforts that are both a part of our labouring conditions under capitalism, but also develops from our resistances to that dominant ideology and our creative expressions in these anti-capitalist political projects. More than that even, though, it is my contention that the assembly as a form both contributes to bringing about the common, but also *is* the common itself, becomes the common in its very constitution.

The assembly past and present

Assemblies as means of forging political directionality for groups of workers are not new. The contemporary incarnations of assemblies such as in the Occupy movement, or in the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly, carry with them a long history of other experiments in workers' democratic control and working-class self liberation. From the early soviets of the first and even the second Russian revolution, to the factory councils in Turin in 1918, to the assembly movement in Spain in the 1970s, organisational forms have existed which, in their very construction, resisted the top-down politicking of parties, vanguards and parliamentarianism.

Assemblies, as a form of decision-making, were often a component part of anarchist and Marxist traditions like the Council Communist movement. Like the "council," then, assembly can be considered something of a catchall term for a "form of organisation renewed at different times and across different countries by groups of workers often unaware of this kind of structure or of previous historical precedents" (Cohen, 2011: 48). Workers' councils and assemblies tend to operate with directly democratic decision-making structures, focussing on the self-activity of workers, building unofficial and cross-union forms of worker organisation. These assemblages of workers also helped to forge class unity in that they often incorporated unionised workers with their non-unionised counterparts. Broadly speaking, assemblies are a form or mode of organisation that prioritises, and is a direct vehicle for, class struggle. Forms of direct democracy are fundamental to these movements, and can be seen in the mass meetings,

delegate structures and, occasionally, the creation of accountable, revocable "local leaders". Features of direct democracy have been seen in even the earliest workers uprisings under capitalism, for example in the Chartist movement (1830s and 40s Britain) and even in the earlier tradition of "cross trade conferences" held as early as 1810 (Cohen, 2011). Directly democratic structures were often threatening to traditional, bureaucratic trades unions as they allowed decision-making to take place at the site of labour, by workers themselves, and did not require waiting for directives from labour leadership. This is evident, for example, in the Great Upheaval of the 1870s in the United States (Brecher, 1999), wherein railroad workers walked out in a mass strike action against wage cuts and developed delegate committees "ignoring the leadership of their national unions" (Cohen, 2011: 49).

The assembly form is simple in that it develops out of the material conditions of workers – it is not "plucked from thin air" (Cohen, 2011: 48) – while in practice it remains work. There are claims to the naturalness of this form, as councils and assemblies have been repeated throughout various cycles of class struggle, often in movements with little knowledge of past precedent. The combustion of radical energy from workers in the form of councils, soviets, and assemblies should not necessarily be considered a spark which ignites a fire, but rather a fire that grows out of embers already lit – this is to say that "workers independently and repeatedly learn and put into practice class-based lessons," (Cohen, 2011: 54) and the practices that arise develop out of the concrete needs of workers over long periods of both struggle and stagnation. While there is spontaneity, then, there is also coordination – the long smouldering embers of workers' discontent eventually combust into flames, usually after the assembly form has already been constituted in a specific location.

Councils and assemblies as the political form for the emancipation of labour strive to overcome the division between the economic and political spheres – they make struggles over the wage not simply an economic struggle but a political one[11]. This makes them inherently revolutionary, as this division underpins the capitalist state, and overcoming the division thus means "in fact, overcoming the capitalist state itself" (Bonnet, 2011: 66). Because unions had historically struggled in the economic and parties in the political spheres, councils resisted this ossified structure and worked to overcome the division.This desire for innovation in form helps explain why councils and assemblies have been so stalwartly resisted by labour unions and traditional left parties. At almost every turn, historically – as we will see in just one example with the Spanish assembly movement – workers' councils and assemblies as movements that condensed power into the bodies of workers themselves were strongly resisted by forces on both the left and right. That being said, there has always existed a minority current into which assemblies and council movements have fit, whether it be from Marx's writings on the Paris Commune, through council communism,

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[11] For a greater elaboration on this, see Negri, 1989.

elements of Trotskyism, anarcho-syndicalism, *operaismo*/Autonomism and other "heretical" left currents which have seen "workers control and councils as the basis of a self-determined socialist society" (Ness and Azzelini, 2011: 2).

Spain in the 1970s provides an example of the use of assemblies as an experimental, directly democratic organisational form resisting more authoritarian organising measures. The workers' assembly movement that arose in Spain during the waning of Franco's dictatorship described itself as the "independent manifestation of the proletariat" (Amoros, 2011) and served as a physical confirmation of the class struggle in that country. Not simply a movement against the Franco dictatorship, nor merely a movement in support of his replacements, the assembly movement in Spain was an "upraising against all forms of exploitation that escaped the narrow framework of bourgeois politics intended for the containment of workers" (Amoros, 2011) and catalysed resistance to anti-Franco opposition groups. Rejecting vanguardism, electoral politics, and trade union reformism, these assembly movements sought rather to invoke practices of solidarity, self-defense, direct dialogue, and the general strike as their specific methods of struggle. Though they began less as a clarified movement, the assemblies soon forged ahead as institutions for the defense of diverse workers' everyday interests, and served as spaces for workers to discuss labour problems and strategise around employment issues. They formed in different domains of public life, taking the shape of meetings and colloquiums, street occupations and public engagements and actions. Through the process of self-education and expansion, the assembly movement eventually shed its purely spontaneous character and was able to sharpen itself into a coordinated self-defense body, with aligned activities and actions – a move that was a necessary evolution from previously fragmentary politics. Through commitment to horizontal, democratic engagement, and diverse memberships, locations, and tactics, the Spanish assemblies of the 1970s never developed into the strict, inflexible party structure of the earlier political mobilisations of, say, the soviets under the Bolshevik party. For a moment, workers' assemblies in Spain became a true counter-power, independent and with enormous force, and full of apparent possibilities.

In the same way that Hardt and Negri discuss multitude as the new, creative social subjectivity of the post-Fordist era of biopolitical production, so too are assemblies and councils about the unleashing of human creativity in the search for and discovery of new ways of being – and producing – together, in common. Councils and assemblies as organisational forms and structures of working class power came from the shared experience of the early capitalist labour process, from the unity and solidarity forged through work, often factory work taking place in the same geographical space. That spatial unity, that locational solidarity, is not as totalising today – which is not to say that it does not exist at all. But older forms of organisation must mesh with and blend with newer forms, so as to develop a politics capable of

resistance, and creation. The reinvigorated assembly contains within it the lineage of those earlier assemblies of the era of the mass worker. The contemporary assembly as an organisational form also speaks to those engaged in the locationally specific, industrial factory work that still exists today. Contemporary assemblies are heterogenous; they do not seek to eradicate difference, as the philosophy of unity that drove much of the Leninist style organising of earlier eras did, but rather use the sectarian, gender, racial, and class differences contained within the assembly as a creative force for the advancement of a dialectical political vector.

The assembly model in general, but as specifically detailed in the work of the GTWA, can be seen as an institution of simultaneous dissent and action that can be, and can bring about, the common. The assembly, with its inclusiveness, non-sectarian identity, and horizontal, participatory structure, registers the dissent of growing numbers of people dissatisfied with hierarchical modes of organisation and politics, and also slowly and often clumsily builds a new politics and social that can be considered an emergent common.

Formed in the autumn of 2009, the GTWA was developed out of a series of consultas with a variety of differently situated activists and organisers on the anti-capitalist, labour, and social movement left. These consultations sought to illuminate the differences between various activist projects and the labour movement (in particular, these consultas sought to bring together auto factory-based labour organisers and activists in the social movement-oriented Ontario Coalition Against Poverty). They sought to build strong relationships of solidarity between these two often opposed forces in order to bring into relief and examine the relationship between class and other forms of oppression and social determination. The tensions between labour bureaucracies and activists which existed throughout the history of radical movements[12] was also at play in left organising in Toronto. The GTWA is imagined as a place where these tensions can be sorted through and alleviated. The Assembly is narrow enough to limit its membership to those identifying with the anti-capitalist left, but broad enough to encompass anarchists and socialists, labour activists and social movement organisers, autonomists and communists, Trotskyists and dissident members of Canada's social democratic party, the New Democratic Party. As a space of reflection and action for disparate and often disconnected actors, the Assembly hopes to defragment struggles and build larger collectivities for work that might address the limits of earlier modes of organising and opens the Assembly up to the possibility of being, or becoming, a living body engaged in the creation of the common, even if it does not directly recognise itself as participating in this. Much of what connects the Assembly to the concept of multitude is largely unrecognised by the organisation (as Autonomist thought is not the prevailing political tendency within the project), but it is these connections that, if deepened,

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[12] Much of which is outlined in Ness and Azzelini (2011).

can continue the GTWA as a radical and revolutionary institution of the common.

The Occupy movement, too, uses the model of the assembly in unique and important ways – the General Assembly was the centrepiece of most Occupy encampments, with GAs often taking place twice a day during the active occupations. The complexity of Occupy's engagement with the assembly process points us to some of the difficulties that embed themselves within the notions of both "the common" and "multitude." General Assemblies in various Occupy sites were points of contention, and varied sites took different approaches to the use and structure of the GA. The New York City General Assembly, struck before the Occupy encampments began, agreed upon the following definition of the General Assembly on 3 September 2011:

> NYC General Assemblies are an open, participatory, and horizontally organised process through which we are building the capacity to constitute ourselves in public as autonomous collective forces within and against representative politics, cultural death, and the constant crisis of our times (quoted in Holmes, 2012: 152).

But, by October when the Occupy Wall Street encampment was just a month old, some argued that the "General Assembly was becoming a form of entertainment" and it "could not withstand the pressures of a constant public and permeable space" (Holmes, 2012: 155). The GA was, itself, becoming a "machine of the mob" (Holmes, 2012: 155), counter to its original intentions. There is a distinct difference between the *use* of assemblies by Occupy, and the assembly *as* the predominant form of a political body on the left centred around a baseline of generally shared politics – something Occupy could not claim but the GTWA can. Occupy sites also used General Assemblies as decision-making bodies and information-sharing sites over the course of a spatial occupation – they are open to anyone at any time without any specific membership criteria, thus often involving actors with competing politics and priorities. The Coalition of student associations, *CLASSE*[13], which drove much of the Quebec student strike imagined the assembly as the political spaces in which organisers and participants would come together, discuss politics, debate, and decide upon strategy in a movement of diverse political actors grounded by a shared political demand. The Assemblies were open for observers, but votes could only come from those affiliated with member organisations. For example, only members of the Geography department at Concordia University could vote in the assembly held by that departmental association. For the GTWA, the assembly is the form through which a non-sectarian, open and heterogenous politics are conducted by political actors of varying tendencies

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[13] CLASSE stands for the Coalition Large de l' ASSE or, in English, the Broad Coalition of Associations for Student Union Solidarity.

for which strategies and tactics form the largest deviation. The difference between these three examples is subtle but important – it is the difference between the assembly a tool and as mode of being. The GTWA, even if it fails – and it may, indeed have already failed in its heterogenous aims by the time of this printing – the project itself, in attempting to think through *new* forms of left working class organising in Toronto, has begun the process of creating a new organisational common; it has taken initial steps forward in expanding and deepening processes of struggle in the city through attempted convergences of competing and differing visions of radical left organising. It has raised the level of discourse and debate alongside the level of collaboration, even if its long-term survival remains to be seen.

The assembly as common

Protracted internal debate is an essential component of an assembly. This commitment to debate and dialogue can make conclusions slow to arrive at but does not have to derail the process of decision-making entirely. GTWA meetings are forums for debates that are otherwise not had on the left in general. With just over 300 members, the Assembly does not operate on the basis of consensus, and instead uses voting as its decision making tool. The General Assembly is the highest authority of the GTWA, and no decisions can be made or passed unless they go through discussion, debate, and voting by the assembly as a whole. In this way, assembly politics can begin to actively rethink the dichotomy between vertical and lateral organising, in favour of more hybrid models, recognising the necessity of working with diverse subjects and groups, while maintaining a commitment to continued struggle through practice, debate, and action. An assembly, then, attempts to strengthen political communication for the multitude. If we are to see networking and dialogue as a series of situational negotiations based around the possibility of changing both one's own standpoint and that of another person's, an assembly gives a foundation for this spatial and temporal togetherness without the necessity of drawing clean lines of for or against, distinctions of good versus evil. That being said, disagreements arise, and the GTWA has not yet discovered ways to move forward in the face of serious political polarities. As time goes on, certain positions within the assembly harden, certain tendencies calcify and certain segments of the GTWA population – mostly more horizontal activists, anarchists and autonomists – feel less "at home" within the greater body, due to concerns over the direction of the assembly. This said, many of these activists still feel a commitment to the work they carry out in the committees or campaigns where the majority of their activity is centred. This opens up a serious issue with regard to the level of democratic engagement on the part of the membership and troubles easy understandings of the assembly as a model to simply put in place to improve democratic organising. That being said, providing the space to begin to work through these disagreements – to talk across tendencies – is an important first step in building mass movement

organisations that are not to re-inscribe oft-committed errors more vanguardist-type organising models.

As noted, most of the GTWA's action-oriented work takes place in its various committees and campaigns which include the Public Sector Defense Committee, the Feminist Action Committee, the Internal Education and Political Development Committee, the Culture Committee, and the Free and Accessible Transit Campaign. These committees and campaigns have autonomy to carry out political activity in the way that they deem most valuable, and their actions then lay the foundation for broader political debate and commentary. For example, in the winter of 2012 the Public Sector Defense Committee intervened in a dispute between a labour organisation and a social movement organisation. As Toronto's city council prepared to vote on a highly contentious austerity budget that would see cuts to social programming and the outsourcing of many unionised jobs, social movement activists sought to take action, organising a demonstration outside of City Hall on the evening of the vote. The labour organisation initially did not respond to calls for collaboration and when they finally did, they attempted to control the planned demonstration actions. The social movement activists sought to enter City Hall and engage in a process of non-violent disruption of the council meeting. The labour organisation disagreed with these tactics, but went further, attempting to thwart the social movement activists and community members from proceeding with their action by threatening to take over the rally and cut social movement activists out. The GTWA Public Sector Defense Committee felt it inappropriate for organised labour to dictate the terms of protest to social movement and community groups, but remained cognizant of the fractious history in activism that the immediate conflict was replaying — a history of disagreement around tactics between labour unions and social movements that is in no way limited to organising in Toronto.

As a clarification of its own politics, and through long discussions, the Committee drafted a letter to the labour organisation highlighting three issues at the heart of the current manifestation of the conflict between social movements (less hierarchical) and unions (more hierarchical), including a) the legitimacy of certain social movements as a significant community voice, b) the role of certain social movements in rallies, protests, and demonstrations, and, most importantly, c) labour organisations' claims to unilateral authority in determining the tactics of others. The Committee felt that the conflict between the labour organisation and the social movement was a key sticking point in a history of struggles as they have manifested in varying geographic locales, and it needed resolution. Whenever there is collaboration between more horizontal and more vertical organisations, there is a question of surrendering some autonomy in the name of common strategy, and this needs to be respectfully negotiated. One group cannot assert dominion over the tactics of others, and the committee felt that limiting class struggle to "polite" tactics are neither effective nor in tune with the ways labour has acted in the past, nor with the prevailing political

conditions, such as the recent actions of Occupy, which helped to inaugurate bold and audacious actions onto a mainstream political stage. This intervention led to conflict within the broader organisation as a whole — some members agreeing with the Committee's intervention, others virulently disagreeing. The end result was a fruitful, powerful, and important political debate and discussion that helped the Assembly further delineate its own politics and positions, bringing not unity to a multitude, but rather the negotiation of difference.

For Hardt and Negri's multitude, there is no unity, no centrality, no homogeneity. Multitude is heterogenous, the opposite of previous forms of communism which relied on an homogenous subjectivity around which the politics could cohere. A contemporary politics of the common rely on different social subjectivity, an internally differentiated subjectivity that is heterogenous but not separate. In a way that the concept of multitude is unable to, the notion of an assembly as a coming together of bodies and subjects into politicised space creates a *form* of unity without necessitating an absolute agreement. In the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly debate rages regarding structure and practice; regarding the future directions of the project. Should the assembly intervene in electoral politics or develop a political platform? Should it become a more active force in organising or focus on strengthening political debate and changing political conversations? None of these debates are resolved, but the important work is already underway — creating the common space for these conversations to take place.

The GTWA also represents a common politics by bringing together different segments of the working class, segments that have been divided by "the pressures of neoliberal policies and labour markets" (Rosenfeld, 2011) and isolated both in their workplaces and homes. Isolation is a large part of post-Fordist capitalism, as workers are no longer convening together in large factories but are, often, separated in precarious work conditions, labouring on contracts, working from home or in others' homes,[14] often located in alienating suburbs. But the isolation of workers in post-Fordist capitalism is not only spatial. The divisions that are part and parcel of the new, post-Fordist workforce have created rancour within the working class itself. Workers are pitted against workers for jobs and, in times of austerity, those perceived members of the labour aristocracy with union protection who labour for higher wages and greater benefits are taken by many members of the non-unionised working class to be an obstacle to greater wealth distribution and thus a different kind of class enemy[15]. In Toronto, for example, the working class is very mixed with a dramatically declining

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[14] This is most especially the case of women, often racialised women, engaged in care work, such as domestic workers, personal support workers, and those engaged in elder care. Much of this has been discussed by autonomist feminists such as Dalla Costa, Fortunati, Federici and the Spanish feminist collective, Precarias a la Deriva.

[15] This can be seen in the comments sections of newspapers on a regular basis.

industrial base and the financial sector, real estate, and public services as the economic drivers of the city. The working class itself is divided into "highly segmented clumps of concentrated numbers: construction; upper-end manufacturing; lower-end manufacturing; servicing the financial services cluster, as well as the retail centres and the entertainment complexes" (Rosenfeld, 2011). Deeper internal divisions within the working class continue with the trajectory of neoliberalism. Such divisions reveal themselves to be highly gendered and racialised in Toronto . Real wages across the city have declined over the last decade[16] as much work has been consistently outsourced, privatised and restructured. Immigrants – of which there is a high density in Toronto – can make up key elements of the commercial capitalist class, but these communities also make up "an increasingly cheapened and precarious segment of the working class" (Rosenfeld, 2011), this being particularly true in the case of migrant women. What we are seeing, then, is less the Autonomist circulation of struggles than the segmentation of struggles amongst disparate groups. The concerns of the employed are counterposed to those of the welfare recipient; a white middle-class positioned against new immigrants; the taxpaying private sector maligns and competes with a parasitic public service. This momentum does not recompose struggles in circulation, as earlier Autonomist theories suggested took place in the era of the mass worker, for example. Rather, a de-compositionary antagonism of struggles (Dyer-Witheford, 2011) is underway and it is into this trajectory that the assembly – assemblies of the multitude in general, the GTWA in particular, can intervene and serve as a new political force for the creation of the common. The assembly is and can be the organisational mode and conceptual framework for a politicised multitude, one with a strong commitment to class analysis that simultaneously recognises the differing experiences of those interpellated into the body of the working class/multitude. The GTWA, especially through the work of its committees, is making the first steps towards the creation of an organisation of the common that is centred in both a class analysis of capital, but able to see the tendrils of capitalist exploitation that radiate outwards, throughout the social factory.

This base building through action is integral to the longevity of the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly in particular and to assemblies as political movements in general. These bases make the Assembly an institution of the common which can develop and maintain a circulation of struggles long past the invocation of a revolutionary moment but throughout the very core of a new common social future. Earlier movements of multitude, in particular the anti-globalisation movement of the late 1990s, were mostly unsuccessful in the Western context of creating long-lasting institutions (and fair enough, that was never its aim). As some have suggested

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[16] See Hulchanski, David J. et al "Toronto Divided? Polarizing Trends That Could Split the City Apart", a report for the Cities Centre at the University of Toronto, 2010, available at http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/gtuo/TorontoDivided-PolarizingTrends-CUI-January2010.pdf

(Katsiaficas, 2002; 2006, Nunes, 2007), the movements of the 1990s were often meant to be momentary, spectacular, tangential, and then dissipate. The main "institutions" which arose were largely in the ephemeral, virtual world of the internet. With its multipolar means of production and circulation, the internet was a way to massify information and open movements up to horizontality and transparency. As Nunes notes "it is only within the horizon of a social life that has become networked that a politics of networking as such can appear" (Nunes, 2007). Moving beyond the thrill of late-90s organising around the internet and the recent ecstatic claims of Facebook and Twitter revolutions that so ignored the low-tech actuality of the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions, the GTWA marks a turning point in the relationship between communication technology and radical political organising. In its monthly coffeehouses, which offer space for members and the general public to discuss a specific theme or issue in its campaigns and general membership meetings, the GTWA attempts to create new spaces for people to meet together in person, to create the persistence and physical connection, which seemed to be missing from over-reliance on virtual communication. At the same time, the Assembly pursues very sophisticated digital communication strategies, using the internet for flexible and quick decision-making, communication, and promotion without forgetting the importance of face-to-face contact and debate. It is this strategy of melding the concrete and the virtual that operates to overcome the ephemerality and temporality of anti-globalisation movements, and yet still permits the flexibility and spontaneity that were doused in inflexible party structures of older forms of organisation.

In the era of crisis and austerity in which we are embedded, devising new political strategies and experimenting with new political forms is not only beneficial but is a necessity. Developing tactics and movements from below will be the only form of bringing about the common, and opening up the revolutionary potentiality of multitude. The assembly as a political form can be seen as that structure through which radical politics, politics of the common, can be formulated and developed. Certainly there is much to be learned from past movements, and as political subjects we must be aware of these histories, but the assembly form allows us to remain flexible enough to adapt to contemporary conditions, respond to contemporary crisis, and make space for a diverse range of subjects and actors so as to make radical social change — the coming of the common — a true possibility.

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About the author

Elise Thorburn is a PhD Candidate currently working on her dissertation while on a Fulbright Fellowship at UNC-Chapel Hill. She is also on the editorial collective of *Upping the Anti*, the founder of the Feminist Action Committee in the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly, and a collective member of Edu-Factory. Her research is focused on the intersection between technology, politics, and cybernetic history. She can be contacted via ethorbur AT uwo.ca.

A new species of shark: towards direct unionism
Godfrey Moase

*"What can we do today so that tomorrow we can do what we
are unable to do today?"* Paulo Freire

Introduction

We have reached a moment in the technological development of human society
where we are limited not by our resources but by our imaginations. We will be
judged as a generation, as a civilisation, on whether we have the collective
capacity to think our way through the iron cage in which we have encased
ourselves. If we don't, no other generation for thousands of years will have the
same opportunity.

Those who are lucky enough to inhabit the top of the iron cage imagine it's not
in their interest to escape it. For this reason we cannot expect that some civic-
minded oligarch will absolve us of the responsibility to act. The question I'm
posing is therefore directed towards the rest of us prisoners. What can we do to
escape, and to build a society founded upon equality, solidarity, sustainability
and true freedom? I want to sketch out the structure of an organisation that can
achieve this — a union for the 21st century.

The rest of this article may read like an autopsy of a dead body. In a way it is.
Unions are like sharks; when they stop moving they die. The union equivalent of
a shark's perpetual motion is members acting together around issues. The rules
that control and limit unions prevent union power critically interfering with the
employer community's desire to structure the workplace in such a manner that
it produces as much profit as possible. It is time for the union movement to
devise a new organisational structure which can challenge the status quo and
effect real change.

The crisis of representative unionism

Before I go into the details of the new structure some context is necessary. We
can divide each and every union in the 20th century into one of two structures:
representative and insurrectional. A representative union (RU) is one where the
officials of that union act as the advisers and representatives of the rank-and-file
membership, through contract negotiations and other legal proceedings. This
model has brought real benefits to generations of working people (such as the
weekend or the minimum wage) but it's fundamentally limited in what it can
achieve. Although we shouldn't knock higher wages, a greater say in the
workplace and progressive social policy, this model of union is forever
vulnerable and any gains it achieves are conditional and reversible. An
insurrectional union (IU) is one that seeks to use the economic and physical
power of the working class to transform the dominant mode of production. Its

horizons may be vast, but given the existential threat it poses to the dominant order it is subject to direct and violent repression. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and Poland's Solidarity (pre-1981) are probably the most notable examples of IUs.

The history of the union movement's interaction with the state can be summed up as a carrot and stick two-step in response to growing workers' power. Insurrectional unions have been repressed, their leaders killed or jailed. Representative unions have been given conditional legal recognition that (at least partially) legitimises their role within the wider economy. This conditional recognition has allowed RUs to build up a significant pool of resources: financial resources, offices and staff (although this is still very little when compared to corporations). Representative unions require these resources in order to go about their daily functions. But these resources are also the RU's Achilles' Heel: take it away and they cease to function. It's not really the laws that regulate industrial action that are used to tame representative unions — it's the threat of having those resources taken away as a result of transgressing the state-sanctioned limits of industrial action.

The union is the membership, and the membership is the union. We cannot begin to organisationally make sense of a fighting union without starting from this point. At the apex of representative unionism membership differed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Membership was widespread and contributions were relatively low when compared with today's rates. However, under this model the amount of time and effort put in to make an objective difference in the lives of each worker was a lot lower. Australian unions could prosper with a strong network of workplace delegates and a few officials who would make the necessary adjustments to the centralised wage and condition structures to bring in new members and enterprises.

Overall union membership declined at its fastest rates not in the Australian Accords of the 1980s,[1] but with the shift to decentralised bargaining in the 1990s. Why? Because this necessitated a qualitative shift in the way unions had to operate in order to successfully "deliver" for members. It was no longer a matter of changing a few documents here and there centrally, with unofficial industrial action delivering extra gains for a few hot shops. The game had changed. Under an enterprise-based bargaining system instead of a single document governing an entire industry, we now had a system where some large operators in a single industry had 10 to 20 different enterprise agreements for the same or similar functions spread across different worksites. A greater and greater amount of time, effort and resources had to go into delivering gains for fewer workers. This is why "labour market deregulation" has coincided with an expansion in the length of the various industrial relations acts and accompanying regulations. This bipartisan policy shift greatly increased the operating costs for unions. It makes no fundamental long-term sense for the

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[1] Although there is a strong argument to make that this may have contributed to overall rank and file disillusionment and disempowerment.

Australian Labor Party as a reduction in union numbers (and subsequently union power) erodes its financial support base. Nevertheless, this is the situation in which we find ourselves in Australia, and it leaves party activists with two options: (1) finalise the corporatisation of the party by turning it into an out-post of the US Democrats (i.e. wholly dependent on corporate funding but with a system of "open primaries" to substitute for an effective industrial and political membership base); or (2) admit error and take on the structural issues again.

The main method the Australian union movement has used to overcome this decline in funding over the last generation has been to increase membership contributions to between 1% – 1.5% of their members' average incomes. Overall, this increase in membership contributions has been justified and largely tolerated by the remaining core of the union movement on two grounds. Firstly, because as the wage system has decentralised, the gap in wages and conditions between organised and non-organised worksites has risen to around a 20% differential. Secondly the very same shift has seen more resources required to achieve this gain. From experience, I can tell you that negotiating an agreement for five people can be nearly as challenging as negotiating an agreement for 5,000 people. This has led us to a union movement workplace structure today, though, where there is a clear binary between union and non-union, membership and non-membership. Membership becomes a significant financial commitment for a worker, but this commitment makes a huge difference to their lives in the right circumstances. This binary, I will argue, will need to be shifted to a membership continuum.

Moreover, there has been a qualitative shift in the employment relationship over the last 30 years. The disappearance of the "job for life" has placed severe pressure on the RU structure. This notion of the "job for life" is based on a combination of mythologising the past and the real life collective experience of the Australian working class. Nevertheless the power and history of this idea is quite real and important when considering the future of the union movement.

In reality of course, there was never such a thing as the job for life. Exploitation and labour market turnover (both voluntary and forced) was a part of life in the Post-War Golden Age. Overall statistics for both the Australian and British labour markets suggest that there has only been a slight decrease in average lengths of tenure since the 1980s (Baldwin et al. 2009). However, like most global statistics, this slight decrease tends to hide rather than reveal what is actually going on. It does not take into account, for example, that there has been a marked increase in job tenure for women over this period as more women have entered the workforce and some have obtained privileged professional or managerial positions within the labour market. Furthermore, there has been a divergence in the labour market between those already occupying permanent positions of privilege and those just starting out (or restarting) who are going through a series of temporary/casual positions (Gregg and Wadsworth 1995).

Some academics, such as Guy Standing, have argued that this divergence is so great that it is forming a new class in the making, the precariat (2011). While I

agree with Standing in his identification of the overall phenomenon in terms of labour market insecurity and its political impact, I'm far more sceptical about labelling the precariat a separate class. It ignores Marx's analysis, in *Capital Volume I* (1867), of capital's tendency to create a reserve army of labour that could be brought in and out at a moment's notice to not only fulfill seasonal and/or contractual obligations but discipline the existing workforce and lower the overall price of labour.

This labour market divergence, however, is particularly marked in Australia. Overall, 40% of the Australian workforce are in temporary or insecure work arrangements from labour hire, fixed-term contracts, through to direct casual employment (ACTU 2012). This constitutes one of the highest rates of temporary work in the OECD, period.

Unsurprisingly, as this graph from the most recent *Australia at Work* (2009: 28) report demonstrates, Australia has a significantly lower length of job tenure than EU countries:

Figure 3.1 Average job tenure: Australia compared to EU countries, 2007, years
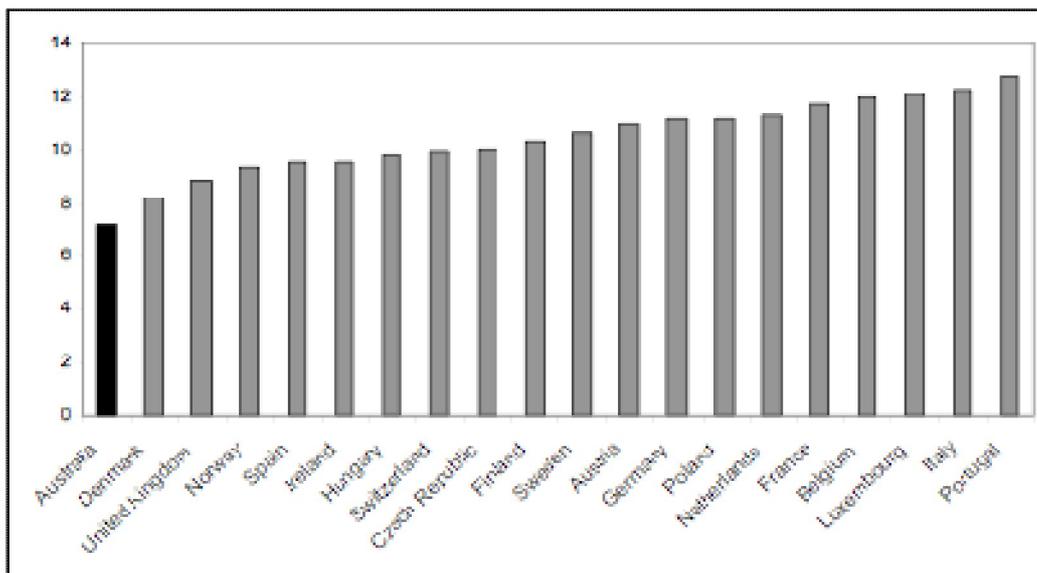
Population: All employed persons

The financial incentive for employers to get rid of the so called job for life is greatest in those sorts of roles that are both physical and deskilled; sectors such as manufacturing and general warehousing. It allows employers to greatly increase the rate of exploitation on the job to maximize their profits, and then easily toss the broken workers back onto society to bear most of those other inconvenient costs. It all leads to the attitude expressed by one worker and participant in the *Australia at Work* (2009: 27) study:

> ...Like you don't have a job for life. Or a right to a job for life, y'know, if they feel that you're not needed...Oh I think that's the way of the modern world. .... Got to accept it and move on (Male, 54 years).

If you want to get a really damning assessment of how Australia has changed for working people, get a group of 40 blue-collar workers who have all started work at different times in the last 40 years and ask them three things. How were they employed in their first post-school job? How are they engaged today? How has their work changed since they started? I've tried it, and would call the exercise "why Marx is right".

This qualitative change in the labour market over the last 30 years has been particularly devastating for the representative union. Being part of a RU is predominantly about getting together with the people you work with and having a union act for you in contract negotiations with your employer. This results in a two-fold difficulty for RUs. Increased labour turnover discourages workers from standing together at their existing place of work, as the reward for doing so is decreased ("I might be leaving soon anyway if I can get something better"), and the barriers to successfully standing together are raised ("A lot of my workmates might not care because they're looking for something else"/ "I'm a casual the boss might just tell the labour hire company to stop giving me shifts"). Moreover, it weakens the membership base of many unions, as the structure of this type of unionism is tied to the employer - when a worker leaves one, they simultaneously leave the other. This makes it much more difficult for representative unions to recruit and retain members. Thus, members of a representative union tend to be those occupying the more privileged positions within already unionised industries (e.g. the skilled tradespeople in a factory, the forklift drivers in a warehouse or the nurses in a hospital). Union members on average have job tenures of 10 years as opposed to five years for non-members (Buchanan 2007: 86).

Labour market mobility is now the main reason an Australian worker will leave their union, whether this manifests as a change of employer or work location (Australia at Work 2011). As such membership in a RU structure faces a dual challenge from the increased resources required to represent workers at a particular workplace, and greater labour market turnover.[2]

Representative unions, nonetheless, still proved to be so successful that the price of labour itself caused a systemic economic crisis in the 1970s and 1980s.

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[2] Some on the Left today may subscribe to the view that the relatively weak state of the union movement today is due to continued and conscious conspiracy by a parasitic class of collaborationist union officials. Maybe this was true once, but I'm afraid the contemporary truth is far more banal. The Australian union movement today is largely populated by organisers and officials with good values who have no great love for either the Labor Party or the employers they deal with, but are largely too overworked by the bargaining and recruitment treadmills in the RU structure to have that much energy left to strategically change approach. It's a case of good people in the wrong structure.

It was then that the structural vulnerabilities and inherent limitations of RUs were exploited to full effect in order to restore profitability under the guise of neo-liberal economic policy. It has had a devastating impact on representative unions in the developed world. This has in turn been overplayed into a crisis of unionism in general.

The idea of workers standing together is an idea. You cannot kill it. It doesn't bleed. Besides, growing union power across the globe stands in the face of the fiction that unions are being eroded.

The rise of an idea: direct unionism

The cleansing fire of extreme neo-liberal policy nonetheless is giving rise to a synthesis of the two competing models of unionism. I know this because the first tentative steps are starting to happen around this global movement. For want of a better term I'd call it *direct unionism*. It combines the transformative vision of an insurrectional union with the everyday foundations of a representative union. But unlike either it cannot be disciplined through the threat of its resources being appropriated or its leaders being killed and jailed. It can only be shut down through turning off the very flows which sustain capitalism itself – the flows of information and capital.

At the heart of the direct union – and in fact at the core of any union – is the conversation. In the same manner that the exchange of commodities is the foundation for a market economy, the conversation with and between workers is the foundation for any union. However, the grounding conversation in a representative union, whether it be between workers, union delegates or officials, is simply this: "What can the union do for us, and how can it do it better?" While many representative unions have initiated great campaigns, or participated in large-scale struggles for new rights, the crux of the matter is that RUs – having been given legal recognition – become (semi)privileged actors in the economic system that can deliver some limited outcomes for their members. This engenders an attitude amongst workers that the union is an outside body that delivers for them, which is an excellent recipe for passivity amongst members. Furthermore, the repetition of this conversation over time prepared the groundwork for the neo-liberal counter-reformation. With unions being framed as an outside body (and often acting like one), the general crisis of the rising cost of labour could be repackaged as *the other* (unions) threatening the prosperity of society in general. Therefore, if this outside body was disciplined, weakened and "brought into line" then everyone (including the workers who were being represented by these unions) would be better off. It worked electorally for a time. Even industrially, smart management in highly-organised sectors could set about a 5-10 year plan of de-unionisation by going direct to their workforce, buying-off or otherwise sidelining local workplace representatives and offering better wage outcomes. With the organisation of their workforce smashed, over time they could bring down the wages and conditions to a more affordable level once again. The sad story of the de-

unionisation of the Pilbara region, in the north west of Australia in the 1990s, bears out this strategy.

The IU, on the other hand, has a very different sort of foundational conversation. The conversations between workers, shop-floor leaders, and organisers take the form of "we are union, and what are we going to do about it together?" There are a number of different names/frameworks for what are essentially the same action conversation whether it be Saul Alinsky's "Anger, Hope, Action" framework or the old anarchist catch-cry, "Agitate! Educate! Organise!" (and that's just for starters). The first phase of the conversation is to agitate/anger the worker about a particular issue they are experiencing. The second phase then moves to educating the workers about the power they can exercise collectively (whether it be in their specific workplace, their company, industry or class) — the idea being that the workers now have a realistic hope that they can actually win on their issue — enough of a hope to care again. The conversation then moves to the action/organise phase, with the aim that the worker will come away from the conversation committed to carrying out some sort of action. Historically this has ranged from simply joining a union, to asking a couple of workmates to come to a meeting, through to participating in a strike. The whole aim of the conversation though is to get working people actively grabbing hold of their own destiny and struggle.

Interestingly, since the neo-liberal counter-reformation, the action conversation is gradually gaining ground in larger-scale representative unions. The fire of the neo-liberal industrial relations strategy is forging a new model of unionism, and the incorporeal part of the union structure — the conversation — is the first part of the representative structure to change. It should come as no surprise then that the first systemic use of action conversations within a representative union structure came at the "ground zero" of neo-liberalism, 1980s California. The 1980s Justice for Janitors campaign in Los Angeles was all about getting workers active because the traditional representative mechanisms had so broken down for cleaners/janitors that the only rational option, over and above a dystopia of forever-falling wages and living standards, was action across an entire industry against those who really exercised power and shifted risk down to workers.

The action conversation, in the contemporary period in Australia, first started to filter through in the early 1990s as the crisis in representative unionism started to be felt institutionally with drops in membership numbers translating into a real operating and budgetary crisis for unions. It was here when the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) radically shifted its training priorities. The first Organising Works class started in 1994. New organisers would be trained in the action conversation and other key elements of organising. Obviously the training up of a professional class of organisers will only ever have limited value as a measure on its own to build up worker power. One could even retort that it hasn't made much of a difference over the last 18 years. I would argue, though, that it's probably only over the next 4-5 years that we will objectively see what sorts of ramifications this will have for the movement in Australia. Given the

relatively small change of personnel and low-levels of turnover it's only been recently that those who directly participated in this revised training curriculum, or were open to influence themselves, have begun to obtain leadership positions within the movement.

The action conversation has probably reached ideological supremacy within the Australian union movement, although its hegemony is by no means uncontested. And there is a real self-interest for unions as organisations as to why this has happened; when neo-liberalism cuts away at the foundation of representative functions it's the strongest alternative the movement can turn to. Where we are today though, is by and large, representative unions having more action conversations. The key will be turning to how these conversations can take place within a direct union.

The membership is the union, and the union is the membership. This is why membership is usually one of the goals of initial conversations between workers, delegates and organisers looking to create a new union in a workplace or industry. Membership is the existential question that sets up the realistic structures necessary to fight for a group of workers' key issues. It is the vehicle which creates the power necessary to win the change they want to see. The union is simply the collective noun for a group of workers united in their economic, political, social and environmental interests.

Union membership is the first sign that a group of workers are united in common cause to defend their interests against the insatiable corporate drive to take more and more profit. It also provides the structural drive for effective unions to fight for equality (at least amongst their membership), as each and every member is of equal value in terms of the contribution they make towards the effective whole of the union. Hence the old adage, "without you there is no union".

While there are other factors at play in measuring worker power, there is a strong enough correlation between overall union membership numbers and density within the Australian economy and the strength of labour in the economy for it to be a topic of statistical interest to both the Australian state and the mainstream media. This is also the source of the paradoxical criticism of union power amongst paid advocates for capital. Over a generation of union decline, these advocates have generally used two lines of criticism. The first being that the union movement is more and more out of touch with mainstream working Australia because there are less and less members. The second line is that unions overall exercise too much power within the Australian economy. The logical gap between the two lines only makes sense from one perspective - the logic of continual profit accumulation. The first line is really a celebration of successful efforts to decrease worker power and the second is the expression of capital's insatiable hunger for more and more. The vampire can celebrate his kills but still lust for more.

The direct union is about the membership as a collective having direct control over their own union. A union is about workers coming together to exercise direct power in their workplace, industries and communities. It should be readily apparent that this is in no way possible without workers also being able to have direct control over the vehicle which is supposed to win them these victories. This statement is a piece of glib obviousness compared with the hard work implementing it in reality – and it cannot be founded on a romanticised or idealised view of workers as the ideal *other* which will come to the rescue of a flawed society. It must be based on a recognition that there is no such thing as an inherent human nature – and that the actions and attitudes we see of people is at least partly a product of the structures we put in place.

Generally in Australia today unions have a representative structure. The membership is represented by a layer of elected officials (a mixture of full-time officials and those who remain on the job). It is these officials who are by and large left to determine and implement the administrative, industrial and political strategies of the union. If either the members are deeply unsatisfied with the results of these elected representatives, or the representatives themselves become divided, or they anger well-resourced outsiders (or usually a combination of all three factors), then there might be a challenge.

A direct union would probably still require a layer of dedicated officials to assist in both researching, proposing and implementing the administrative, industrial and political strategies of the union. However, it would be the membership that would also have the power to propose and determine these strategies and policies. This would have to come through a mixture of face-to-face meetings/general assemblies, online participation and (sometimes) votes of the entire membership. Probably the most important piece of infrastructure for the direct union is a full-on Web 3.0 site, a space that would allow geographically-disparate but industrially connected members to deliberate together. On such a website though, in a members' only section of course, all of the union's administrative policies (including salary levels, membership contributions and credit card policies among other important topics) would be posted for free comment and suggested editing.

This could be supplemented by an annual general assembly for the union that is open to every single financial member – a hybrid physical and online meeting – occurring with booked meeting/conference facilities in each major metropolitan region as well as allowing members who may be unable to attend a chance to voice their opinions online. These meetings would vote on the union's budget for the coming year, decide the union's political strategy for that given year, and endorse/review the progress of significant campaigns. Such a general assembly, to be a meaningful event though, would have to be a culmination of a series of informal meetings and/or committees and online forums open to all members to put in the significant amount of work for members to then make an informed decision. Think of it as a synthesis of structure and the democratic energy of the Occupy Movement.

There would still be leaders in such a structure but the basis for their power would be different. I would come less from "having the numbers" and therefore controlling key office, than being allied with and harnessing creative thinkers to drive progressive change, being persuasive enough to shift people, and doing the hard work of organising members. Having a structure to reward these character traits would not only be good for the movement but good for humanity.

This of course, all sets up an interesting paradox. What if the membership collectively and directly decides against any of the other structural changes I would propose as part of building a powerful direct union? Well, shit happens.

Membership in a representative union structure is really a dichotomy. Either you are a union member or you are not a union member. If it's a recognised union site then chances are you are probably a member, and if it's not a recognised union site then you are probably not a member. To be a member you must be paying your union contributions. In contrast, direct unionism abolishes the member/non-member dichotomy and replaces it with a continuum, and it does this by breaking the nexus between membership and paying contributions.

The separation of membership and contributions is really the structural means by which capital's two key strategies for reducing worker power (over and above a direct assault on unions) are transformed into trends which build levels of worker organisation. As I've outlined earlier, two developments in the industrial sphere have translated into a general hacking away at the membership of representative unions: First is the decentralisation of bargaining away from an industry level to individual work sites; second is the growing rate of turnover with the rise of insecure work (especially for new entrants to the workforce). This has led to a situation where, by and large (in the private sector), union membership is restricted to islands of key sites within some companies in the economy, and that within these islands membership is further (and sometimes deliberately) restricted to a core of permanent longer-serving workers. The periphery of insecure workers is then largely ignored.

The membership continuum, however, can turn this into a trend that works for building worker power. First a disclaimer: all of these structural changes are dependent on active union campaigns. A shark needs to keep swimming to survive and prosper. Supplementary to these membership changes, then, is an environment where unions are actively campaigning for insecure workers in a way that brings the core workforce together. Unlike Guy Standing, who sees very little prospect for solidarity between secure and insecure workers, I think capital's insatiable desire for more and more profit as quickly as possible will see it forcing more and more workers in the core to the periphery of the workforce. This leaves those remaining in the core working under the ever-present threat of being made redundant or outsourced. This may work for employers in terms of day-to-day control of their workforce, but it's also fertile organising territory. Australian unions have made a respectable start at starting campaigns that create this necessary context (see securejobs.org.au and jobsyoucancounton.com.au). Putting issues of context aside, a membership continuum turns the islands of unionism into pockets of dandelions in a field.

As workers come through these sites and inevitably leave them they can float onto new fields as union members. It achieves this through a number of intersecting means.

Direct union membership is not continuously mediated by an employer through payroll deductions. Instead, when a member joins a direct union they do so directly – membership contributions are paid directly to the union either via electronic fund transfers or credit cards. Whatever the means, any individual's union membership is not dependent on ongoing employer cooperation. If this membership method were applied across the Australian union movement today, it would open up at least the structural possibility that hundreds of thousands of unionists each year could retain their memberships in non-union or anti-union workplaces. A structural possibility is, however, a long way from a structural imperative to retain union membership.

Furthermore, workers leaving a workplace face a very real prospect of unemployment or underemployment, while many insecure workers within the islands of unionised workplaces face the real and ongoing prospect of underemployment. Removing the nexus between membership and contributions allows for the periodic suspension of contributions while retaining one's underlying union membership. For example, it might be the case that a worker will not be getting a shift during the annual office shutdown – once this would have been enough to cancel a union membership.

At this point, you might be thinking that all I've done is to collect a bunch of things that are already happening within many unions and turned them into a recipe for draining the union movement of key financial resources. If this was all there was you'd be right, as I haven't outlined any significant points on the spectrum as yet, but briefly outlined the technical means by which a worker could move through the spectrum and retain membership. And there is a very real tension that needs to be teased out here between underlying union values of equality and democracy combined with increasing involvement on the spectrum leading to more involvement and more rights. On this point, I don't have all the answers - but I know I don't have all the answers.

A table of the direct unionism continuum:

Union involvement	Contribution level	Membership Rights	Potential Services
Not a member	None	None	None
Campaign subscriber	None	Limited use of union website. Subscribed to email list.	Participate in campaign activities. Limited use of union website
Community member (for sympathetic activists, unemployed workers, retired members)	Minimal (50 cents/week etc)	Voting rights on union political/social/economic policies and strategies. More extended use of union website. Access to union training courses.	Access to union's information on employment opportunities in area of coverage. Assistance building resumes.
Minority member (for workers not covered by a union agreement)	Relatively minimal ($1-3/week)	Full voting rights on elected officials and participation in annual General Assembly. Some use of union website for industrial purposes. Ability to elect workplace delegates.	Access to all non-industrial union services. Access to membership service centre for remote assistance with individual workplace issues (including workers compensation).
Bargaining member (for workers covered by a union agreement or actively working towards one)	Committed (1% to 1.5% of income)	As above, plus full use of union website for industrial purposes.	Allocated organiser(s) to assist with campaigning/building worker power for a better agreement. Full access to assistance with individual workplace issues (up to representation at tribunals).
Member-organiser (for rank and file bargaining members fighting for workers outside their workplace)	As above plus an average of in-kind assistance of one hour off site/week	As above, plus more extensive organising training. Respect as a leader of the working class and the sacrifice that involves.	None.
Union cooperative member (for workers who already owns the means of production)	2% to 2.5% of income	All rights above except that of a member-organiser.	All of the above plus business services to ensure ongoing viability of cooperative. Mediated access to full union subscriber list and network to build market for the enterprise.

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to blog about it does it make a sound? A working website is now the most important piece of infrastructure a union has. As I've stated earlier, the heart of the union is the conversations that occur between members – this is what brings workers to stand together. The website has an important role to play in bringing workers together across geographically-disparate areas; members who might otherwise be critically linked by employer, industry or supply-chain connections. There has been some background debate over the last few years whether the rise of the online world and social media has made organising easier or harder. That debate is beside the point. It would be like arguing whether the printing press had damaged the aesthetics of book publishing: the world has moved on and the point now for those of us who are primarily interested in changing it is to adjust to a new reality.

The first step towards being an active unionist on the direct membership continuum is becoming a campaign subscriber (note I'm not arguing that under a fully functioning direct unionism model that workers would necessarily move through the continuum sequentially). The direct union's homepage is the permeable membrane that non-members first pass through on a journey towards eventually taking control of the production process.

The main purposes of the direct union website at the campaign subscriber level are twofold. First, on a global scale it is about data collection. The website as a tool is about building up a database of workers in the union's industries. This puts direct unions on the starting blocks to at least begin the process of organising the working class as an entity. The workers' experience is to sign up for free to gain information that has clear utility for their job. This might mean that information that is currently readily available becomes only accessible after a worker has input their email address and industry of work into an online form. An example of such information might be fact sheets and quick guides to injuries at work, electing safety reps, unfair dismissals/dealing with disciplinary procedures, collective bargaining, or summary guides to wages/conditions in a particular industry (to name but a few key topics). In addition to this, the direct union would have to put out regular e-letters that would include links to articles, images and podcasts. These updates would be tailored to the campaign subscribers' nominated industry. It would be vital that the industry e-letters would have to include campaign news as well. However, this also leads onto the next purpose of the website.

Second, as well as addressing areas of immediate need for workers, the website is about raising consciousness. This is where campaigns come in. Becoming a campaign subscriber is about participating (*read* online at least) in campaigns that result through some sort of collective action in making a difference for a group of workers. The point is to counter the dominant consumerist model by providing concrete (*read* online at least) experiences of strength through worker unity. Such campaign activities (over and above getting an email) might include sending emails, uploading photographs, agreeing to participate in a real-world event or asking friends and family to become campaign subscribers as well.

What a campaign subscriber gets is partial access to an online community of workers — and it's absolutely key that the subscriber is made aware of what further access there is for upping their level of commitment to that community.

A good example of what a direct unionism website initially might look like to a campaign subscriber is Working America (see www.workingamerica.org), and their *I am not your ATM* campaign. Working America is a community affiliate of the AFL-CIO with approximately 3 million members in the US. It provides an interesting model of building up a database of activists who are deeply unhappy with the broken economy of the USA. What it leaves us to grapple with, however, is how to translate this into strong collective action across workplaces, industries and in the streets.

The website functionality will need to further expand for the next level of membership — the community member. Some unions such as Unite the Union in the UK have instituted a community membership along the lines summarised in the earlier table. What this form allows, though, is for employed and unemployed/student members to start the process of connecting and acting together politically within their communities in a way that is neither dependent on nor bounded by mainstream party politics.

Taking the first steps toward direct unionism

Direct unionism rests on one key assumption: a high degree of software development capacity. It would be charitable to say that the labour movement's overall technological capability is sadly lacking. Many union websites are embarrassing. And given the internet is a space where more and more people come together for entertainment, friendship, education and key information this is a major hole in the movement today. This, however, sets up a dilemma for union leaders. There is a choice between developing software internally or contracting out software development to a private firm. Developing software internally is a huge risk — most unions are simply not going to be able to afford the risk of dropping $100, 000 let alone $1 million on software that might not even fulfill the union's core needs. Even if the software works it will become outdated pretty quickly. Even the resources of some of the world's largest unions on their own are not going to be able to keep up with the development speeds of large-scale private corporations such as Apple, Google or Microsoft. The most talented individual in the world will not be able to keep up with the more efficient mode of development and production.

The choice to contract out software development to private firms, on the other hand, is no less problematic. First of all, it's no less costly. Anything approximating a 3.0 site with basic functionality will probably set a union back about $100,000. In addition, the union will have to continue to pay an ongoing rent to the private firm for continued website servicing. Moreover, it comes down to an issue of power. The ongoing technological organising ability of a union is effectively hostage to a private firm. Given the union software market is a fairly small concern, there's probably not going to be a very large number of

players. It would effectively mean that any one nation's union movement is subject to a handful of development firms. This near monopoly situation effectively means that the movement's precious resources go towards a small group of private individuals keen to maximise their profits.

In essence, both choices are inefficient. With the first choice we have a whole bunch of union silos developing different software for the same ends without collaborating, and thereby repeating the same mistakes. With the second choice, there are less silos (theoretically any boutique firm would have a number of union clients) but workers' capital gets diverted to private firms extracting a profit. Faced with two imperfect choices, many unions have made an even worse decision by (largely) doing nothing. With that, direct unionism remains nothing other than the fantastical rantings of a mad man (and not in a 'cool' 1960s advertising kind of way).

There is, however, another way. If you really want to socialise the means of production, you socialise the means of production. And in this instance, it's almost as easily said as done. Because socialist production (and by that I mean actual worker – not state – controlled) is alive and well on the internet. It's free and you're probably already using some sort of open source software without realising it. Open source is about programmers coming together to work on source code that is free and publicly available. This collaboration around projects is a powerful way of creating free software for the end-user. An example is Mozilla Firefox. The global union movement has made some tentative starts down this road. For instance, Cyberunions (www.cyberunions.org) is an interesting project exploring the intersection between new technology and union organising. Union internet pioneer Eric Lee (see www.ericlee.info) has built a union global news service with LabourStart (www.labourstart.org) and an international union social networking site in UnionBook (www.unionbook.org). By and large these efforts have globally linked together key organisers and activists within unions.

What's missing, though, is the next step (as far as I know, and if you know better please tell me). The next step is a group of unions cooperating and collaborating by developing open source campaigning software that is free and ready to use. When this happens change will really start motoring. This would allow unions to build on and improve upon the investments that other unions have made – contributing to a shared commons of software that the wider and global union movement can take advantage of. It will give any union around the world the capacity to start to turn into an indestructible union if it so chooses, and as soon as one union consciously makes this decision others will be forced to follow. I would forecast that this is more likely than not to happen in the near future. Why? Because it requires only one of any numerous state/provincial labour councils, national congresses/councils of unions or global union federations to pilot such a mechanism with any interested group of its affiliates. Only one of these groups needs to decide that this is a realistic way of increasing the technological capacity of its affiliate unions without necessarily spending anymore on software development. Only one of these groups needs to think this

is a realistic way of responding to a crisis of union membership, or a way to wage effective campaigns against ever circling and predatory neo-liberal political forces. The immediate reason for this development process may vary but the underlying necessity remains — it's the most efficient way of building up the most effective campaigning technology.

The old representative species of shark is being hunted to extinction by global capital, but a new species of direct unions can turn the tables. This is the way we make the tools necessary to forge a new world.

* I doubt I've had a single original idea in this essay. This is just the start of the process of knitting together disparate existing threads, a process which I hope involves many people, and will continue at www.tradeunion.wordpress.com.

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About the author

Godfrey Moase works as a campaign Lead Organiser at the National Union of Workers in Melbourne, Australia. He blogs at www.tradeunion.wordpress.com and can be reached on Twitter @gemoase.

The Chilean student movement of 2011-2012: challenging the marketization of education

Nicolás M. Somma

Introduction

According to mainstream international analysis (e. g. United Nations 2011), Chile is one Latin America's "best students". The first country in the region to implement drastic neoliberal reforms in the mid-1970s, Chile sustained impressive rates of economic growth and reduced poverty to a third in the last two decades. All this took place in the midst of political stability, regular elections, and a high respect for civic and political liberties by regional standards. In 2011, however, Chile caught the attention of the world not for its macroeconomic numbers but for an unprecedented wave of social protest against the government and the state of its educational system. While the first protests in May of that year brought to the street a few thousands secondary and tertiary students, by August protesters reached an estimated peak of about 200,000 and included not only students but also their families, workers, environmental activists, indigenous peoples, and a heterogeneous mass of citizens disgruntled with the political and economic system. These were the most massive and encompassing protests since those that in the late 1980s helped overthrowing the authoritarian regime of General Augusto Pinochet, who ruled the country between 1973 and 1990 (when democracy was restored). They took place in Latin American's jewel and, while their intensity decreased, they are far from disappearing by October 2012.

In the search for explanations, some observers quickly underscored the similarities between the Chilean student movement and the Spanish *Indignados*. This ignored a crucial difference: while the latter protested against government cutbacks in a climate of economic recession and austerity, the former acted in a context of economic growth, rising employment rates, low inflation, and expanding social programs. Aware of this puzzle, more caustic commentators concluded that Chileans were protesting "because they were full" - presumably of food, hi-tech gadgets, cars, and modernity. But this is too simple to solve the puzzle since there is no automatic link between "being full" and protesting.

In this essay I present three claims regarding the current (2011-2012) wave of student protest in Chile. The first one is that the student movement, despite its apparent discontinuity with Chilean neoliberalism, is actually its unintended byproduct. Specifically, the contradictions inherent in the rapid development of a system of higher education guided by market principles created a large mass of tertiary students with unprecedented organizational skills, communication networks, and grievances - the basic ingredients that nurtured the movement.

However, and this is the second claim, the movement was powerful enough to rebel against its origins and shake two of its most cherished beliefs – namely, that education is a consumer good, and that it is acceptable that private actors profit from educational activities. By doing so, the student movement opened the way for a restructuring of basic aspects of Chilean society well beyond the educational system.

The third claim is that the movement succeeded in minimizing internal divisions despite undergoing rapid numerical growth. I argue that this happened because a highly participative context granted legitimacy to movement actions and kept student leaders aligned with the student masses. In this respect the movement stands in sharp contrast with the practices of Chilean political parties during the last two decades, which are characterized by their elite and non-participatory character. These three claims are based on publicly available information about the movement in the mass media, personal observations, and informal conversations with student activists. They intend to contribute to the debate about this movement rather than providing definitive statements based on rigorous empirical research.

Chile: traditionally mobilized, recently quiescent

The unexpected massiveness of the 2011-2012 protests become less surprising if we consider that until 1973 Chile had a strong tradition of popular mobilization. For instance, since the 1880s the Chilean labor movement became one of the most developed ones in Latin America, and by the first decades of the twentieth century it was politically supported by powerful Socialist and Communist parties. In the 1960s political mobilization expanded from urban centers to the countryside as a result of the efforts of leftist parties and Christian Democrats to capture the peasant vote. But the apex took place during the Socialist government of Salvador Allende (1970-73). In these years, blue collar workers of nearby factories created independent centers of collective democracy (*cordones industriales*). And in a context of scarcity, popular neighborhoods organized groups for assuring the provision of basic food supplies (*juntas de abastecimiento*). They attempted to resist conservative attempts to overthrow Allende through economic sabotage and intimidation (which required the mobilization of rightist militia groups).

Such vibrant and polarized civil society was beheaded from 1973 onwards by Pinochet's repressive apparatus, which dismantled civic organizations, labor unions and political parties, and prosecuted their leaders. Although popular mobilization resumed in the late 1980s as the dictatorship was crumbling, the democratic governments in place during the 1990s and 2000s (all of them of the center-left coalition *Concertación por la Democracia*) did little to keep civil society activated. The rationale in the early 1990s was that popular mobilization could move the military to stage another coup, as had happened in 1973. As a result, center-left political parties severed their links to lower-class communities (*poblaciones*) and social movements in general. Protest dwindled and electoral

participation rates fell systematically during the 1990s and 2000s. The bottom line is that the heightened mobilization of 2011-2012 looks awkward only if we forget pre-1973 Chile. Otherwise it looks quite consistent with the country's tradition.

However, there are two remarkable novelties in the current wave of protest. First, rather than a top-down creation from established political actors and institutions, it was a spontaneous collective creation of students – and for that reason students reacted vehemently against any attempt of cooptation from the political class. Second, and precisely because they had the political status quo as a counter-model, students attempted to minimize hierarchical structures within the movement, promoting their own version of the "horizontalism" that Marina Sitrin (2006) found in Argentinean movements of marginalized workers. These two features – autonomy from institutional politics and a horizontal style of internal organization – allow conceiving the Chilean student movement as part of the broad mobilization against neoliberalism that has been developing in the Global South during the last decade (see also Motta 2008, 2009, 2011, and Webber 2011).

How neoliberal education creates a student movement

The first claim of this essay – that the current student movement is a byproduct of Chilean neoliberalism – requires a look at the process by which the Chilean educational system became guided by market principles. Pinochet made several changes to Chilean education, which up to the 1970s relied on state funding and centralized administration by the Ministry of Education. He decentralized primary and secondary education, putting municipalities in charge of schools; provided subsidies to private schools, whose numbers increased dramatically; and liberalized tertiary education, favoring the mushrooming of private universities and technical institutes. The combination of these changes resulted in a four-fold expansion of the number of Chileans accessing tertiary education between 1990 and 2010, leading to an increase in coverage from 16% to 40% in the 18-24 age group. Approximately 70% percent of these students were the first ones in their families to reach such level, which was seen as the surest means for upward social mobility.

The expansion in coverage was so welcomed by politicians and citizens alike that the failures of the new education market remained hidden from political debate. However they eventually became visible. First, because state supervision was negligible, the training provided by many of the newer secondary and tertiary institutions was deficient. As employers realized so they became increasingly reluctant to hire graduates from these institutions (who rarely came from the upper classes), frustrating their expectations of upward mobility. Combined with the existence of an expensive private school system only affordable to the upper classes, this created huge disparities in educational quality and economic returns.

Secondly, educational fees soon became very high, making Chilean education one of the most expensive ones in the world (relative to its population's income). State-backed loans expanded and were taken by about 70% of the student population. But since they were below educational fees, families had to finance about three-quarters of educational expenses – one of the highest proportions among OECD countries, to which Chile belongs since 2010. Because such loans had high interest rates, students accumulated impressive debts which were hard to repay. This problem was obviously harder for the sizable proportion which could not afford the entire career span and had to drop out. They did not get an education diploma but frustration and a debt which often endangered family finances. Finally, although profiting from educational activities is illegal in Chile, the owners of many private institutions violated the spirit of the law through intricate procedures. As a result, large sums of money went from the pockets of popular and middle-class families to those of increasingly richer educational businessmen.

In a nutshell, the cost of expanding tertiary education through market mechanisms was disparity in educational quality, lots of debts and frustration, and economic vulnerability for thousands of popular and middle-class families.

The first scream: the 2006 "penguin" protest

Already by the 2000s, one of the unintended consequences of the commodification and subsequent expansion of Chilean education was the creation of a large mass of middle-class students with better organizational capacities than their parents. Also, as they had not grown up in the midst of a brutal dictatorship, they were ready to voice their demands in the streets (a blanket hanging from the wall of an occupied high school building in 2006 thus claimed: "We are the generation that was born without fear").

The change underway became evident in 2006, when a protest campaign by secondary students (the "penguins", as they were called for the colors of their high-school uniforms) jeopardized the government of Michelle Bachelet - a leader of the Socialist Party. Mobilized across the whole country through marches and building occupations, the "penguins" demanded then end of the municipal administration of schools as well as changes in school curricula. Yet they did not succeed. Divided and debilitated after months of activity, they demobilized before entering into negotiation with the government. The political class quickly crafted an agreement that only superficially addressed the movement's demands, including an ad-hoc education committee with few student representatives that was unable to advance any significant reforms

The "penguins" learned two important lessons from this experience: first, to be critical about attempts by politicians to institutionalize and co-opt the movement's demands; and second, that mobilization should continue while negotiating with authorities. As Camila Vallejo – one of the most visible leaders of the 2011-12 movement - put it in an interview: "this [the 2006 experience]

left a mark in the student movement that makes us aware of the cooptation strategies by the political class" (Ouviña 2012:15).

Challenging the educational market: education as a right and the struggle against profit

Having reached tertiary education by 2007-2009, the old "penguins" took again to the streets in 2011. Now the contours of the target were clearer than in 2006. The movement did not face in the Executive a gentle leftist woman any longer (Michelle Bachelet) but a center-right president (Sebastián Piñera). A billionaire businessman, Piñera had not fulfilled his campaign promises of selling his companies before taking office. Thus he could be easily portrayed as the very essence of unleashed neoliberalism, providing a clearer target for the movement's demands. Joaquín Lavín, the education minister until July 2011 (when he was replaced precisely due to student protests), also helped: he was one of the founders and stockholders of a private university suspected of having violated the anti-profit legislation.

As in 2006, the initial demands in 2011 were relatively narrow – they revolved around the subsidy to student transportation and delays in the provision of fellowships. But as months passed they escalated, ranging from the provision of free education to all Chileans and an effective punishment of actors profiting from education, to proposals for funding public education such as a tax reform and an extension of state ownership over the vast copper resources of the country. The movement also grew numerically, from a few thousands in the first marches to hundreds of thousands in the winter of 2011 (this point will be addressed below).

Against profit

Despite being, to a large extent, an unintended byproduct of the expansion of the educational market, the movement challenged that market by shaking two of its basic assumptions. The first one was the appropriateness that private actors profit from educational activities. Although as mentioned above this is illegal in Chile, many educational institutions were making profits by resorting to intricate practices – for instance by creating real estate agencies that rented buildings to universities at unusually high prices. The movement was decisive in spreading the belief that one of the reasons why Chilean education was so expensive (and families had to struggle so much for affording it) was that a few educational "entrepreneurs" were becoming rich out of it. This cognitive connection was essential for creating the sense of injustice that energized the movement. Additionally, this was a severe blow to the philosophy of Chilean market society, according to which market actors motivated by profit do good not only for themselves but also for society as a whole.

The spread of this belief against profit was also helped by the timely unraveling of corporate scandals. In May 2011 it became public that *La Polar*, an important

retail company, was abusing their clients by making one-sided debt renegotiations which were ultimately detrimental to them. The event, which ended with the arrest of top company managers, was interpreted by many as an example of the hazards of badly supervised markets. Comparable scandals involving the poultry industry as well as educational institutions (such as the private *Universidad del Mar*) also contributed to a heightened public awareness about malpractices in profit-making environments.

Recognizing that profit was illegal, the government attempted to address the movement's demand by creating an entity (the *Superintendencia de Educación Superior*) in charge of supervising tertiary educational institutions and guaranteeing the transparency of their resources, contracts, advertising practices, and board members. The movement, however, does not trust that the *Superintendencia* will be willing to stop illegal profit-making practices in the education sector because it is believed that some high-level government officers have personal stakes in such practices. Even if willing, the new institution does not have the capabilities to do so. As Camila Vallejo, one of the most visible movement leaders' recently argued, it is 'a paper tool'.

The ultimate problem is that the movement does not trust the government. An indication of this is the frequent criticism that governmental proposals have "small characters" (*letra chica*). Borrowed from the jargon of commercial contracts, this expression refers to clauses written in small characters that hide aspects which are detrimental to the client. In this case the expression was used to indicate subtleties in the wording of educational reform projects which in practice significantly attenuate their impact. Another indication of distrust is that the movement does not accept demobilization as a condition for negotiation with the government — as they learned in 2006, demobilization destroys the leverage they need for effective negotiation.

Education as a right — not a consumer good

The second assumption that the movement challenged is perhaps more basic to the workings of an educational market — namely, the appropriateness that people pay for education. The movement argues that the Chilean system creates enormous inequalities between those sufficiently rich to access and complete studies in high-quality educational institutions and those too poor to do so. For eradicating this injustice, which flies in the face of the supposed meritocracy of the system, the movement claims for the provision of free and high-quality public education for all citizens. Therefore, education becomes a right rather than a consumer good. Students claim this is not impossible in Chile, as shown by other middle-income countries that have such a system (nearby Uruguay to put an example).

During the first months of the conflict the government remained silent on this issue. Instead, it announced several proposals that increased significantly the economic resources funneled to the public education and reduced the interest rates of educational loans. By mid-2011, however, Piñera claimed that "the

education has a double goal. It is a consumer good (…) and also it has a component of investment". This revealed what many suspected – that the government was in favor of an educational market in which people pay for accessing education. Later on Piñera and his ministers defended the idea of a "teaching society" – in which private actors partake in the educational business – against that of a "teaching state" – in which the state is the main or sole educational provider. And to the movement's claim regarding free education for all citizens, the government responded that it would be unfair to use public resources to provide education for the upper classes – which can afford it by themselves. Movement leaders retorted that if education depended on market mechanisms, even partially, it will continue reproducing segregation and inequalities. Therefore, the disagreement is not about the amount of resources for public education but about the basic views on the matter.

Interestingly, despite expressing views that were very different from those of the government, the movement used similar rhetorical weapons: technical arguments and numbers. They understood that they had to dispel the stereotype that portrays students as merely emotional and capricious children pursuing impossible goals. For doing so they spent much time trying to understand the workings of Chilean education, looking at international experiences in order to develop solid proposals, and criticizing governmental ones on technical grounds. Thus, the movement usually backs its arguments with quantitative analysis and international comparisons that highlight the deficiencies of Chilean education.

The students also developed original ways of collecting information for showing the injustices of the system. For instance, given the ambiguities of official figures about the number and amount of educational debts, a group of engineering students at the *Universidad de Chile* developed a webpage (http://yodebocl.tumblr.com/) where students can upload the information regarding their indebtedness state and may also offer a narrative or their story. Although the approximately 5.000 students that uploaded their information do not represent the whole population of indebted students, the numbers are still indicative of the burden that some of them face. The average student debt reported in this website is over twenty thousand dollars, which is equivalent to about twenty five average monthly wages in Chile.

Solving the tension between internal unity and growing support

For most movements, more supporters mean more diversity and therefore more opportunities for divisions. Thus, any movement that brings to the street large numbers of people faces the challenge of maintaining internal unity and solidarity while growing. If we take the number of protestors as an indicator of movement size, it is clear that the movement became massive in a few months - as noted above. How did they manage to maintain internal unity despite this growth? In the remainder of this essay I address this puzzle. First I argue that

potential internal divisions were minimized thanks to the creation of highly participative environments within the student body and a horizontal style of leadership. This granted legitimacy to movement actions and prevented the oligarchization trends described one century ago by political sociologist Robert Michels (1959)[1]. I also argue that the numerical growth of protesters resulted from the resonance of student demands in (a) the population at large and (b) specific mobilized groups - such as workers and environmental activists - that also share with the student movement a broad dissatisfaction with neoliberalism.

Participation breeds legitimacy

Abundant opportunities for participation and a horizontal style of leadership minimized trends toward division in the Chilean student movement. Participation, in turn, depended on internal organization. The movement is coordinated by the CONFECH (*Confederation of Chilean Students*), which is composed by representatives of the student associations of about thirty public and private universities. Representatives are elected in periodical elections by the corresponding student population, therefore allowing a fluid rotation in leadership positions. One illustration of such fluidity was the 2011 election of the FECH — the student organization of the *University of Chile*, one of the most influential ones. The movement flourished during 2011, when the FECH was led by Camila Vallejo, yet this did not assure her reelection - she was defeated in the late 2011 elections by current FECH president Gabriel Boric.

One of the most notable aspects of the movement is its way of reaching decisions. Because it opposes the non-participatatoryand heavily elitist nature of contemporary Chilean politics, its most visible figures conceive themselves as spokespersons rather than movement authorities. This means that major decisions have to be backed up by rank-and-file student bodies. Typically, after meeting with government authorities to hear the latter's reform proposals, movement representatives summon students to regional and national assemblies. Proposals are presented and discussed until they arrive at a decision (which so far has almost always consisted of a rejection). This is a slow process due to the time needed for convoking and celebrating assemblies, but it confers legitimacy to the movement's decisions since all interested students have the opportunity to voice their concerns. Besides the general CONFECH assemblies, which take place in rotating locations across the country, each university periodically holds general student assemblies as well as specific assemblies at the faculty or college level (which often take place on a weekly basis during student strikes).

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[1] According to Michels, organizations that need to coordinate the actions of large numbers of people show a tendency to concentrate power and decisions in the hands of a small clique of leaders — even if their ideology dictates the opposite. These leaders (an "oligarchy") end up moving away from the needs of rank-and-file members and pursue their own personal objectives.

Besides the assemblies, students have engaged in intense consciousness-raising work within campuses. These involve debates on the strategy of the movement and problems of the education system, presentations by intellectuals and activists on varied social and political subjects, film festivals, and artistic performances. These activities have been more intense during strikes since students are freed from normal academic routine. Students have also gone beyond campus walls and sensitized the general population about the cause of the movement in buses, squares, and streets.

It is important to note that the internal organization of the student movement shares some similarities with those of other Latin American experiences such as the Zapatista insurgency in Mexico, the Landless Movement in Brazil, the communal councils and urban land committees in contemporary Venezuela (Motta 2011), or the self-organized groups of industrial workers in Argentina (besides obvious differences in historical settings and groups mobilized). These other movements also faced the challenge of coordinating the actions of many people under extreme circumstances (in many senses more extreme than those of Chilean students) without resorting to the old formula of a supreme leader or a vanguard party. All of them found an alternative formula: allowing common people to create their own destinies through a collective process of assembling, thinking, and voicing concerns and opinions regarding problems and potential solutions. For people used to follow the dictates of some encumbered or enlightened political leader, this was a powerful and transforming experience. The movement could therefore be felt by activists not as a reified entity outside them but as their very creation — a creation instantiated in every assembly or protest action (see Motta 2009 for a general reflection on this point).

Students and beyond

High legitimacy favored by extensive participation allowed the movement to grow without corrosive fragmentation. Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of the movement is precisely how it succeeded in garnering a broader base of support than any previous movement since the restoration of democracy two decades ago. Of course, partially this resulted from the increasing support within the student population. While in its beginnings the movement was essentially confined to students from the most reputed universities of the country, they were soon joined by students from smaller private universities, high-school students (including those from some private schools), and technical education students.

But the wave soon went beyond the student population, and environmental activists as well as unionized workers joined the cause. Environmental activism in Chile had a noticeable awakening in the last few years as a result of the approval of plans for building electric power stations in Southern Chile that threatened natural resources and indigenous communities. Student protests provided environmental activists an opportunity for linking their demands to a cause — such as the evils of the current education system — that was more

tangible for the Chilean population at large than environmental problems. This was especially true for the population of the capital city Santiago, who cared little about environmental threats in distant parts of the country. Besides their differences, the student movement and environmental activism converged in their broad criticism to the social costs of neoliberalism.

The labor movement also established links to the student movement, especially through the high-school teachers union and mining workers unions. The historically strong Chilean labor movement was weakened during the military dictatorship by several means - first by illegalizing its activities and imprisoning or jailing its leaders, and then by promulgating a labor code that imposed restrictions to the creation of labor federations. Combined with structural changes in the labor market this explains the systematic decrease in unionization rates, that currently stand somewhere between 11% and 15% and puts Chile as one of the least unionized OECD countries. While the specific demands of the labor movement obviously differ from those of the student movement, both share a general criticism towards the inequalities promoted by neoliberalism. Additionally, the goals of the student movement resonate among the many industrial and service sector workers whose children are first-generation tertiary students. These parents know better than anybody else the economic burden that results from taking educational loans.

More generally, since a large proportion of Chilean families have or expect to have tertiary students among their members, and since they cannot afford educational expenses without taking loans, at least one of the problems highlighted by the movement — the expensiveness of upper education — resonates widely across the population. This helps explain the massive presence of parents, grandparents, and entire families (children included) in some student protests. In recognition of this, and evidence of their creativity, the movement organized some family-friendly protests in public parks filled with musical performances and other activities.

Of course, in the current mobilization against neoliberalism in the Global South, the Chilean student movement is not the first to find commonalities with other domestic movements. For instance, the mobilization that led to President de la Rúa's demise in Argentina in late 2001 was also composed by a heterogeneous number of groups which included recently displaced industrial workers, long-term unemployed, and retired people among others. The same can be said about the mobilizations that ousted Sánchez de Losada in Bolivia. While such broad alliances are ultimately based on the fact that neoliberalism imposes heavy costs on a variety of social groups, their activation often requires a more contingent condition - disillusion with the unfulfilled promises made by the current government, as was the case in Chile with Piñera's earlier promise to reform the education.

Tactical variety

The wide variety of protest tactics employed by the student movement also deserves mention. The traditional public march in the largest cities of the country was the backbone of the protest. It served to show the massive support the movement had garnered and forced the government to spend much energy on dealing with it. In Santiago, the country capital, most marches took place in the *Alameda* street, the main central avenue on which several state buildings are located – including the presidential palace. Marching in the *Alameda* not only symbolizes the centrality of the movement's demands but also increases its visibility given the large concentrations of passersby.

Marches were complemented by four other tactics. Perhaps the most notable one was the public deployment of collective artistic performances. These ranged from kiss-ins in public squares (*besatones*), bicycle rides around the presidential palace, giant puppets, marches in underwear, and performances based on classic pop songs such as Michael Jackson's "Thriller", which was carried out in front of the presidential palace by perhaps more than one hundred students. Similar to the emotions aroused in the Argentinean *Santiagazo* of the mid-1990s (Auyero 2004), such tactics created a sense of carnival and festivity that was central for keeping up the morale of students in the midst of the seriousness of their demands and the uncertainty regarding governmental responses. And by revealing the creativity of students, artistic performances possibly aroused the sympathy of those bystanders that were not impressed by more sober traditional tactics. In this respect, the Chilean student movement is aligned with creative protests in other parts of the world – from the human microphones and hand signals of the current Occupy Movement, to the smart-mobs that protested against President Estrada in the Philippines in 2001.

Another tactic was the temporary occupation of buildings. They ranged from university and high school buildings to headquarters of leftist and rightist political parties, television channels, and even the state agency in charge of certifying tertiary education institutions. In many cases police forces ended up evacuating the buildings through indiscriminate repression methods. Some students filmed such practices with their cellular phones and uploaded them in the internet, forcing authorities to investigate police excesses. Occupations served as pressure means because they threatened the financial situation of some educational institutions (for which state subsidies are tied to student attendance) and created uncertainty amongst academic and government authorities.

Additionally, a few high-school students carried out hunger strikes that lasted several weeks – fortunately without deaths. Hunger strikes kept the government and society at large on tenterhooks, and led top officers – such as the Health Minister – to voice polemic opinions about strikers that put the government in an uncomfortable situation. Finally, in a few occasions the bystander population supported the movement through *cacerolazos*, or the noisy banging of pans and pots at prearranged times - typically at night. The *cacerolazos* were surprisingly

intense in the upper-class neighborhoods of Eastern Santiago, suggesting that some of the better-off sectors of society supported the movement despite their traditionally rightist preferences.

Conclusions

The current Chilean student movement represents just an example of a broader mobilization against three things: the organization of societies around market principles, the political class that promote the policies that reproduce such organization, and the corporate world that profits from it. Since the 1999 Seattle protests or the 2001 World Social Forum, to mention two important milestones, this mobilization has become ever stronger. This happened not only in Latin America (particularly in Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela) or even the Global South, but also in the more developed areas of the world (as shown by the recent Occupy Movement, who has been most active in North America and Western Europe). No doubt that there are enormous differences between, say, the Spanish *Indignados*, the Argentinean *piqueteros*, and the Chilean students. Each is shaped by unique domestic conditions and each sustains specific claims that are related to such conditions. But their common themes – i. e. a struggle against exploitation and inequality, a deep distrust in the current state of representative democracy, the experimentation with new forms of political action and consciousness, and a commitment to horizontality in social relations - are remarkable.

This essay described some features of the student movement that since early 2011 is shaking Chile. Chile is an interesting case for studying anti-neoliberal protests because it was the first Latin American country in which political elites applied neoliberal policies in its purest forms – as was the case in the 1970s when the Pinochet dictatorship resorted to Milton Friedman's advice. Sustained protest against neoliberalism in Chile was unthinkable in the highly repressive 1970s, but perhaps surprisingly, it did not ensue either in the decade and a half after democracy was restored. This historical asynchrony may explain its intensity when it finally emerged – as a foretaste in 2006, and in full force in 2011.

In this essay I presented three claims regarding the Chilean student movement. First, the student movement is the unintended byproduct of the expansion of tertiary education. Such expansion, which took place under an educational market system during the last three decades, created both the critical mass of organized students and the frustrations and inequalities that fueled mobilization. Second, rebelling against its origins, the movement challenged two basic assumptions of the educational establishment: that tertiary education is a consumer good (instead of a citizen right), and that it is acceptable that private actors profit from the provision of educational services. Finally, I argued that the closeness of movement representatives to the mass of students, as well as the extensive opportunities for internal participation, granted the legitimacy

needed for minimizing the divisive tendencies in a context of rapid movement growth.

These claims are highly speculative and may be refuted by further systematic empirical research. However, they point to the capacity of grassroots movements for challenging not only the political and economic institutions of one of the "best students" among Latin American nations, but also – through the questioning of profit in education and the properness of paying for education - the moral foundations of current capitalism.

At this moment (October 2012) mobilizations continue but have decreased in intensity compared to one year before. Marches are convoking lower numbers of people, some sectors of the public opinion have withdrawn their initial support to the movement, and persistent mobilization has exhausted the energies of many students that wish to return to "normal times". It is very unlikely that the current government will promote the major reforms demanded by the movement. However, the movement has already changed many people's conception about how the educational system should work. It has spread the belief that individual difficulties for accessing, affording, and finishing tertiary education result to a large extent from the built-in injustices of the educational market. Since many of the currently mobilized students will soon become voters for the first time thanks to a recent electoral reform, 2011-2012 will likely become a watershed in the way politicians frame educational reforms. But it is uncertain whether all Chileans will have access to high-quality and free education in the medium term.

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About the author

Nicolás M. Somma is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He teaches and does research on political sociology, social movements, and historical-comparative sociology, with a focus on Latin America. He has published articles in the journals *Comparative Politics, Sociological Perspectives,* and the *Sociological Quarterly*, as well as many book chapters. Currently he is starting a research project about the diffusion of Chilean protest between 2000 and 2011. He can be contacted at nsomma AT uc.cl.

Organizing process, organizing life:
collective responses to precarity in Ecuador

Tristan Partridge

Abstract

In Ecuador's central Andes, members of the Indigenous village of San Isidro are engaged in various community-level projects which seek to secure and stabilize rural life, in the face of increasing temporary labour migration. The 'action notes' presented here take an introductory look at how the 'organizing process' at the centre of such forms of collective action is adapted to encourage participation through responsibility, and how subsequent collaborative projects are designed to counteract some negative impacts of precarious labour conditions and opportunities. In these activities we see a snapshot of people who not only yearn for, but actively cooperatively set out to build and re-make, a 'happier life' or their version of a good, or just, or sustainable, or dignified way-of-being.

San Isidro

Porfirio Allauca looks up from the accounts-book he's helping review with young Betty Guamán. Soon, she'll take on the role of community-treasurer in place of her father, Don Gonzalo. Once again, he is away working in Ecuador's Amazon oil fields, far from their home which is here in the Indigenous village of San Isidro in the country's central Andean mountains. In a population of about 500 people, almost every household here has someone —usually a father or son aged 18-45 — who makes the day-long journey to spend two weeks of every three away in the jungle. There they work in a range of jobs including kitchen porter, mechanic, chef, security guard or drill-operator.

Tomorrow there will be this month's community-assembly meeting here in the village hall, hence the need to inspect and prepare the accounts. Despite the widespread, periodic absence of some residents, communal life in San Isidro continues to take shape and organize collectively around community-level projects. Of course there are still hurdles to clear, not least those that stem from the precarity of contemporary labour conditions, or the results of historic processes of marginalization (such as being denied access to land or facing political exclusion and discrimination from state officials). Institutional oppression at the hands of colonial settlers may be formally less visible than in times past, but the varied effects of contemporary forms of labour-related exploitation are no less felt. Porfirio, someone who has spent nearly all of his 38 years of age engaged in community organizing in one way or another, turns to

me and tells me, "today we face a new form of slavery... today we have new landowners, new overseers, new rulers: new powers governing us, people we can't see... we can't see them to tackle them."

Water Supplies and the 'Food Circle'

The 'organizing process' of collective life in San Isidro has sought to counteract some of the negative impacts of widespread temporary labour migration with people travelling long distances to take up shift-work in the oil industry. Migratory practices are not a recent phenomenon, but have become more commonplace with Ecuador's intensified focus on drilling oil export. This period — the last 20-30 years — has also seen an increasing cost-of-living (linked to fluctuating prices in the global marketplace for things such as cooking-gas and certain staple foodstuffs), a subsequent increase in wage-dependency, and also a decreasing land-base among residents of San Isidro.

Similar shifts among rural populations are occurring throughout the world, where such instability often leads to very severe outcomes in terms of malnutrition and hunger. Whilst the community here seeks to build some of its own solutions, responses at the macro level fail repeatedly. In her analysis of such shortcomings, Lappé (2012) argues that resolving the paradox of hunger in a world which bears a global agriculture capable of feeding 12 billion people is a matter of distinguishing between a lack of food and a lack of power, between the symptoms and causes of hunger. For small-scale farmers across the globe, including in Ecuador's Andes, such a 'lack of power' is counteracted by efforts to secure the freedom, ability or autonomy which would enable them to opt out of, control or influence any market systems that affect their access to food, to decide what crops they themselves will grow and in what quantities, and to direct the destinations of what they produce.

As we have seen, life in San Isidro itself could generally be described as "semi-subsistence", in the sense that economic and dietary needs are largely met by some form of cash-earning income, in combination with family-scale farming. Through the structure of the community (*comunidad*), which is centred on a directing committee elected bi-annually by community-members, collective activity here has increased in intensity over the last couple of years. Though there is a long history of organized Indigenous mobilization and action in this region and throughout the country, this recent intensification in San Isidro has occurred since the community was successful in securing government funding for an irrigation-water pipeline. This project has, since then, depended on collaborative action and cooperation for its upkeep and maintenance.

Among other initiatives, this has led to the creation of a 'Food Circle' which, by localizing food production, distribution and consumption, ties together efforts to counteract the precarious nature of local employment and fluctuating food prices. This matches efforts throughout the world that seek to address both labour instability and often unaffordable food-costs.

Here in San Isidro, a variety of traditional and staple crops are cultivated on small landholdings irrigated by rainfall and the community's own irrigation system. The idea of holding weekly exchanges in the village square among a collective of food producers was outlined initially in economic terms, by community activist Tannia Rojas, who studies at the local Technical College: "rather than, say, ten families all going to Pujilí [the nearest market town] each week and each spending $10... they stay here and these families make a wheel, or circle, of produce [a 'food circle']... that way, staying here, there is $200 in San Isidro that was not going to be there otherwise". In the same meeting, a list of everything that could be made available was drawn up[1], as well as a list of things to plant - popular products which it would be good to make available each week[2]. The events themselves bring together families and, as with many such acts of localised activity and resistance, the lead here is taken mainly by women (and some of their older children), since most men travel away to work[3]. Here, deals are quickly struck and subsequent plans discussed for what might be available the following week. Access to food is thus directly negotiated (in contrast to the global inequities in food distribution), and the destinations of crops agreed among the producers themselves.

'Food Circle' meetings take place in addition to the larger monthly community-assembly sessions to which all members are invited typically involving between 6 and 12 participating adults. Often older children and teenagers are just as actively involved in the decision-making process, which is done by consensus (unlike in the community-wide meetings, there is no elected 'council' or board), and so usually around 15 voices will contribute to proceedings. During the planning stages, which lasted a couple of weeks, Tannia (who outlined the project's approach to interested parties, above) and Porfirio (with whom we started this visit to San Isidro) acted as nominal leaders as they had previously met with organizers from other communities in the region who had tried such projects in the past. As in other areas of collective action in the village (and discussed briefly below), an emphasis is given on not only 'participation' but also on an equitable division of responsibility. When the weekly exchange-meetings began, this theory was put into practice, since all participating members were food-producers within the circle, and thus everyone present had an interest in taking the lead for a particular crop or crops: it is in everyone's interest that there are not too many potatoes or radishes, say, one week and then none the next. Sharing, through negotiation, responsibility for food production in this way serves to secure access both to food and to a market for produce brought to the 'circle'.

The 'Food Circle', then, maximizes community- and producer-control over food prices and destinations, and helps to secure income to compensate for

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[1] This included: lettuce, taxo/papaya, skinned guinea pig, radish, carrots, tree-tomatoes, blackberries, milk, pumpkin, garlic, cheese, onions, potatoes, eggs, beetroot, maize-flour, morocho/corn, lemons, fried beans.

[2] Suggestions were: acelga/chard, other potato varieties, spinach, tomatoes, peas, beans, kidney beans, tubers: ocas, mellocas, mashua.

[3] For more on new forms of territorialized struggle, gender and resistance, see Motta et al. 2011.

precarious local employment practices. It also complements existing efforts to collectively manage natural resources crucial to crop cultivation in the village. By thus governing both productive and commercial processes, participating community-members in San Isidro can better safeguard their access to food.

Action, Responsibility, The Commons

Not everyone is able to commit fully to this initiative. However, there are very few people who do not get involved in community life in one way or another, even if their working life limits their participation. Geovanni Allauca, a 23-year-old following his older brother into work in the Amazon regions for a drilling company from the USA, lamented how his work schedule means he can't be as much of an active member in community-life as he used to be – especially compared to when he worked as a group-leader with young people in San Isidro and in neighbouring communities. He was very clear on the need for the 'organizing process', not least to counteract something of the 'new slavery' that Porfirio described, above: "We need to organize. Organize to make demands, and organize to defend – to defend ourselves, all of us, against what we're being forced to do and to become. Life here has changed so much, and in my lifetime."

This critical organizing process shares features of commons systems[4] that are found across the world, and not only because it is centred on a specific 'community'. Much like if it were being used to control hunting rights or fish stocks, the process is collectively defended and managed, implemented and adjusted, controlled and negotiated, by the very same people who are set to benefit from it. At the same time, this group of people is equally in a position to lose-out if it is mismanaged, for example if regular maintenance work is not sustained this can cause an interruption to the water-supply or if there are informal alliances this can lead to an inequitable distribution of water. This mirrors the dynamics and concerns of commons regimes.

There are two key steps to consider in efforts to support the development of these practices. The first is finding ways to retain control over natural resources that the community needs. This is not to ignore or overlook the benefits of receiving support from outside sources, but to underline the fact that these are generally only temporary, and often unpredictable or unreliable. As mentioned above, San Isidro has benefited from some government funding recently, but this came about only after many years of campaigning and organizing, and there is now no further promise of cash toward the irrigation project's upkeep (hence the renewed collective efforts to maintain it with communal labour). Similarly, in this part of the country there has been a presence of international NGOs, though this too is visibly dwindling as NGO offices in 'the West' feel the pinch of economic collapse and consequently close-up their offices in smaller countries such as Ecuador. Even in the past, this kind of support has been patchy, as

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[4] For more on Commons thinking and practice, see Kenrick 2012.

Porfirio reminded me: "the task is ours, and ours alone. The government might change next week, who knows? And then what? And you see the same thing with many NGOs, they don't travel to the places that need more support, the places that are far away and hard to travel to... some places have been neglected completely. Either people are helping the communities who need help, or not. Anything else is just pretty speeches."

The second step is to maintain these forms of action by encouraging widespread participation, and doing this through sharing responsibility. We have seen this in the example of Betty, above, being trained in the role of community-treasurer before she has left school. This is an integral element of community organizing as it is being used and developed in San Isidro. Porfirio, again, found words to sum this up succinctly whilst engaged in dialogue in an assembly-meeting: "We all work, we all have families... the thing is to do it not for our family – though our families are supremely important – nor for ourselves, but for the community... for the system to work, any system, and for this project to work, it is about giving responsibility, a sense of responsibility to everyone who works on the project... "

An example of this in action came whilst talking with 18-year-old Iván who was working up in the hills on pipeline maintenance for the community, in a week-long stint of voluntary work that project-members take it in turns to complete. I asked him what it was about working on the project that he enjoyed, what made him want to do it, what encouraged him to share in the work. His motivations stemmed from, and reflected, strong collective and affective solidarities and loyalties. He replied: "My grandparents used to tell me how their life was extremely hard: they lived as slaves lived – they told me about their slavery... it's not like that now, now that we have Human Rights. They say there's no more slavery now, and maybe I believe it... but life is still very hard. Very hard. For me, the community is important: this place, this project: the water... all are important to us these days. And this is why we work here. This is why I am here now".

Undoubtedly, life is hard in different ways both at home and away at work, and as basic costs for things like gas and electricity continue to rise, there is extra pressure on rural populations to find new ways to meet their economic needs. Even if projects like San Isidro's Food Circle can boost these efforts, more work within the community will be necessary to incorporate all 84 households.

Today, however, aided by the collective strength of *el proceso organizativo* or *la vida organizativa* (the organizing process/life), prospects are looking increasingly positive. For many, the community is more cohesive and productive than ever before, even in the face of precarious labour conditions. Don Enrique Copara, now in his 70s and someone with a whole lifetime of experience as both a highland herdsman and as an elected member of the community council, would often tell me how the community is more organized than ever today, and that it's a good thing too since "otherwise, I'm sure all the youngsters would have had to leave". His words echo a strong sense of the

potential contained in the building and weaving together of sociability and community, a potential that can counteract something of the exclusionary logics of dominant global social and economic processes.

In this snapshot of collective rural life in highland Ecuador, we have seen something of the solidarity and substantial help which is both generated and expressed by people engaging in a collective 'organizing process'. At the heart of community life, this form of cooperative activity is being constructively used to counteract something of the precarity which defines labour opportunities and conditions in the wider region. This clear example of a positive trend toward community-building is one way in which the sense – and actuality – of such place-based collectivities is not a given, but is something that stems from both experience and aspiration. That is, a project that utilizes and builds on the specific knowledge of local political and agricultural conditions, and at the same time operates in open, ongoing dialogue among participant-members in order to strategize, devolve responsibility, and design further needs-meeting actions. All of which is hard work indeed, as my friend Porfirio told me – hard work that seeks to "build a hopeful future, and create a worthy life".

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About the author

Tristan Partridge has worked with community groups and farmers' networks in highland regions of both India and Ecuador, most recently whilst completing 15 months' fieldwork in Cotopaxi province as part of a Social Anthropology PhD at Edinburgh University. Along with collaboratively produced short films and photographic essays, these experiences are now being explored and examined through audio work as well as publications.

With a focus on collective action and notions of 'community' in the particular setting of an indigenous 'comunidad', this builds on previous work with activist groups in India and the UK during a Glasgow-based MSc in 'Global Movements, Social Justice and Sustainability'. As such, commons-based regimes and ideas about place, inheritance and control are considered in light of broader processes of rural change (precarity, migration, agroecology, food sovereignty).

More info at http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/gradschool/research_student_profiles/social_anthropology/partridge_tristan. Email: t.h.partridge AT sms.ed.ac.uk

An Emancipatory Global Labour Studies is necessary! On rethinking the global labour movement in the
Hour of Furnaces

Peter Waterman

Abstract

This paper critiques the "New Global Labour Studies" for its social-liberal parameters, concentrating on the supra-national or global level, spaces, sites or aspects thereof. It argues the necessity for an "Emancipatory Global Labour Studies" and suggests some possible theoretical sources of such. It presents cases for research on labour(-related) social movements with hypothetically emancipatory potential. It considers information technology and cyberspace as a crucial new agora of labour struggle and a crucial resource for movement-oriented international labour studies.

Prefaces: from delusions to furnaces

A strange delusion possesses the working classes of the nations where capitalist civilisation holds its sway. This delusion drags in its train the individual and social woes which for two centuries have tortured sad humanity. This delusion is the love of work, the furious passion for work, pushed even to the exhaustion of the vital force of the individual and his progeny. Instead of opposing this mental aberration, the priests, the economists and the moralists have cast a sacred halo over work. Blind and finite men, they have wished to be wiser than their God; weak and contemptible men, they have presumed to rehabilitate what their God had cursed. I, who do not profess to be a Christian, an economist or a moralist, I appeal from their judgement to that of their God; from the preachings of their religious, economics or free thought ethics, to the frightful consequences of work in capitalist society.

(Paul Lafargue 1883)

[The changing nature of work and production opens up] a number of major questions not just for the development of frameworks for future empirical research, but for our very conception of society: What models of individual autonomy and choice can we use to understand human agency in an increasingly commodified economy? How should we conceptualise the

increasingly fluid boundaries between "work" and "leisure", "production" and "consumption", "service delivery" and "service use"? When citizens are pitted against one another in their capacities as workers and as consumers, what forms of social organisation are possible to enable them to express their collective interests and gain some purchase on their decision-making process? When both employment and consumption relationships are increasingly transacted over geographical distances, often across national borders, what forms of representation, negotiation, and regulation are possible?

(Ursula Huws 2003:186)

In the longer term...the development of the world working class will have to become the analytical background against which trade-union internationalism is analysed.

(Marcel v.d. Linden 2008: 261, fn 6)

The revolts [leading up to the Marikana Massacre in South Africa] have failed to register on the laptops and Blackberries of the chattering classes. This is because of the social — and even geographic — distance of the middle classes to the new working classes and the poor. The sight of the police shooting striking workers on TV has brought the real world of struggle right into the lounges of public opinion. In the midst of our outrage at this brutality let us acknowledge something new is emerging. Early signs do not indicate it is grand and well-organised. Movements, after all, are notoriously messy. But the struggle to build new militant unions may succeed in bringing organised labor closer to the new majority of informal workers. In normal times trade unions can be almost as much a huge bureaucratic machine as a corporation or a state agency, with negotiations conducted by insiders far from rank-and-file members. Strikes change all that.

(Leonard Gentle 2012)

Now is the hour of furnaces and nothing but light should be seen.

(José Martí, 1853-95)

Introduction

There is a welcome new wave of what is beginning to call itself "The New Global Labour Studies". This considers work, workers and unions in the light of globalisation and then at local, national, regional and global level. It is to be distinguished from "the Old International Labour Studies", which tends toward

the national-comparative rather than the global.[1] The new wave could be considered, at least in part, to accompany the new "Global Justice and Solidarity Movement" and the wave of writing inspired by such. But is the New Global Labour Studies (NGLS) also *informed and motivated* by the new popular and radical-democratic social movements, by its new principles of articulation, or by the new theorising? The NGLS would not be new if it did not reflect on the crisis confronting work and working people globally, as also on that of the inter/national trade union movement. It therefore also has implicit or explicit implications for inter/national unionism. But does it also fan the labour sparks thrown out by the planet-consuming furnace of capitalist globalisation and paleo-liberalism?

This paper 1) critiques the NGLS for its social-liberal parameters, concentrating on the supra-national or global level, spaces, sites or aspects thereof. It argues 2) the necessity for an "Emancipatory Global Labour Studies" (EGLS) and suggests some possible theoretical sources of such. It presents 3) some cases for research on labour(-related) social movements with hypothetically emancipatory potential. It considers 4) information technology and cyberspace as a crucial new agora of labour struggle and a crucial resource for movement-oriented international labour studies.

1. The New Global Labour Studies[2]

I associate the NGLS initially with a particular book and journal and intend to take these as representative of a growing body of writing and dialogue. The book

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[1] A good - meaning also strong - example here might be Gall, Wilkinson and Hurd (2011). The combination here of Marxism, a blind eye to the global (in either spatial or holistic terms), and an abandonment of even Marxian utopianism, gives pause for thought.

[2] The background to this paper is the involvement of many of the parties addressed with the "New International Labour Studies" (NILS) of the 1980s. These include Ronnie Munck, Eddie Webster, Rob Lambert and myself. Over the decades we have both collaborated and disagreed, but always, I hope, respectfully and with continuing appreciation for each other's work. For accounts of the passage from NILS to NGLS see Munck (2009 and/or 2010). For the gradual re-emergence of Left international labour studies in the UK, see Waterman (2009). In commenting on an earlier draft of this paper, Laurence Cox, a founder of [Interface], said, in part:

> In terms specifically of [Global Labour Studies], I get the sense of a field highly structured by forces outside itself – some work representing a thoroughly institutionalised perspective, with only limited ability to think beyond actually-existing circumstances; some fascinating work (usually historical or ethnographic) around specific kinds of struggle but which don't really offer much by way of practical orientation for most working situations; and some passionate but usually wildly generalising writing from specific political positions. (Email received 070911).

I can only hope that this revised version, which benefits from participation in the South African Global Labour University Conference and conversations with my hosts in Johannesburg (Eddie Webster and Luli Calinicos) and Durban (Pat Horne and Patrick Bond), will go some way toward meeting the needs of this commentator. But I also think that, given the one-way, top-down, centre-periphery, North-to-South flow of funding and institution-building, there would be a good case for a political-economic (power and money) analysis of the NGLS, a research task I leave to others.

is [*Grounding Globalisation: Labour in the Age of Insecurity*](). And the journal is the new [*Global Labour Journal*](). There is an overlap between the authors of the first and the editors of the second. Indeed, there is also a certain overlap between these and a particular union network, the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights ([Sigtur]()). And (at least initially?) with the [Research Committee 44]() (Labour Movements) of the International Sociological Association. And, finally, with the Northern-based but largely Southern-targeted [Global Labour University]().[3] There are other links - personal, professional, institutional and ideological - between the NGLS on the one hand and the traditional inter/national trade union organisations plus the inter-state International Labour Organisation (ILO) on the other. The book and journal seem therefore relevant and worthy objects of critique. The NGLS has, finally, a much wider spread, or force of attraction, within the broader field of cross-national and global labour studies, being, thus, more like a complex or network, the characteristics of which this part will attempt to specify.

The book[4]

Firstly, then, Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout (2010). This book (henceforth *Grounding*) is a highly original and ambitious work, which should provoke discussion and encourage further work amongst labour-oriented academics and research-minded activists in coming years (see full review, Waterman 2011a). *Grounding* focuses on the tribulations and struggles of factory workers in the "white goods" (refrigerators, washing machines, etc) industry in one locale each of Australia, South Korea and South Africa. The book could be considered as the major contribution (at least in English) from the "Global South" to the widening Left efforts to reconceptualise and reinvent the labour movement worldwide in the age of globalisation.[5]

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[3] The Global Labour University (GLU), based in Kassel and Berlin, Germany, now has branches in India, Brazil and South Africa. It describes itself, on an [ILO site,]() as 'strengthening South-South Cooperation through a Global Network for Decent Work and Social Justice". The same brochure has an upside-down pyramid (or right-way-up funnel?), showing its three Southern partners at the top and Germany at the bottom. Despite being firmly rooted within the homeland of traditional inter-state and international trade union institutions, as well as social-liberal discourses of labour relations, it is also a source of, or has hosted, work that goes beyond the ILO-ITUC-Development Cooperation canon. See here the [GLU conference held in Johannesburg](), October, 2011, and [the abstracts of papers contributed to this](). Consider, in particular, the work of conference participants, Melisa Serrano and Edlira Xhafa (2011), published in a joint ILO/GLU publication. More on these later.

[4] This and the following sub-section draw on Waterman (2011a and b).

[5]An earlier Southern exception comes to mind, the English/Spanish "Labour Again" list [http://www.iisg.nl/labouragain/index.php](). After a promising start, however, it seems to have fallen into disuse. It is nonetheless worth a visit...or a revival. The absence of Latin American labour studies from the resources deployed by *Grounding* is dramatically revealed by the contribution to the *Global Labour Journal* of Enrique de la Garza (2011). In a special issue on ["making public sociology"]() edited by Michael Burawoy, de la Garza reveals the theoretical/political riches of this tradition, as well as giving us a moving autobiographical

Grounding depends on a critical reconsideration of the theory of 20th century Left sociologist and social historian, Karl Polanyi, with his currently much-cited and promoted work (e.g. Munck 2002, 2009, 2010) on "the great transformation" brought about by the first industrial revolution, of the "double movement" in which the capitalist economy came to dominate society and how this provoked a movement to "re-embed" the economy in society. *Grounding*, however, marshals other theorists to supplement or correct Polanyi. They include, notably, Sidney Tarrow (2005) on transnational social movements, and Michael Burawoy (2000, 2004) on, respectively, movements against globalisation and the relationship of socially-committed academics to the people and movements they study (indeed, the title of their book does homage to Burawoy). The authors also make use of radical social geographers such as [David Harvey], with arguments concerning capital's spatial operations and the necessity for multi-spatial and multi-level counter-strategies.

Whilst they do not synthesise their theoretical sources, far less draw from them a set of initial propositions, the authors do deploy them throughout the work with elegance and effect. Curiously, *Grounding* does not conceptualise, in its theoretical introduction, two related notions from the *old* New International Labour Studies that nonetheless repeatedly reappear throughout the book, "social movement unionism" and "the new labour internationalism" (although the latter, as we will see, is at least defined in Chapter 9). Yet these two concepts actually seem to underlie or at least inspire their work. More limiting, however, is their failure to deal with computerisation/informatisation as a fundamental characteristic of capitalist globalisation and a crucial terrain of labour and other social movement struggle against this. Informatisation depends on and creates *another space* – cyberspace – which emancipatory social movements ignore at their peril.[6] The implications of this void in the theoretical peregrinations of GG, become evident in the chapter on a new labour internationalism.

The internationalism chapter of *Grounding* (Chapter 9) depends on a schematic opposition between an old and a new labour (actually *union*) internationalism (Table 9.1), in which the characteristics are:

Old Labour Internationalism	New Labour Internationalism
Career bureaucrats	Political generation of commited

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account of his life as a movement-oriented labour specialist. I also discover, for the first time, that whilst we were busy with the New International Labour Studies in Europe and the Anglophone world, he was busy with a rather more-substantial "New Labour Studies" in Mexico and Latin America.

[6] The key text on informatisation and networking is Castells (1996-8), which deals both with the present revolution in capitalism and new forms of cyberspace resistance to such. Increasing Left writings, however, concern themselves with cyberspace and social movements in general or even with labour movements in particular. Apart from Eric Lee (1996), consider Escobar (2004), Dyer-Witheford (1999), Martinez (2006), Robinson (2006, 2011) and Waterman (2010).

	activists
Hierarchy and large bureaucracy	The network form
Centralisation	Decentralisation
Restricted debate	Open dialogue
Dipomatic orientation	Mobilisation and campaign orientation
Focus on workplace and trade unions only	Coalition with new social movements and NGOs
Predominantly established, Northern, male, white workers	Predominantly struggling Southern Afro, Asian and Latino workers

Whilst such Manichean oppositional schemes are a common rhetorical or polemical device (of a kind I may myself employ), and whilst this one does powerfully challenge the old union internationalism, the characterisation of the new is itself open to challenge. Where, for example, is the alternative to, the opposite, or surpassing of, the "male-dominated"? Not on the table, nor, actually, in the book's index, any more than are "women" or "feminism".[7] Nor, indeed, are there on this table any "new" theories/ideologies/discourses. Such schematic presentations of internationalism need, I would argue, to be supplemented by wider and deeper features/aspects such as the following (Waterman 1998:57-63, 235-8).[8] These include

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[7] Hale and Wills (2005) deals not only with another globalised industry, garment production, but with an overwhelmingly female workforce, and one in which global resistance is promoted by feminists and takes the networking form.

[8] Marcel van der Linden is the key figure in the "Amsterdam School" of "Global Labour History". A major historian of union, labour and social-movement internationalism, he reminds us that the union internationals today only represent between five and ten percent of the world's wage-earners (van der Linden 2008:280). Van der Linden also warns us, concerning his own recent work on labour internationalism, that

> Since the historiography of trade-union internationalism is far more advanced than the historiography of the world working class, I focus on the development of labour organisations here. In the longer term, however, that approach should be reversed, i.e. the development of the world working class will have to become the analytical background against which trade-union internationalism is analysed. (v. d. Linden 2008:261, footnote 6).

Van der Linden also reminds us – should we need such reminding - that Marx's working class bearer of human social emancipation was only a tiny proportion of the then-existing working classes and therefore proposes another theoretical basis for including these others (van der Linden 2006:Ch. 2). Actually we *do* need such reminding because whilst we did or do know this, we assumed global industrialisation and the consequent generalisation of the industrial proletariat

- distinctions between different active *bearers* of internationalism (the union organisation? the broader labour movement? the new global social movements more generally? labour-movement or labour-oriented activists/researchers?),

- the *axes, directionality, reach and depth* of international solidarity actions or campaigns,

- the distinct *possible yet problematic types of solidarity* within either the old or the new (Identity? Substitution? Complementarity? Reciprocity? Affinity? Restitution?),

- the *meaning* to those workers involved at either end of the transaction (or any point of the network) of the solidarity they are involved in.

I am equally unconvinced by this chapter that a new union internationalism is or will be *primarily* carried by the Southern workers (Waterman 1998: Ch.5). Indeed, it could be seen as a prerequisite of any new union or labour internationalism that it develop out of a global dialectic and dialogue

- between all world areas - including the here forgotten (ex-) Communist one and that humungous new Commu-Capitalist Workshop of the World, China (subsumed with difficulty into any homogenous North or South)!

- with the full range of radical-democratic worker movements

- with the complete range of radically-democratic social movements

- between labour organisations/movements and socially-committed academics.

The "new internationalist" cases that this chapter of *Groundings* offers are all from the Geographic South, though Australia is, obviously (if embarrassingly) part of the Socio-Economic North, and South Korea is in the Geographic North (Seoul is almost as far North as Lisbon)! Even the most "socially southern" of the three, South Africa, is a somewhat atypical member of the Global South (although what would be a "typically" Southern state/society is today questionable). So any Manichean, or even a simple binary opposition, between North and South is here either fatally undermined or rendered seriously problematic.

The major case offered for the new union internationalism is the Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (Sigtur). It is no coincidence that this network links major unions in the three case countries in this book. Nor that one of the *Grounding* authors, Rob Lambert, is a founder and keystone of this network. Nor that he and Eddie Webster have been its major academic promoters. So one has to decide whether authorial over-identification does not seriously exaggerate its importance.

Sigtur has no presence within the World Social Forum (unlike the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) and the South African Confederation of Trade Unions (Cosatu), it has attended only one WSF). And after almost two decades of existence it has a weak and non-dialogical web presence.[9] Yet a dialogical web presence is today surely another requirement for any new labour internationalism. Nor are we offered, in the presentation of Sigtur, here or elsewhere, any serious discussion of the "North/South" relationship *between* the three countries that the authors consider "the fundamental challenge to a new labour internationalism" (209). Yet Australia, home base of Sigtur, is clearly a Northern wolf in Southern sheep's clothing. Sigtur has, finally, been so far trapped in an unrecognised or unadmitted contradiction - or at least a foundational tension - between trying to build a new *networked* labour movement internationalism on the basis of leadership relations between trade union *organisations* that themselves reproduce the state-national base of their Old Labour Internationalism.[10]

Grounding is, therefore, a work still imprisoned within earlier stages of capitalism and the incrementalist discourses of the Westeurocentred Left; its proposed strategies reproduce the 20th century social-democratic tradition. I say "20th century" because there was an emancipatory 19th century one, and there is also developing a 21st century social-democratic tradition – one that is opening itself to the dramatically-transformed nature of global capitalism and to the newest global social movements contesting this (consider, for example, Bieler, Lindberg and Pillay 2008, Bieler and Lindberg 2011, New Unionism,

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[9] www.sigtur.com/. Although I was given to understand, early 2010, that this was to gain a dialogue feature, it has not, October 2012, come into existence. Moreover, the presence of Sigtur on the new UnionBook blogsite is more or less limited to propaganda. A rare academic contribution to the Sigtur site (reproduced on that of UnionBook), by Robert O'Brien, is actually an endorsement of the network with a few cautionary comments. We are, thus, confronted with a small circle of academics (who reappear as co-authors of *Grounding* and editors of *the Global Labour* Journal) and a limited network of traditional Left trade union leaders involved in a largely self-referential relationship. The Sigtur website is not, at least yet, the space in which an emancipatory global labour internationalism can be developed. Perhaps it will come to contribute to such in the future but this would require it to enter into direct, open, horizontal dialogue with other such cyberspaces, something I will return to.

[10] Sigtur membership consists primarily of national union centers of some unspecified "Left ", "progressive" or "democratic" nature. In the case of the Philippines, this is the Kilusang Mayo Uno, long associated with the (Maoist) Communist Party of the Philippines (http://jpe.library. arizona.edu/volume_6/westvol6.htm).   In the case of India, it is the two major Communist trade union federations, one of which is associated with the Communist-led Government of West Bengal, itself responsible for land clearance and peasant massacres in the interest of major Indian corporations (http://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/apr2007/beng-a21.shtml). At a Sigtur conference in South Africa, 1999, I witnessed a *walkout* by the two Communist Indian unions in protest against a Hong Kong-based labour NGO's exhibition on factory fires in China (we have to presume that protest against factory fires in Thailand would have been acceptable to the Indian delegation). Members of Sigtur also appear to act as national gatekeepers, obstructing, if not blocking, Sigtur from relating to other unions or labour movements in what they seem to consider as "their" nation-states. Indeed, I heard one Indian Communist leader at this conference proclaim, in traditional bourgeois-national-statist mode, the principle of non-interference in Indian labour matters!

UnionBook and the personal but pluralistic and multi-lingual, Global Labour Institute website of Dan Gallin). Striking, also, is that despite the Southern drumbeating,[11] our co-authors are entirely dependent on Northern theories and theorists.

The most *Grounding* can hope for is that, in its three somewhat untypical Southern cases, industrial unions and Left political parties will bring about radical reforms within (presumably repentant) national-capitalist polities. In 2012 evidence of such such movements and such repentance is lacking. Even those Left Latin American states in which so much labour and social movement hope has been placed over the last 5-10 years are being critically questioned and challenged (e.g. Heinz Dietrich 2011). The utopia which the authors are promoting (in Chapter 10) must be seen as one of the past: Sweden of the 1970s? On a world scale? And this despite the surely reasonable argument that it is *union identification with this Swedish utopia* that continues to disarm, firstly, the unions of the North in the face of the new capitalism but also many *if not most* of the unions of the South, for which this shrinking (if not yet melting) Northotopia has become the only imaginable one. Consider here the almost literally universal union endorsement of the Decent Work project[12] of the Euro-centred International Labour Organisation (critiqued Waterman 2005).[13]

The exchange

The publication of *Grounding* led to an exchange in the new *Global Labour Journal*. This did not, unfortunately, suggest a way beyond the shortcomings of the NGLS. It was also, unfortunately, in attack/defence mode (Global Issues 2010). It was started (despite the evident sympathy for his work of *Grounding Globalisation*) by Michael Burawoy (2010a), in a piece entitled "From Polanyi to

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[11] Munck's (2010) 'South" is at least a metaphorical as well as a socio-geographic one, referring to the 'subaltern" whoever and wherever s/he may be.

[12] For Southern union endorsement of the Decent Work campaign, see the website of CUT-Brazil, Sigtur's major Latin American affiliate, http://www.cut.org.br/cut-em-acao/40/trabalho-decente-na-estrategia-da-cut.

[13] The effect of international trade union involvement with - in reality uncritical acceptance for almost one century of its 25% representation within- the ILO, has been, inevitably, one of a reduction of its independence of thought and autonomy of action. Whilst there is little if any writing on this, compare the much-later experience of women's NGOs with presence within and recognition by other UN instances (Joachim 2011):

> [R]ecent work…suggests that multilateral institutions affect not only the behaviour of NGOs but also the very understanding they have of themselves, as well as the interests they pursue. […] Furthermore, the heightened engagement of women's NGOs in the United Nations, in general, pitted so-called insiders and outsiders against each other. Although the former considered institutional politics a necessary strategy to advance women's status, the latter feared that this would result in co-optation and problems of accountability.

Pollyanna".[14] Whilst certainly of value in its critique of Polanyi and the New
Polanyism, his almost unqualified attack on *Grounding* did not suggest any
labour movement alternative,[15] dismissing not only the authors of *Grounding*
but Global Labour Studies in general as being over-optimistic and as hopelessly
and falsely so. Burawoy seems to see the necessity today for not so much a class-
based as a species-based movement but concludes even *here* that:

> Some sort of global counter-movement may be necessary for human survival,
> but there is no historical necessity for it to appear...A counter-movement to
> prevent ecological disaster can only be imposed by authoritarian rule...There
> may be small counter-movements...but palliative care might forestall *any*
> collective commitment to contain capitalism's rapacious tendencies. (Burawoy
> 2010a:311)

Given the evidence for growing global protest against war, imperialism, climate
change, deforestation, genetically-engineered crops and animals, patriarchy and
sexual discrimination, advertising, Frankenstein foods, extractivism, I would
suggest that his is a fatalistic pessimism and one that – as several of his
respondents suggest (Global Issues 2010) - cannot but discourage struggle.

I have to ask myself whether the combination in this exchange of an admittedly
unrealistic optimism and a quite unqualified pessimism may not be due to 1) the
heavy dependence on, or reference of both parties to, two socially-committed
critical theorists of industrial capitalist society, social discontent and
emancipatory movements, Karl Marx and Karl Polanyi, and 2) the further heavy
reference to, if not dependence on, the distinction or opposition between the
exploitation theory of the first and the commodification theory of the second.

It is my feeling that whatever major theoretical, methodological, analytical or
strategic insights or inspirations the Two Karls might provide for global labour
studies today, they do not – either singly or combined – provide a sufficient
theoretical basis for an emancipatory movement under our radically different
capitalist conditions. Actually, of course, Karls 1 and 2 were not adequate to the
19th and 20th centuries either. Neither the class-based strategies drawn from
Marx nor the Society+State-based ones following (at least implicitly) from

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[14] A Pollyanna, according to Wikipedia, is 'someone whose optimism is excessive to the point of
naïveté or refusing to accept the facts of an unfortunate situation"
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pollyanna#citenote-0.

[15] Burawoy did come back with a rejoinder (2010b) in rather more friendly mode, but without
demonstrating any optimism of the will to counter his pessimism of the intellect. His problem
may be with the distinction or opposition he sees between academic work and political
engagement. Burawoy seems to consider (his?) academic work to be committed to truth or
science and (others'?) political engagement to involve an idealisation of realities and
possibilities. Whilst cognizant of the tension between these two types of practice, I have not
found – and am not finding - academic labour studies to be so scientific nor political work to
necessarily require idealisation.

Polanyi, was crowned with more than temporary, partial – and tragically reversible - success. I am here referring, of course, to the collapse of the Communist and Third World Socialist projects that drew on Marxism and to the more-gradual destruction/disintegration of the capitalist welfare-states inspired (again implicitly) by Polanyi.

The hosting of this exchange by the *Global Labour Journal* does it credit. But both the exchange and various other contributions to or review articles in GLJ raise in my mind the idea that "Another Global Labour Studies is Necessary". Thus in one recent issue we find two contributions suggesting more of social-reformist conviction than critical sociological endeavour, those of Gay Seidman and of Hennebert and Bourque.

In the course of a book review *Gay Seidman* (2011) argues of "Social Movement Unionism" (SMU) that it is not a

> strategic prescription, [proponents] forgetting that the phrase was originally merely descriptive, meant to capture the heady sense of excitement and possibility that came when labour activists realised that even in authoritarian settings, workers could use their shopfloor strength to support broad working class goals.

This has to be considered an authorial fancy rather than a reflection on the literature or a finding from research. In original formulation (Waterman 1993), the argument 1) dealt with workers under both liberal-democratic and authoritarian capitalist regimes and 2) had a clear "strategic prescription" - or at least a provocation to surpass traditional models and theories, Right, Centre or Left. On a search, June 2011, the phrase rated 72,800 Googles (to use the new currency), many of which are to such societies as those of the European Union, others to North America, one or two even to Madison, Wisconsin, (where Gay lives and where, early 2011, a dramatic and innovatory labour-student-community protest occurred). Amongst the thousands of contributions are also scholarly items critical of the concept but advancing the effort to help international labour escape from its capitalist predicament, its national(ist) parameters and its Social-Liberal (occasionally Communist or Populist) entrapments.[16] The best-known piece on SMU is the mentioned one of Kim

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[16] I have been using the term 'social liberalism' without defining it. I have been provoked by Magaly Rodríguez García (2010) who in her work on the International Confederation of Trade Unions, prefers the sub-category, "labour liberalism" (208-10). If that applies particularly to the role of the ICFTU in the Cold War period, I have a preference for 'social liberalism" thus understood:

> It differs from classical liberalism in that it believes the legitimate role of the state includes addressing economic and social issues such as unemployment, health care, and education while simultaneously expanding civil rights. Under social liberalism, the good of the community is viewed as harmonious with the freedom of the individual...Social liberal policies have been widely adopted in much of the capitalist world, particularly following World War II. [...] It affirms the following principles: human rights, free and fair elections and multiparty democracy, social

Moody (1997), which has "international" in its title, and which can hardly be dismissed as being either confined to authoritarian settings or merely descriptive. "Social Movement Unionism" was also the subject of a panel (one of the eight papers being that of Gay herself!) at the 2010 session of the Labour Movements Committee at the Conference of the International Sociology Association, Gothenburg. http://people.umass.edu/clawson/abstracts.html#session8.[17] In a report, secondly, on the 2010 Congress of the ITUC, *Hennebert and Bourque* (2011) fail to mention the manner in which the ITUC repressed a Palestine solidarity resolution proposed by the South African Cosatu union centre and (re)elected to major ITUC committees the leader of the increasingly-criticised Israeli Zionist trade union centre, Histadrut. This led to a public Cosatu critique of the ITUC - to my knowledge the first such by *any* affiliate (http://www.cosatu.org.za/docs/shopsteward/2010/sept.pdf). Whilst this example of Eurocentric bureaucratic union authoritarianism might have occurred out of the sight of Hennebert and Bourque, how can they have possibly missed the priority given in Congress plenary sessions to representatives of the international financial institutions responsible for the de-structuring of the international working class and the present crisis of international unionism? An evaluation of the same ITUC Congress by veteran social-democratic international union leader, Dan Gallin (2011), is not so much critical as dismissive of both the ITUC and of contemporary social-democracy more generally.[18]

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justice, tolerance, social market economy, free trade, environmental sustainability and a strong sense of international solidarity. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_liberalism#cite_note-9.

This seems to me to embrace contemporary Social Democracy as well as Labour Liberalism. Although I might like to add Modernism and Eurocentrism to the mix - as well as opposition to Neo-Liberalism.

[17] Interestingly, a recent paper (Flores 2010) on a new Brazilian union uses the concept of SMU to distinguish it from the CUT-Brazil confederation that Gaye (Seidman 1994), had discussed in SMU terms. Be it noted, finally here, that a recent critique of the SMU concept accuses it of coming from and relating to Western liberal democracies rather than in Southern authoritarian settings (Rahman and Langford 2010)!

[18] "The ITUC had its second congress in Vancouver in June and elected a new general secretary (Sharan Burrow) and a new president (Michael Sommer from the DGB). Predictably, not much else has changed. The ITUC remains a jester in the court of the intergovernmental organizations and acts, in the best of cases, like an international human rights NGO with an emphasis on labour issues. Unlike all its predecessors, even the two latest and weakest, it has no principles, no programme, no vision and, consequently, no traction. The role of the largest international labour organisation the world has ever seen remains marginal. [...] The ideological collapse of social-democracy, which has internalised neo-liberal policies hostile to workers, to unions, to its own historical heritage and reason for existence, has certainly been a factor contributing to the demoralisation of the trade union movement, especially in countries where there is a historically close link between the unions and the social-democratic parties (Central and Northern Europe, UK), or in the countries of the former Soviet block where the meaning of socialism has been lost through decades of Stalinism."

In suggesting that "another global labour studies is necessary", I am, of course, playing with and expanding on the early slogan of the World Social Forum, "Another World is Possible!", a slogan that at least opened up the imagination to the possibility of a world beyond not only paleo-liberalism but also capitalism. Let me here suggest as a name for my alternative, "Emancipatory Global Labour Studies". This would provide the acronym EGLS (pronounced: "eagles"). But before we go hunting for eagles, let me to try to establish that the NGLS, with its limited parameters, goes wider than one book and one exchange in one journal.[19]

A major contributor to the NGLS has been *Ronaldo Munck* (2002, 2009, 2010), who combines theoretical insights on class (Karl Marx), commoditisation (Karl Polanyi), space (David Harvey and others), uneven and combined development (Leon Trotsky), post-colonialism (Walter Mignolo), Gramsci (or at least contemporary theorists of "subalternity") and others to conclude that

> Subaltern studies…can equally be applied to postmodern subjects such as the proletariat [precariat? PW] and the new working poor. A critical theory of subalternity would contribute to our understanding of contestation in the era of neo-liberalism by workers and the new international social movements /…/ The long-term contest between East and West is now leading to the latter losing out…The North-South contest is seeing increased contestation by the latter…Th/e/ new South is not (just) a geographical region but, rather, more of a cultural metaphor for all the subaltern classes, regions, neighbourhoods and households. This transformation project represents…a recovery of the struggles, aspirations and counter-hegemonic projects of actually-existing global civil societies. (Munck 2010:221)

Whilst there is in Ronnie's argument a rich mix of theoretical elements and thought-provoking ideas, and whilst he gestures toward new working classes, new socio-geographic spaces, new social movements, even "counter-hegemonic" (213) ones, and even a "grounded and truly global socialist transitional programme" (214), he seems to see such as expressed, at least in part, in an existing labour (trade union?) movement that "has recovered its voice and…articulated grounded and practical proposals to deal with the global disorder". We are presented with no evidence of such. There is here, indeed, no consideration of the core or "default" labour movement form and ideology – the national-industrial, collective-bargaining-oriented, oligarchical union – as an obstacle to a Marxist or even a *Polanyian* transformation. The

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[19] The NGLS seems to be expanding even I struggle to complete this piece. This may, of course, be simply a function of my wider casting of a net which is clearly of my own construction. In this manner I became aware, late-July, 2011, of a relevant piece by the Left Social Democrat, national and international union officer and adviser, Asbjorn Wahl (2011) in a new (to me) website, the *Global Labour Column*, http://column.global-labour-university.org/, itself a project of the Germany-based but now international Global Labour University, http://www.global-labour-university.org/.

theoretical/strategic contributions of, for example, feminism and environmentalism are marginalised or invisibile, as is informatisation and cyberspace. There remains, finally, a profound tension between the class and post-capitalist orientations of Ronnie's Marxists and the non-class and reformed-capitalist orientations of his Polanyi.[20]

A welcome addition to the NGLS has been that of the radical social geographers (Castree et. al. 2004, McGrath-Champ, Herod and Rainnie 2010). They have introduced "space" and 'scale" as crucial determinants of and contested terrains for workers and unions. In both cases, however, the concentration is overwhelmingly on "labour" as understood in terms traditional to 19th-20th century capitalism, even if Castree et. Al. (2004:225) do recognise that most of the world's work is done outside the "formal economy".[21]

Perhaps the most sophisticated contribution to the NGLS is that of *Peter Evans* (2010), in, again, the *Global Labour Journal*. Evans reviews a wide range of literature and considers an equally wide range of old and new forms of international labour response. He also addresses the problem of the traditional formal inter/national union structures and such new "rhizomes", or network relations, of international social movements and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Sensitive to the possibilities of the new communications technologies, he also stresses their potential for a necessary cultural transformation in the labour movement:

> Global communication technologies are more than just tools – they also reshape cultural possibilities. Contemporary global diffusion of everything from ideological presuppositions to everyday practices doesn't erase divisions, but twenty-first century workers may share as much culture at the global level as nineteenth century workers did at the national level. The global media may be a frightening Leviathan, but the memes they create are shared by workers around the world. In the workplace, the global spread of corporate structures and practices creates shared cultural milieus that permeate workers' lives almost regardless of geographic distance and political boundaries. If the socio-cultural nemesis thesis argues that cultural divisions undercut the possibility of transnational solidarity, the "labour's turn" thesis argues that revolutionary changes in communication combine with the emergence of a globally-shared

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[20] I leave aside here the question of Ronnie's use of "post-modern", even if, as I have suggested parenthetically, this applies to the precariat and the new working poor. These both seem to me to be long-existing modern subjects (if "modern" is being restricted to the epoch of national, industrial, enlightenment powered capitalism). What would here be "post-modern" would be the vocabulary or theory that has rediscovered or reinvented them.

[21] A visual and visceral reminder of this in the case of India is provided by an illustrated book on such workers in the case of India (Breman and Das 2000). This not only shows the immense variety of such work and workers but also reveals the variety of spaces (work places, homes, streets) in which they survive. It also prompts for me the question of why the two books on labour and space do not themselves deal with the nature of the factory, office, street or household space in which their subjects actually work.

culture and everyday practices to create new potential for building solidarity across even the widest geographic divides. (Evans 2010:357)

Like most contributors to the NGLS, unfortunately, he gives both the hegemonic, institutionalised ITUC family and the marginal networked Sigtur qualities or potentials broadcast by their champions rather than emerging from committed but critical research. Thus he states of the Eurocentred and Eurocentric ITUC etc, that

The 2006 merger of the World Confederation of Labour and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to form the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) replaces a structure fractured by Cold War politics with the possibility of a unified strategic actor. The move to rename the International Trade Secretariats (ITSs), calling them Global Union Federations (GUFs) instead, reflected recognition that it is not so much trade itself as the global production networks that underlie it that must be restructured if workers interests are to be protected. The accompanying organisational consolidation reflected appreciation that global corporations operate across a range of sectors, and labour organisations must encompass a similar range. (Evans 2010:361-2)

Whilst later qualifying this somewhat…umm?… Polyannic vision, he fails to see that this institutional – indeed corporate – merger, reproducing the corporate capitalist model, was neither preceded nor followed by any change in worldview, ideology or strategy. Discussion before and after the event was confined to leading officers, mostly out of the public eye, and it in no way involved any identifiable rank or file. It was a defensive move by a set of institutions under severe external attack (due to the global neo-liberal offensive) and internal weakening (the reduction of union resources). He likewise sees the move of the AFL-CIO from its CIA-days (Scipes 2010) to a largely state- or inter-state-funded and Westeurocentric Development Cooperationism as a sign of *hope* for labour internationalism! Indeed, all his positive examples of union internationalism are on the North-South axis and in a North → South direction. Taking this problematic part for the whole obstructs, surely, a holistic view of, and a universal ethic for, international labour solidarity.

Rohini Hensman, a veteran of socialist-feminism and Left unionism in Mumbai, India, is surely the most "Southern" contributor to the NGLS, as well as a contributor to *Global Labour Studies* (Hensman 2010).[22] Her contribution to the journal, however, seems to me trapped within both the parameters of

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[22] She has also published a book (Hensman 2011) which deserves a full length review, particularly since its title suggests its more-than-Indian implications and because it has a couple of chapters on the international and internationalism. Hensman has, however, been subject of a symposium (Phelan et. al. 2011), if not one marked by any particularly emancipatory perspective.

capitalism and the ideology of social-liberalism. It is also surely *passé,* as well as somewhat iffy. She argues that

> Globalisation could help to strengthen workers' rights in India if unions worldwide could agree on a social clause in WTO agreements which would guarantee the basic human rights embodied in the ILO Core Conventions to all workers, including those currently in informal employment relationships, and launch campaigns for employment creation programs. Additionally, they would need to put pressure on governments to slash military expenditure and redirect public spending to the social sector, infrastructure, and civilian research and development. These steps would also help to end the economic downturn. (Hensman 2010:111)

Rohini even argues that

> Opposition to globalisation retards the transition from imperialism to a world order marked by more egalitarian and peaceful relationships between peoples; furthermore, it distracts attention from the task of shaping the new global order, leaving the field open for advocates of traditional authoritarian labour relations and modern neo-liberal policies to impose their own agendas on it. (123).

In so far as she does not demand or even speculate about an alternative to such, this accepts the parameters of capitalism. In so far as it proposes, implicitly, a neo-Keynesian alternative to neo-liberalism, it falls within the discourse of social-liberalism. In so far as it proposes to continue the ICFTU campaign, for what I have called "A Social Clause from Santa Claus" (Waterman 2001), it is *passé.* This ICFTU campaign failed and has been buried, without funeral or flowers, by the new ITUC in favour of the equally social-liberal "Decent Work" campaign.[23] The dependence of Rohini Hensman's arguments on a reformed and social-liberal WTO, and on an International Labour Organisation (ILO) which only has powers of moral suasion, means the similar dependence of the Indian and international labour movement on one inter-state organ of neo-liberalism and one of social-liberalism, the one based in Washington, the other in Geneva. Although, further, she does mention that only seven percent of the Indian wage force is in "formal employment" (119), her argument is based on the hope that the other 93 percent are going to be able to enter into the sphere of national labour law, collective bargaining and international labour standards, within which the traditional international labour movement exists but is also

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[23] The Social Clause has been at least singed – by an author who thinks it still has life - as failing so far to have challenged the political and ideological hegemons (Pahle 2010). It has been scorched by a collective based in South Africa (Tribe of Moles, 2011), of which more below.

trapped.[24] Whilst, finally, she, reasonably, condemns a bourgeois-nationalist anti-globalisation ideology that predominates amongst the Indian unions - based on the two or even ten percent - she shows no awareness of an international *anti-globalisation* movement that is morphing into a *global justice and solidarity movement* with ever-more pronounced anti- or post-capitalist orientations.

Steve Hughes and Nigel Haworth's introductory work on the International Labour Organisation (2011) is overly concerned with the personalities and roles of successive Directors General. This suggests it belongs to "The Great Man School of ILO History". They also say surprisingly little about the role of unions within the ILO. Whilst both authors are involved in an official ILO history project, this does not necessarily mean that their work is - in the pejorative Latin-American sense phrase - an *historia oficial*. They may occasionally remind us that the ILO is an institution of capitalism (43), and take note of its critics (Chapter 8). But the book dismisses the criticism that the ILO has no power to in any way back up its decisions (95). This is to fail to compare it to the international financial institutions that have seriously undermined and disoriented the ILO. More significant, however, is the absence of any critical-sociological or political-economic authorial standpoint. There is a consequent silence over the fact that, within this "tripartite institution", one part (labour) has only 25 percent representation whilst the two others (capital and state) have 75 percent (in the Governing Body it is a still-pathetic 30:70). The book does not consider the significant circulation of staff between the ITUC and ILO posts or departments. Nor does the book consider who is "represented" by "labour" (actually by state-approved trade unions), the indirect and distant manner of even such meagre representation, nor what percentage (10? 15?) of the world's wage or labour forces the unions here "represent".[25]

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[24] Actually, they would have to not only enter the seven percent of the wage force in the organised sector. In order to impact on this set of institutions and regulations, they would have to become part of the even smaller percentage of the unionised. To assume the primacy of this unionised...what, two percent?...of India's labour force would seem to me to condemn the labour movement to marginality.

[25] Former ILO officer, Guy Standing (2008), in a text the authors give some space to (Hughes and Haworth 2008:97-8), actually makes a much more fundamental critique of the ILO than they allow for. Underneath a wide-ranging critique of its past and present is his concept of "labourism" - that at its origin the ILO assumed labour to mean fulltime, male employment in unionised/unionisable occupations, with such unions oriented toward collective bargaining with employers under the protection of a benevolent state. And that, despite its dramatically changing programmes and slogans, the ILO is - given neo-liberal globalisation and its nefarious effects on this model - unfit for purpose. He shows how the unions are incorporated into the ILO and how they frequently collaborate with the employer representatives in defence of common corporate interests. Standing is no Anarcho-Marxist Samson, attempting to pull the temple of global capitalism down on his own head (already ensured by his resignation from its priesthood). But, unlike Hughes and Haworth, he is prepared to think outside the canon, to identify fundamental new labour phenomena, and to suggest both theories and policies relating to such. He thus makes, to my mind, a considerable contribution to an emancipatory global labour studies. And I regret to say (given their generous mention of my own critique of the ILO)

Labour and Globalisation is (was? will again be?) a network, autonomous of the formal union structures, that has existed for some years within the World and European Social Forums (WSF, ESF). The WSF is not an academic agora, but it is the kind of space within which labour(-oriented) intellectuals and activists might be expected to exchange ideas and experiences oriented toward "another possible world". Despite the presence in its various forum meetings of various critically-minded union and other labour movement activists, from North and South, the network has remained at best a pressure-group within the limits of actually-existing trade union structures and discourses. Indeed, the ambiguities or limits of this autonomous labour exercise remain those of the traditional inter/national unions at the same events. L&G and the ESF seem to be associated with or have given rise to a June 2011 conference entitled "Austerity, Debt, Social Destruction in Europe: Stop!", at the European Parliament, hosted by the Leftist GUE/NFL group of Euro-parliamentarians. The target seems to have been neither capitalism nor globalisation nor even neo-liberalism, though a "financialised capitalism" gets one mention. And although the purpose of the event was to search for alternatives to the dire situation portrayed, this seemed to be a restoration of a Neo-Keynesian Social Europe. The conference did, true, identify itself with the wave of European protests occurring or projected in 2011. But it was apparently unwilling or unable to endorse a Greek proposal for a "common front of trade unions, movements, political forces" (the precise nature of which I have been unable to track down).

Having hopefully established that this is a major tendency in contemporary international labour studies, let us try to establish some elements necessary for developing an emancipatory tendency.

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that his 30-page article provides a rather more profound and provocative account of the ILO than their 122-page apologetic.

2. Sighting eagles[26]

"Emancipatory" is, of course, an old word, often referring to the inclusion of the oppressed, exploited, excluded, discriminated, into an existing polity or society, often referring only to political rights.[27] In the Marxist tradition, however, it came to mean emancipation from capitalism, as in the name of the first Russian Marxist party, the Social-Democratic Emancipation of Labour Group.[28] In so far as this referred to the working class, it tended to reduce emancipation primarily, and almost solely, to overcoming exploitation in the capitalist wage-form. I prefer to understand emancipation as the counterpole to alienation in all its forms. This is how it seems to be understood by Erik Olin Wright (2006):

> Emancipatory social science, in its broadest terms, seeks to generate knowledge relevant to the collective project of challenging human oppression and creating the conditions in which people can live flourishing lives. To call it a social science, rather than social criticism or philosophy, is to recognise the importance for this task of systematic scientific knowledge about how the world works. To call it emancipatory is to identify its central moral purpose—the elimination of oppression, and the creation of conditions for human flourishing. And to call it social implies a belief that emancipation depends upon the transformation of the social world, not just the inner self. To fulfil its mission, any emancipatory social science faces three basic tasks: first, to elaborate a systematic diagnosis and critique of the world as it exists; second, to envision viable alternatives; and third, to understand the obstacles, possibilities and dilemmas of transformation. In different historical moments one or another of these may be more pressing than others, but all are necessary for a comprehensive emancipatory theory.[29]

And here are the crucial spheres of emancipatory effort suggested by the multi-volume compilation of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007-10), *Reinventing Social Emancipation: Toward New Manifestos*.[30] This project implicitly suggests the necessary articulation of Participatory Democracy, Alternative

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[26] Short-sightedness implies, obviously that their may be many eagles or eaglets I have missed. A case in point might be the work of Rebecca Ryland (Ryland and Sadler 2008) on grassroots and labour internationalism. This began with an MA and continued later to a PhD in 2012. Its originality lies in its rare attention to what union members understand by internationalism.

[27] In the Dutch case in the 1980s, I recall, there was a government department of "Emancipation Affairs", which was self-understood to apply only to women. Later there was a dilution and reduction of state-institutionalised emancipation, with the new keywords being, of course, "gender mainstreaming" and with responsibility being thinly spread over multiple departments. By that time, presumably, no one in the Netherlands was in need of emancipation.

[28] http://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1883/xx/sdelg1.htm.

[29] An alternative and later source for the Olin Wright argument is http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/ERU_files/ERU-CHAPTER-2-final.pdf.

[30] Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster (2006) make their own contribution to the Boa Santos volume on labour internationalism.

Production Systems, Multiculturalism, Justice and Citizenship, Biodiversity, Rival Knowledges, Intellectual Property rights and even...a New Labour Internationalism (Waterman 2006a:446)! Anyone could (and should) add to this listing. I might have added Liberating Cyberspace. And whilst I think Boa's last area should have been *New Internationalism(s)* - and whilst we might still be waiting for a volume of, or on, the New Manifestos - I think we can take a general orientation from the two cited authors. We could, thus, begin to understand global social emancipation as the project of developing a post-capitalist, post-liberal (and post-state-socialist) understanding of democracy, production, rights and knowledges, a liberated cyberspace, and a new global solidarity - within which a new global labour solidarity would play a part.[31]

Marcus Taylor has a thought-provoking piece on both the New International Labour Studies of the 1980s and more recent developments that leans in the direction of EGLS without quite getting there. He points out the limitations of any political-economic determinism:

> the promise of international labour studies lies in its ability to develop a more critical perspective akin to Marx's critique of commodity fetishism and to feminist critiques of the gendered foundations of capitalist societies. Such an approach would insist that the classed, racialised and gendered struggles through which labouring bodies are accumulated, reproduced, put to work and restructured are not simply sociological appendages to the hard rigour of political economy. Rather they constitute the social substance from which the abstract forces of capitalist society are given both form and content. If labour is the "form-giving fire" through which capital in its various forms is produced, then the results of struggles over the construction, reproduction and utilisation of labour simultaneously configure the local and global, concrete and abstract dimensions of global capitalism. As such, they shape not only the localised relationships of power and resistance through which labour is reproduced and utilised; they concurrently feed into the determination of prices, profits and competitiveness, and therefore shape investment, technological change and industrial structure, i.e. the very parameters of capitalist development. (Taylor 2008: 449-50)

What more specific meaning could social emancipation have today for working people? The classical labour movement had, in fact, two major work-related emancipatory slogans. One was "A Fair Day's Wage for a Fair Day's Work". This notion was, initially, surely, a Christian one, later incorporated, along with other

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[31] Only on finally redrafting this paper did I become aware of Ernesto Laclau's (1996) essay "Beyond Emancipation". It clearly deserves more serious consideration than I can here provide. He appears to suggest that this concept is dependent on the conditions of unfreedom it negates and has no constructive (creative?) content or capacity. Unless and until, however, either he or someone else offers one or more constructive alternatives, I think I can work with emancipation's negation of the various - and increasingly dangerous - unfreedom(s) with which we are confronted.

convenient bits of churchlore, into social liberalism. In so far as this is or was an emancipatory slogan, it was clearly in the sense of gaining rights *within* an existing capitalist society and liberal polity. This is where lie the political (or spiritual?) roots of Decent Work. The other historical slogan was "The Abolition of Wage-Slavery", the fundamental aim of the anarcho-syndicalist (and internationalist) Industrial Workers of the World (aka IWW, or Wobblies):[32]

Conditions they are bad,

And some of you are sad;

You cannot see your enemy,

The class that lives in luxury,

You workingmen are poor,

Will be for evermore,

As long as you permit the few

To guide your destiny.

CHORUS

Shall we still be slaves and work for wages?

It is outrageous --has been for ages;

This earth by right belongs to toilers,

And not to spoilers of liberty.

In more contemporary form, this reappears in Andre Gorz (1999), who calls for "The Liberation of Time from Work". In so far as Gorz considers that in the West we have reached the end of the "work-based society", this slogan might be understood as Eurocentric, but should be taken as one expression of a global struggle against enforced capitalist work and worklessness. It takes expression in the South, particularly in Latin America, in attempts to both conceptualise and realise a "solidarity economy" – a considerable topic at successive World Social Forums.[33] In so far as this understanding could be linked to the ancient/contemporary demand for the liberation of the commons (socialisation of an increasingly privatised/commodified world, for which see Waterman 2003 and The Commoner), an inter-relationship with the GJ&SM (with its ecological, citizenship, women's, housing and rural movements) would be developed. The

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[32] This is from "Working Men Unite!", by E. S. Nelson, in the Wobblies' *Little Red Songbook*. http://www.angelfire.com/nj3/RonMBaseman/songbk.htm.

[33] Though also, typically, a concept much argued about, and into which various governments have various slippery fingers, http://www.globenet3.org/Articles/Article_Argentina_Solidarity.shtml. Interestingly, a solidarity economy network came out of the 2010 US Social Forum, http://www.solidarityeconomy.net/about-solidarityeconomynet/.

Gorz slogan should at least be credited with de-naturalising "work", whilst so many Left labour activists and specialists simply take work for granted. In any case there are other authors carrying on the struggle against wage slavery (e.g. Carlsson 2008, Holloway 2010, Porcaro 2009, Sinclair 2001. Carlín 2010). Let us note here that most, if not all, of the contributors to the NGLS do not question, far less challenge, "work" as the alienation of human labour by capital/state. They are, rather, concerned with improving the conditions under which this takes place. So let me here specify on some of these more-recent challenges to "work", taking just two or three of the above-named authors.

Drawing from classical Marxist political economy, *John Holloway* distinguishes between "labour" and "doing":

> There are two different sorts of activity here: one that is externally imposed and experienced as either directly unpleasant or part of a system that we reject, and another that pushes towards self-determination. We really need two different words for these two types of activity. We shall follow the suggestion of Engels in a footnote in Capital (Marx 1965 [1867]:47) by referring to the former type of activity as labour, the latter simply as doing. Autonomies, then, can be seen as revolts of doing against labour. (Holloway 2010: 909).

Mimmo Porcaro, reflecting on the contemporary fragmentation of what was once (thought of) as a homogeneous industrial working class, draws from the independent Marxist labour historian, E. P. Thompson, to stress the *non-industrial* milieux within which the English working class made itself:

> If the results of an investigation...confirm that today, as in the past, buds of collective consciousness are born primarily off the job, they would confirm that (especially today) the main venue for the formation of a potential class consciousness is not production, but life itself, in all its many forms. Does this imply a weakening of the socialist discourse? Allow me to observe that a collective movement of workers (and others) oriented toward social transformation can be built only if and when "consciousness" takes shape as the effect of "whole life", because strong ideas capable of truly affecting politics, "public" ideas accessible to everybody, regardless of their class and family, ideas organised as causes...can be born only as the result of the whole ensemble of life experience. [...]
>
> This [necessary] new investigation closely resembles the one that should become a new politics: the interconnection of a thousand heterogeneous experiences from which an unprecedented collective entity may emerge. This entity will not emerge from abstractions: not from Work, not from Life, not from Politics. Work, Life and Politics are in some way "neutral": they are battlefields that can have different outcomes, including, respectively, labourism, retreat to the quotidian, or opportunism. Rather, the new entity will be engendered by concrete, hence unpredictable, choices made by millions of men and women who will want to take sides on each of these battlefields, to arrive at a solution that does not reproduce today's hierarchies: a non-repetitive

solution, not devised beforehand, the one that best fits a consciousness of the historical situation capable of renaming the present and the future. (Porcaro 2009)

He even goes so far as to suggest that it may be in the common experience and discontents of *commodified consumption* and a *commodified family life* that an emancipatory consciousness and action could be constructed.[34]

One recent major work on the contemporary nature of work and workers is, however, firmly anchored to the conditions of at least one Southern country and region. This is the book of *Franco Barchiesi* (2011), also – unsurprisingly - an Italian of the autonomist tradition, but who bases himself on ethnographic research amongst South African workers and who less asserts the identity/difference with other African workers than provides argument and evidence *for* such. He is concerned with the relationship between how workers perceive their work and how this relates to their behaviour as citizens. His conclusions are those of neither an Incremental nor an Insurrectionary Polyanna. Whilst, like our previous autonomist writers, shifting the focus of our attention from formalised wage employment in large-scale enterprise to the broader community of residence and work, his Chapter 6 deals with

> how workers articulate politically their desires to transcend a grim precarious workplace life. Some try to grapple with change through an updated activist imagination appealing, beyond the walls of the shop floor, to community mobilisation and demands for [de]commodified social services. More widespread is, however, the continuous reliance on the ANC [African National Congress] for policies of job creation and protection. Seemingly in contradiction with the low esteem workers have for their own jobs, such claims reveal, in what I term an emerging politics of labour melancholia, aspirations for an idealised social order where work guarantees authority relations based on gender, age, and nationality. Such developments raise the disquieting possibility that, by maintaining work at the core of its imagination of citizenship emancipative [sic] discourse can easily and inadvertently feed chauvinist and authoritarian fantasies. (Barchiesi 2011: 25)

This work shows that a new theoretical approach toward labour does not necessarily imply optimism about its role but rather *a shift of the terrain of focus and the terms of debate*.

The South Africa-based *Tribe of Moles* picks up where Barchiesi leaves off. The "provocation" they issued for a conference says much of what I have been thinking but expresses it rather better. They say, for example:

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[34] I here recall the manner in which I observed a determined Euromarch for Jobs in Amsterdam, 1997, whilst in a neighbouring street other, more-relaxed, citizens were involved in the commodified ritual of privatised consumption, known as 'Shop Until You Drop". I experienced this, wryly, as a binary, not to say Manichean opposition. Porcaro suggests a way beyond this.

> Should we start placing liberation from, and not through capitalist work at the core of new languages and grammars of politics, which uncompromisingly break with the legacy of the twentieth century Left(s)? […] The most powerful struggles we have been witnessing over the past decade have placed on the agenda matters of de-commodification of water, housing, land, education, and basic services independently from the market. From Greece to Egypt, precarious workers have not merely seen their subjectivity thwarted and mutilated by the lack of a stable job but, by being central to vast movements against austerity policies, they have indeed placed their own precariousness at the core of a radical politics of claims and political possibilities.

This does not mean dismissing traditional labour struggles:

> Workplace struggles are, for sure, still important in affirming the autonomy of life and the common from the dictates of the market, for example through demands for wages and benefits that are impossible to meet in terms of productivity, therefore subverting wage labour from within. But struggles for production especially imply for us the production of social relations and political possibilities that emanate from the power of the common as it manifests itself across the social and the everyday. They hint, in other words, at the production of subjectivity and the refusal of the modalities of subjection along which capital and government want to align conducts and values. We are referring here not only to subjectivities premised on waged employment and the consumption of commodities but also to their correlates in the institutional sphere: liberal democracy and the idea of the individual rooted in property and market relations as the only legitimate carrier of socio-political agency.

Ilda Lindell has been working extensively on the informal sector in Southern Africa (2009, 2011a, b, c). This work includes pieces on transnational organising (Lindell 2011a, b), using the socio-geographic concepts of space and scale (for which see also Munck 2010). She challenges the prioritisation of either the global or the local in studies of informal labour. On the basis of two Mozambique case studies she also concludes, interestingly, that neither "bottom-up" nor "top-down" (Oxfam promoted!) strategies are the "right" one, with the implication that various strategies can positively affect self-empowerment and have political impact locally/nationally/internationally. In her introduction to Lindell 2011c (3-16) she considers all the challenges for traditional unions and unionism that collective self-organisation outside the "formal sector" imply.

Melisa Serrano, Edlira Xhafa (2011a, b) (and their fellow graduates in a GLU research project presented to the GLU's Johannesburg conference) talk more of "alternatives", or of surpassing the "capitalist canon", in their research on what I

would consider emancipatory labour initiatives.[35] They also, I think, incorporate into their argument that notion of plurality, dialectic and dialogue I have suggested as part of my idea of EGLS. They produce a critique of the "alternative" literature, suggest a research methodology, carry out case studies, and argue for their own work that it

> Aims to contribute to the discourse on alternatives to capitalism by establishing a "dialogue" between theoretical debates…and existing social experiments…In doing so, we aim to bring these theoretical debates into the perspective of those engaged in these practices and struggles in such a way as to develop their consciousness and capacities to become subjects of transformation…Finally, by identifying common elements in various struggles and experiments…we attempt to connect these struggles and…contribute to the construction of a coherent and inspiring alternative of capitalism. (Serano and Edlira 2011a: 20).

Most of the projects researched have to do with local alternatives in the economic sphere, such as worker-run factories in Argentina and India; informal workers' cooperatives and micro-lending projects in Mozambique, India, Brazil and the Philippines; state-supported or initiated democratic and participatory schemes in Brazil and Quebec; and partnerships for community and economic development in Australia. They give, further, examples of both union and – as indicated – state support. And whilst they warn against romanticising the more successful projects, they also argue for the consciousness-raising accompanying what they clearly consider to surpass, in potential, a capitalist logic. They therefore conclude that

> The identification of common strands or elements in people's stgruggles that have emancipatory or transformative potential, and their connection with [a variety of emancipatory] theoretical discourses, contribute to a process of connecting the struggles of people across the globe in the common pursuit of a coherent and inspiring alternative to capitalism. (Serano and Edlira 2011a: 32).

Chris Carlsson, from the USA, belongs to an American tradition of Left libertarianism and utopianism (compare Sinclair 2001), is familiar with both Marx and Marxisms, and is highly concerned with both work and class.

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[35] The conference was of such general relevance that it may be invidious to identify other conference presentations that surpass the capitalist cannon. My ear or eye caught the contributions, in particular, of Jackie Cock, Ercüment Çelik, Prishani Naidoo, Franco Barchiesi, Devan Pillay, Sue Ledwith and Collaborators, Jennifer Jihye Chun, Ruy Braga. Abstracts can be found in the Conference Reader and Conference Papers. Both these and a CD made available at the conference are, however, incomplete. Much of the outcome of the conference has become available in 2012, part of this being downloadable from the Global Labour University site here. Another compilation drawn from the conference papers was published by *Labour, Capital and Society (2011),* of which the introductory matter and abstracts are available here.

However, he not only abandons the traditional terrains and means of labour movement action but suggests, rather, that emancipation from wage-slavery requires marginalising or exiting (or being expelled) from it and the creation of new communities of production, distribution and exchange on the periphery of or beyond the parameters of capital and state.[36] For him capitalism began with the enclosure of the pre-existing commons. And the emancipatory project is one of re-establishing the commons under contemporary conditions. This is not for him, however, a future prospect, far less one requiring an apocalyptic revolution. He finds his "Nowtopia" (Carlsson 2008) in the contemporary USA and provides us with multiple varied contemporary examples of such. These include the activities of "Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-Lot Gardeners", to quote the book's subtitle. These might seem primarily US or even Californian activities, dependent on survival possibilities existent only there. And, indeed, there is little if any reference to Asia, Africa and Latin America. Yet the self- or collective-oriented activities he portrays in considerable detail surely have their parallels in the majority precariat of the Global South. And there are anyway lessons to be learned internationally from how working people are responding to the contradictions in the homeland of globalised, computerised, networked and paleo-liberal capitalism. Given the valuable reviews existing of the work as a whole,[37] I will concentrate on what is, in Carlsson's book, simultaneously the most Californian and the most international area of both alienated and self-created labour "The Virtual Spine of the Commons" (Chapter 8). Unlike our previous three "emancipatory" authors, he makes significant room in his work for the struggle in and around the Internet. He argues that

> Though a majority of people do not work in computer- or Internet-related business, the growing precariousness of fixed employment in most fields parallels the relationships emerging in on-line and related work. (187)

Carlsson recognises the contradictions within the work of the free software and other emancipatory cyberspace activities – particularly, of course, the capacity of information capitalism to turn such creative and cooperative production into profitable business. Nor does he idealise even the most adventurous cyberspaces, such as Wikipedia or the movement-oriented Indymedia. But he does argue that

> Capital has reorganised production systems across the planet with just-in-time supply lines, disemploying entrenched, unionised workers in favour of transient

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[36] For Carlsson's critical, if not dismissive, view of the "alternative" labour event at the Belem WSF, 2009, see Appendix 3 in Waterman (2009a),
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cssgj/documents/working-papers/wp008.pdf.

[37] By Robert Ovetz, http://www.commoner.org.uk/?p=89 and Ben Dangl, http://www.zcommunications.org/nowtopia-by-ben-dangl.

immigrant and temporary workforces wherever possible. The newly emerging communities on-line, facilitated by many of the net-based organising efforts, represent another facet of an emerging recomposition of the working class. New sites and forms of resistance to capital accumulation are taking shape, and already beginning to make themselves felt in the anti-globalisation and anti-war movements, technologically savvy immigration campaigns across the northern hemisphere, and with remarkable resilience in the unquenchable efforts of faceless digital rebels who refuse to succumb to the practices or priorities of business. (207)

3. Siting eagles

Many of my references and URLs[38] refer to this other workplace/work type/communication-space/contested-terrain that neither *Groundings*, Michael Burawoy nor his respondents show much, if any, awareness of. It is called cyberspace. Indeed, they do not mention, either, that growing part of the world's working classes who produce the equipment, write the computer programmes, work in the call centres, or whose working lives are increasingly dependent on the internet/worldwide web, Facebook and other P2P (peer-to-peer services), plus, in the case of academics and activists, online journals and publishing, databases, Wikipedia or Google's translation device. We are now entering the brave new capitalist world of labour indicated in the initial quote from Ursula Huws.

In the USA, the vanguard of capitalist (post-)industrial development, computer use at work or computer dependence at work is rising dramatically. Consider this from aroud the turn of the century:

> Survey data indicate that the share of workers using computers with video screens and keyboard input on the job rose from roughly 25 percent to 50 percent between 1984 and 1997…Popular applications include word processors, database and spreadsheet programs, and, more recently, e-mail clients and Internet browsers.[39]

I am not sure whether or not this percentage includes or excludes MacDonald's hamburger-flippers, filling your greasy order on a counter computer. It is, however, more than two decades since Barbara Garson (1988) wrote of *How Computers are Transforming the Office of the Future into the Factory of the Past*.

I will here only suggest that, under an increasingly globalised and informatised capitalism, "real virtuality" (Castells 1996-8) is a new terrain of life, work and struggle that relativises any privilege assumed for the shopfloor, the enterprise, the state-defined nation, the inter/national union office or conference.[40] (I say

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[38] The highlighted or clickable words, names or phrases above.

[39] http://www.scribd.com/doc/104027581/Handel-IT-Employment-InfoBrief.

[40] Castells (2007) carries further his argument on communications in a paper that argues

> that the media have become the social space where power is decided. It also puts forward the notion that the development of interactive, horizontal networks of communication has induced the rise of a new form of communication, mass self-communication, over the Internet and wireless communication networks. Under these conditions, insurgent politics and social movements are able to intervene more decisively in the new communication space. However, corporate media and mainstream politics have also invested in this new communication space. As a result of these processes, mass media and horizontal communication networks are converging. The net outcome of this evolution is a historical shift of the public sphere from the institutional realm to the new communication space.

The argument is developed in a major work I have not had access to (Castells 2009).

relativises, not denies, denigrates or dismisses). Secondly, information and communication technology (ICT) provides an infinite space/means of communication with emancipatory potential that revolutionary thinkers and activists previously, erroneously if understandably, accorded in turn to the free press, to film, radio or video. Why ICT provides this where the previous means or modes did not is in part because of the built-in principle of feedback, that Bertold Brecht (1983) mistakenly projected onto radio, that it embodies the network, is therefore in principle subversive of institutionalisation and hierarchy, that the technology is ever cheaper, and because, as I have suggested, cyberspace is infinite. This implies that whatever and whenever capital, state and other hegemons try to commercialise or control – and they are continually and aggressively doing so - is a provocation to sabotage, circumvention and creativity by technically-qualified but frustrated information workers and networked "hacktivists".[41] Marx, as so often was before his time (and a little too earth-bound in metaphor?) when he said in the *Communist Manifesto* that "What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers".[42] We have been dramatically reminded of the subversive capacities of cyberspace in general, and of social networking services and the new P2P (peer-to- peer) technologies in particular. I am thinking here of the Wikileaks furore and the Arab uprisings. Whilst much of the media coverage and commentary about these is grossly hyped (Lovink 2012), the use of the web by trade unions, the broader labour and social movements and *by global labour specialists themselves* has expanded exponentially over the last decade.

So what I am here primarily concerned with is cyberspace as a disputable terrain, and, particularly, whether or not it is at least *a* privileged terrain for an emancipatory global labour movement and the study thereof. This is the arena sketched by Peter Evans earlier. But I would like to consider whether it is not additionally capable of breaking down the academic/activist divide. Following, commenting on and, hopefully, contributing to thinking and action around "International Labour Communication by Computer" for some two decades (Waterman 1992, 2010), I have to admit that both the activity and reflection has seemed to be making slow and difficult progress. Recently, however, there seems to have been something of a breakthrough, at least on the reflection side of the equation. I am thinking of Bauwens (2011), Burston, Dyer-Witheford and Hearn (2010), Hogan, Nolan and Trumpbour (2010), Mosco and McKercher (2008), Mosco, McKercher and Huws (2010), Cyberunions. These efforts often go far wider than my concerns in this paper, dealing with the very language we use in talking about "work", "network theory", "knowledge workers", and other quite crucial theoretical and social questions. Whilst I might mention some of

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[41] "Hacktivism" is also a disputed terrain. At least if construed as "Clicktivism". See White (2011) for a critique of those who see this as an alternative to street-fighting days.

[42] http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/. Note that he was here assuming that this would be primarily the industrial proletariat produced by early capitalist industrialisation. The grave-diggers produced by a globalised, informatised, patriarchal, militarist and ecologically-destructive capitalism are legion.

these broader issues, I will try to concentrate on whether or not this *is* a privileged terrain, whether it *is* breaking down the academic/activist divide, and, of course, the international/global aspect. Oh, and, of course, whether and it what sense this literature might be said to be emancipatory.

In a special journal issue on "Digital Labour: Workers, Authors, Citizens" Burston, Dyer-Witheford and Hearn (2010) ask about the new technologies:

> What are the implications of these changes in the very definitions of what constitutes "work" and in the parameters of the workplace? What are the implications for our senses of selfhood, our political agency as citizens, and our creative freedom as artists and innovators? Finally, how might we see these changes wrought by digital technology as potentially politically productive or liberatory? (215)

Whilst Ursula Huws (2010) strikes here a somewhat somber note, Dyer-Witheford (2010) himself goes back to the Young Marx's notion of "species-being" to explore the fate of humanity under the present capitalist dispensation. Reflecting on the uprisings in the Arab world, he says:

> Regardless of their outcome, whether catastrophic, compromised or victorious in unimaginably experimental ways, these uprisings have already returned to the political horizon possibilities of radical self-organisation that have in so many places been banished for a generation. They are revolutions detonated by the meeting of extraordinary high technological development and extreme inequality, a contradiction that defines the condition of the global worker, and whose resolution will determine the trajectory of human species-becoming. (500)

It is Vinnie Mosco and Catherine McKercher (2008) who actually ask "Will Knowledge Workers of the World Unite?". If previously cited authors may be aware that "labour's others" also exist "above" or "beyond" the traditionally employed/unionisable, Mosco and McKercher focus on what is a dramatically growing sector of such. Acutely aware of the novelty of their knowledge workers, they are equally aware of the manner in which computerisation implies "convergence" across what were previously distinct kinds of work and industries and then, of course, what were distinct national capitalist economies. Sympathetic to the idea of social movement unionism (158-65), they trace its expression amongst knowledge workers in North America, in India and at international level. They argue that

> Some, especially among communication, media and information unions, result in the creation of non-traditional labour organisations to represent the needs of workers who, for any number of reasons, are unwilling or unable to join traditional unions. (161).

The authors' North American, Indian and international examples do include non-traditional union models but they seem to think that, in these very different countries or very different levels, traditional unions are willing, if not always able, to evolve in the direction of what one might call a globally networked solidarity unionism. My feeling is that whilst unions are capable of responding, adjusting and following, the sources and dynamic for any such transformation are to be found outside the traditional working class and their traditional organisations.

Brecher, Smith and Costello (2009) not only discuss one or two cases of union/labour campaigning with/in the Web but also raise a series of challenging questions about such (italicised in the original):

> 1. *What does it mean when individuals begin organising outside and without the help of traditional organisations?...*
>
> 2. *It's easy and cheap for organisations to bring people together into a swarm or smart mob, but what do you do with them then?...*
>
> 3. *Will offline social movement organisations be willing to cede control as ordinary people increasingly leverage social networking tools to channel their own activities? ...*
>
> 4. *How do labour and social movement organisations address the dangers associated with online action? ...*
>
> 5. *How do we track the demographics of who's online and who's not and what tools they are using? ...*
>
> 6. *How do we present complex ideas online? ...*
>
> 7. *How does offline and online social movement building fit together? ...*
>
> 8. *How can social movements wield real power online? ...*

It is interesting that the authors do not distinguish between unions and social movements, clearly seeing them as confronted by the same problems and possibilities.

Now, do we have any evidence that action and reflection, labouring people and labour specialists, labour leaders and members/followers, West/Rest, Fe/Male, Hetero/GLTB are also meeting, dialoging, strategising, collaborating in Cyberia, on the Web? Are these traditional distinctions/oppositions, produced or reproduced (some even from pre-capitalist societies) being overcome in this new space? Are new liberated territories and new labour/social movement practices being here created?

If I consider what is possibly the most open and horizontal of international union or labour movement sites, [UnionBook](#) (UB), I can, September 2012, only draw on a year or two of personal experience. UB describes itself as "the Social Network for Trade Unionists". In its present form it had been functioning also for about two years. July 2007 it had some 4,000 adherents. This compares

with its "mother" site, LabourStart, an international multilingual news and
solidarity service which after 10-15 years of operation claims some 50,000.[43]
But whilst LabourStart has 200 correspondents and occasional conferences,[44] it
is a broadcaster, in the sense of collecting information and appeals and then
posting them from a single centre to surfers or to those subscribed to its email
service. UB, clearly, is meant to be a labour movement alternative to FaceBook,
etc. It is open in the sense of dispensing with any coordinator, founder Eric Lee
himself keeping a lower profile on UB than many of its contributors.[45]

Apart from providing members with individual blogsites, UB had, around 2011,
200+ groups. "Featured Groups", include the following: "Solidarity With the
People of Egypt" (204 members), Labour Union Staff (119), Labour-Lore and
Working Class Culture (105), Transnational Corporations (149), Trade Union
Educators (235). All the groups are in English although a certain proportion of
UB members come from outside the North and even the Anglophone South. The
number of members does not necessarily correlate with the amount of activity.
Nor, evidently, with the questions posed in the previous paragraph. For the full
list of groups see http://www.unionbook.org/groups. These include a couple I
have myself unsuccessfully floated. I have thus been reduced, or reduced myself,
to a personal blog, to which I copy-and-paste labour and social movement news,
views and analyses, as well as my own writings. I am not sure whether I can find
out how many visitors come here, what their identities might be, but there is in
any case, minimal feedback. But for me the most interesting group on NU is
Social Network Unionism, set up by the Netherlands-based Turkish activist,
Orsan Senalp. Social Network Unionism listed 70 members, autumn 2011. But
whilst it carries items by the group's creator, and many from those oriented
toward global social emancipation and cyberspace, I wonder to what extent
these come from those union or social movement activists toward whom Orsan
Senalp is himself clearly oriented.

We seem to be here confronted with two interlocking problems: 1) the
inheritance of a generally low level of interest in ideas within the international
union movement. Such interest probably went into decline after WW2, with
such disinterest or even aversion increasing with the failure of "labour's utopias"

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[43] For more on UnionBook see Waterman 2010 and Robinson 2006.

[44] Its 2007 conference took place, November, in Istanbul, under the the dramatic title "From
Social Networks to Social Revolutions", http://www.labourstart.org/2011/. The site was
complete with a red flag. Even as rhetoric, this was a major innovation for LabourStart,
previously reproducing the social-liberal discourse of the ITUC, Global Unions, the ILO, etc.
Clearly inspired by the Arab uprisings, which also used the R-word, the question remained of
whether the transformation suggested by LabourStart was intended to also occur in Belgium
and Switzerland, where social liberal internationals are largely seated. Late-2012, however, the
third LabourStart conference was moved to rebellion-distant, redflag-free Australia and its
subject-matter was less that of social transformation than of how to run solidarity campaigns
(on the North-South axis?).

[45] Indeed, it does occur to me that these two sites should – given their specificity/generality
actually be named UnionStart and LabourBook!

(Communism, Marxism, Social Democracy, Populism/Radical Nationalism); 2) a continuing lack of interest or capacity by labour-oriented internationalist intellectuals in communicating new emancipatory ideas to even those union and labour activists who have computer access, interest and internet skills (such as the 4,000+ on UB). This judgment is again impressionistic and speculative. A research/action project addressed to UB and other relevant sites would be necessary to investigate the matter further, this requiring an appropriate methodology and the active encouragement and support of its coordinator.

Attention could and should be extended to such other sites as the longer-established NewUnionism (NU). Its subtitle is "Organising for Workplace Democracy" and it is possibly the most ideas-oriented (and aesthetically innovative) international labour site. NU does publish relevant membership/affiliation data:

> The New Unionism Network was launched at the beginning of 2007. Here's our membership directory. In terms of demographics, 48% of members work for unions. The next biggest group is "rank and file" workers (at 31%), followed by academics (11%). The gender balance is 34%/66% female/male, which is a worry, although female membership has been rising more proportionately in recent months. There are about 500 members from 47 countries, and 1500 subscribers to our Work In Progress newsletter. We're well pleased with the balance between white-collar and blue-collar members. The nationality with the highest membership is the USA (24%), followed by UK and Australia (21%), and then Canada (11%)… [W]e're needing to build our website audience in South America and Africa in particular. In terms of finances, we are seeking donations to cover operating costs. We're currently holding our own through thanks to the odd member donation, but no more than that. We have no other source of income, nor any political links.

Clearly membership is overwhelmingly from the Anglophone North, the site being exclusively in English. NU does have a few members producing longer posts but most items seem to be either written or posted by website owner, Peter Hall-Jones. Although the site is formally devoted to Organising, Workplace Democracy, Internationalism and Creativity, items written or posted by Hall-Jones would seem in practice to reach beyond these:

> As well as networking for unionists, we also provide a bridge for those who can't join a union (or *feel* they can't, for whatever reason). We want to bring the "precariat" - workers without security such as those in the informal economy, part-timers, temps, freelancers, the unemployed, trainees etc - into the general orbit of unionism. After this, they can then make a more informed choice about deeper participation and/or solidarity…New Unionism is about:

> ... working people democratising their workplaces
> ... activists globalising unionism "from below"
> ... organisers turning practice into theory
> ... labour meeting labour academia[46]

NU also has its own groups on UB (225 members) and FaceBook. And the FaceBook site itself links with various other union or labour sites where more discussion might be taking place.

Inspiration for overcoming the old divides can be found beyond union and labour sites and, indeed, in traditional spaces and places. For an example of what is possible online, consider the work of Annie Leonard**,** which, with freely-accessible videos, caricatures and wit, communicates radical messages about mass consumption and pollution.[47] Or the films of Michael Moore, one of which ends with an updated version of "The International" by Left activist song-writer, Billy Bragg, http://michaelmoore.com/books-films/capitalism-love-story**.** Or, to move beyond the Anglophone world, *Anti-Capitalism*, by Argentinean autonomist academic, Ezequiel Adamovsky (2011).[48] This is done in the style of the well-known works by Rius, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rius. *Anti-Capitalism* is - for worse rather than better, I fear - illustrated by an Argentinean worker art group rather than some brilliant individual artist. But this is surely the small price paid for the principle of surpassing the intellectual/worker or professional/amateur divide!

Open-access and CopyLeft journals in cyberspace are one way in which the high price and exclusivity of academic production is being broken down. The *Global*

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[46] Indeed, New Unionism launched, November 2012, a discussion about a "social network model" for a worker controlled global unionism. See here. This is simultaneously the most radical, utopian and politically-relevant proposal to come from a union-oriented source that I have yet seen.

[47] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annie_Leonard**,** and

- Story of Bottled Water
- Story of Cap and Trade
- Story of Stuff
- Story of Cosmetics
- Story of Electronics
- The Story of Citizens United v. FEC

[48] This was first published in Spanish in Buenos Aires around 2005. I made strenuous efforts at that time to interest an English-language publisher but without success. I had similar lack of success in finding an online outlet for this brilliant little book. Next came editions in German and Japanese. Finally, it was published in the USA by that excellent radical publishing company, Seven Stories. It should really now be done online by Annie Leonard!

Labour Journal, otherwise quite traditional in being restricted to academic contributions and by peer-review, is a model in so far as its total content is available for free download. This labour-friendly open access online journal, *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements*, preserves the academic tradition of peer review whilst being open to "action notes" and other contributions from both academic and non-academic activists. Canada seems to be the site of a whole number of open-access online labour journals. One is *Labour, Capital and Society*, which comes out of the earlier era of the "new international labour studies", marked by its focus on labour in the third world. Although its online emanation is recent, it has digitalised issues back to 1996, and it has hosted special issues on international labour studies and labour internationalism.

So much for reflecting, or reflecting on, cyberspace and the emancipation of labour. But what will shortly become evident is that cyberspace is an increasingly important place *for finding out* what emancipatory labour sparks are escaping the furnace of a furious and world-destructive capitalist globalisation

4. Labour and related movements with emancipatory potential

I want, firstly, to both argue *for* an emancipatory tendency in international labour struggles/studies and to *avoid* setting up EGLS and NGLS as either a Manichean opposition (virtue/vice) or even a simple binary one. This is not only because global labour studies is an inevitably disputed or disputable terrain but also because each of the categories I have identified is itself disputed or disputable. And, crucially for me, the "emancipatory" can be found on the terrain, in the struggles, within the institutions, in the publications of what I have called the "social-liberal" NGLS! For me this is a sign of our new capitalist times. The Cold War is over, both Liberalism and Marxism (or Reform and Revolution) have lost their cast-iron certainties, have fragmented or been increasingly challenged. So, I would rather see my NGLS and EGLS as overlapping terrains, but having different horizons, whilst each is – as I have suggested – itself a site of dispute. I claim, obviously, to stand on the terrain of the emancipatory, from where I hope to challenge those who stand within the social-liberal, and invite them to consider this more adventurous terrain. But within this latter terrain I expect to be challenged by those who consider themselves to be more emancipatory or to have a deeper, wider, more subversive/utopian vision of labour studies and labour struggles.

Why, secondly, does the subtitle above say "and labour-related"? This is to allow for movements of those who may not be considered "workers", or "real workers", or "normal workers", by either the unions, the unionised or labour researchers. *Or*, slightly less negatively, those whose activities or movements may be recognised or even adjusted to by the inter/national union organisations but in a patronising Eurocentric or patriarchal manner. These others form together, or relate to, the overwhelming majority of working people worldwide. I have called them "labour's others" (Waterman 2008). As suggested, they may be recognised as workers, but not have their *specific* identity recognised nor the *autonomy and democratic equality* of their movements granted. I am thinking of peasants and small farmers, carers (customarily called "mothers" or "housewives"), the precarious, prostitutes (even if increasingly recognised as "sex-workers"), street-traders, urban petty-producers, and even the urban poor more generally – who either produce, trade or die.[49] I am also thinking of students who are not only future workers, or the precarious, or the unemployed but whose academic conditions are increasingly industrialised and whose struggles either take on labour/social-movement characteristics or overlap with those of the unionised. And I am obviously interested in their increasing internationalism and the forms these internationalisms take. The cases and sources here listed are inevitably random, but suggest the growing number and

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[49] For a brilliant and moving portrayal of life, work and survival in the truly brutal conditions suffered by slumdwellers in the megacity of Lagos, Nigeria, see "Welcome to Lagos", a three-part BBC documentary, http://documentarystorm.com/around-the-world/welcome-to-lagos/.   It does not deal with more than individual or small-community struggles. But it demands reflection on how the work, energy, creativity and optimism of such millions could become a force for self and social emancipation.

variety of such movements and activities. Only research can reveal whether they do or do not contribute to the emancipatory movement. Or, more cautiously - whether emancipatory elements can be found in them, emancipatory lessons drawn from them.

- Greater Toronto Workers Assembly.
- Excluded Worker Congress, USA
- El Buen Vivir/Living Well/Sumak Kawsay
- 7th Global Labour University Conference[50]
- Beyond Growth Congress 2011
- Basic Income Network
- Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy (RIPESS)
- Beyond Precarious Labour: Rethinking Socialist Strategies
- Labour and Climate Justice
- Labour and the Commons (or anti-privatisation)
- Labour at the US Social Forum in Detroit, 2010
- Precariat
- Edufactory: Conflicts and Transformations of the University
- Peasants/Small Farmers/Landless
- Domestic Workers
- Sexworkers [51]
- Street Workers/Traders [52]
- Urban Inhabitants

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[50] I was invited by the GLU to take part in this event, which I have mentioned earlier. Due to some misunderstanding it is a second paper of mine that is abstracted here – which I have to consider a bonus. An earlier version of my conference paper can be found at Waterman (2007).

[51] I am aware of having not dealt with sexworkers in either my NGLS or EGLS sections. Perhaps no such study exists in international(ist) terms. There is a hypothetically relevant work here, that of Gregor Gall (2006). But, despite the subtitle "An International Study", it appears to have no chapter or chapter section on the international level or internationalism. From a critique by Juanita Elias (2007) it appears that it belongs to a traditional political-economic school that has little or no time for gender, or for feminist theorising on sexwork.

[52] StreetNet is an interesting case in so far as, whilst clearly articulating a major category of "labour's others", and insisting on their autonomy, it confines affiliation to "membership organisations" and mimics in many ways the structure and practices of the traditional inter/national union organisations. See here Pat Horne (2005) and Ercüment Çelik (2010, 2011).

- ▪ America Latina en Movimiento/Sindical
- ▪ Migrants[53]
- ▪ Take the Square
- ▪ Social Network Unionism
- ▪ Global Labour Institute UK[54]
- ▪ Cyberunions
- ▪ Trade Unions Past, Present and Future[55]
- ▪ [Fill in as necessary or desirable]

The point, of course, is not to set such up such categories, networks, lists, alliances, sites as being or representing the "real" proletariat. The problem is that of recognising proletarianisation as more a process than a condition. Nor is the idea to set up the "poorest of the poor" in Manichean opposition to some "labour aristocracy" as the privileged bearers of revolution and internationalism. If only because this would be to repeat the Marxist error concerning the urban industrial proletariat and to use language appropriate to 19th-20th century capitalism and state-nationalism.[56] Under the conditions of a

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[53] I have not been able to identify, late-2012 any autonomous on-going global network of or for migrant workers! There are some dependent on or oriented toward the UN, the ILO and the ITUC. There are a couple of Filipino-based international migrant networks, one at least of which appears to be possibly linked with the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines, see here And yet another that is a church outreach body, http://www.simn-cs.net/. There must be at least one autonomous global network, if not more. Further search for, or the construction of, such a network is necessary. In the meantime, consider the World Charter of Migrants, http://cmmigrants.org/. And a national solidarity network in the USA, http://www.immigrantsolidarity.org/.

[54] This points to "Education Materials", not available on the GLI headquarter site. Late-2012 there also appeared on its site the report of a conference on the international trade union movement. This gives the impression of an effort to surpass the old institutions, procedures and discourses whilst being trapped by the conference title itself (Mather 2012)! It appeared too late to receive here the detailed critical attention it certainly deserves.

[55] This is a remarkable new book series, edited by Craig Phelan, interested, among other matters, in "trade union internationalism past and present; comparative and cross-border studies; trade unions' role in promoting economic equality and social justice; and trade union revitalisation and future prospects". Whilst it clearly does not express any particular orientation, a number of its titles certainly contribute to the renewal of critical global labour studies.

[56] We can see one veteran socialist Africanist, John Saul (2011) struggling to surpass such oppositions in a piece on "non-transformative global capitalism", the "proletariat and precariat" in Africa in general, in South Africa in particular. He here resurrects the ghost of his African "labour aristocracy" thesis that I, mistakenly, thought to have hung, drawn and quartered in my PhD over 25 years ago (Waterman 1983)! Even if his resurrection is qualified and temporary, it does signify the extent to which his effort to come to terms with work, working people and social discontents under a *radically*-transformative global capitalism in Africa are limited by traditional Marxist categories and socialist hopes.

contemporary globalised and informatised capitalism, the key words for social transformation should, anyway, be "emancipation" (explained above) and "global solidarity" (implying a solidarity which relativises the state-defined nation and its relations with other such). Further, of course, there are multiple tensions and contradictions both within such categories/organisations/networks and between them and other such. Of equal importance, finally, some of the categories/activities mentioned above are linked to/carried out by or with the traditional working class and its traditional organisations. These latter are, therefore, neither to be demonised nor dismissed. They are, rather, to be subject to critical study using relevant contemporary theories or concepts.

Conclusion: A Long March Through the Literature

I fear this paper has somehow echoed Mao's Long March, which not only travelled for two years and thousands of kilometres before it reached Yan'an (Yenan) but advanced and retreated and even looped the loop before arriving at its destination. As with Mao in Yan'an, however, this paper has only reached a resting place. And unlike the case with Yan'an, where Mao violently repressed dissent,[57] I am hoping that those who either agree or disagree with my argument, or consider it inadequate, might feel stimulated, emboldened or provoked sufficiently to respond to it.

"Emancipation" is an aspiration, not a "line" or a "position". There is not only a plurality of sparks but also of furnaces throwing these out. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2004) talks of the necessity to identify

> two processes that I designate as *sociology of absences and sociology of emergences*. I speak of sociologies because my aim is to critically identify the conditions that destroy non-hegemonic and potentially counter-hegemonic social experience. Through these sociologies, social experience that resists destruction is unconcealed, and the space-time capable of identifying and rendering credible new counter-hegemonic social experiences is opened up.

And, in the words of international union veteran, Dan Gallin (cited Hall-Jones 2011):

> Many of us come from a tradition which encourages one to think that one can provide the spark all by oneself, if one has the correct policy (which is the brownish residue left at the bottom of the pan after many splits have boiled the water away) and if one works hard enough… I have finally come to the conclusion that this is nonsense. The spark we want cannot come from any one of us, it can only come from a combination/interaction of many of us. In other words, forget the vanguard party, the network is the vanguard.

And, finally, those who have managed to plough through this substantial paper may feel mollified by the knowledge that I have now given myself the eventual task of reducing this paper to 10 Commandments, 21 Conditions, 11 Theses or Umpteen Propositions and to make them accessible to labour and social movement activists who do not have the time to read long academic papers.

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[57] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yan%27an.

References and Resources (extended)

[The "extended" refers to materials that might contribute to the development of an emancipatory global labour studies. PW]

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About the author

Peter Waterman (London, 1936), retired from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, 1998. He has specialised on international(ist) labour and social movements, on alternative international(ist) communication and culture – particularly the cyberspatial. He has been active on UnionBook and been publishing with into-ebooks.com. He has been one of the major contributors to discussion on 'the new labour internationalisms'. He initiated the ongoing international exchange on 'social movement unionism' (aka 'the new social unionism'), and in 2005 floated a Global Labour Charter project. He has just published *Recovering internationalism: creating the new global solidarity* (http://www.into-ebooks.com/book/recovering_internationalism/) and is currently completing his autobio under the working title, 'Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist: From International Communism to the Global Solidarity Movement and an Emancipatory Cyberspace'. He can be contacted at peterwaterman1936 AT gmail.com.

Connecting social movements and olitical moments: bringing movement building tools from global justice to Occupy Wall Street activism

Jackie Smith

Abstract

The current political moment has given birth to the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) and other forms of resistance around the world. How might this moment of upsurge in global protest be sustained and expanded? This paper considers how earlier movements can contribute to today's struggles. Many contemporary activists conceptualize their struggle in local or national rather than global terms, and most have yet to fully explore the lessons and resources of earlier movements. Yet, the global justice movement and World Social Forums offer important strategic lessons and models to inform an emancipatory project that addresses the concerns of contemporary activists. Global justice movements have expressed a three-part strategy of resisting and rolling back neoliberal globalization, articulating alternatives to globalized capitalism, and working to build collective power. While OWS has helped spark new activism around the work of resisting economic globalization and (in a more limited way) articulating alternatives to capitalism, in many places it has been less attentive to the long-range work of movement-building. Efforts by OWS activists to connect with and build upon these earlier streams of organizing work can strengthen momentum for global social change.

The movement against corporate globalization began long before Occupy Wall Street began in September of 2011, and like movements before this, today's movements build upon the lessons, ideas, and networks developed through past struggles. Also important to note is that these struggles have originated for the most part outside the United States, and the spread of protests in North America and Europe reflect an intensification of neoliberal policies in the global North. Countries of the global South have long experienced the corporate exploitation and corruption of government that have become the main targets of the OWS movement. For many years people of the South have experienced the high unemployment and diminished public services that are now becoming commonplace in rich countries. They have developed means of survival and resistance over time, and people in the global North have much to learn from them. This essay explores some of the origins of what should be seen as a *global* uprising against corporate-led globalization in order to help clarify some of the lessons we have learned through struggle and hopefully to shed light on the path ahead.

Globalization Projects

Economic globalization, or capitalist globalization can be seen as a political *project* aimed at reinforcing the interests of those who control large stocks of capital over those without such advantages (McMichael 2006). The idea that globalization is a *project* disrupts the dominant notions of globalization, and by extension economic development, as inevitable, natural, and benign if not beneficial processes. It suggests that there are particular actors whose actions help construct globalization in ways that serve their interests. Thus, we can see the "globalization project" as involving particular practices and policies to advance the power of elite classes at the expense of the majority of the world's population. It has done so by: 1) reducing public claims on resources, 2) restricting states' roles in the economy, 3) restricting the collective power of workers, and 4) expanding the political power of transnational corporations.

The policies and ideology advancing the globalization project are often referred to as neoliberalism. In essence, neoliberalism portrays the welfare state as an obstruction to the efficient operation and therefore the profitability of "free markets,"[1] and thus seeks to limit the size and scope of government. Reducing states' claims to collective resources extends to the realm of taxation, which at least as applied to corporations is seen as a major impediment to economic progress. Thus, neoliberalism has constrained the resources available to states by restricting the tax base while systematically reducing public services such as education, public transportation, and health care in order to balance government budgets. This has been happening in the global South since the 1970s, and while the North has also seen this developing over recent decades, its effects have become more widely and intensely felt since the global financial crisis of 2008. Neoliberalism further undermines public authority by advancing policies and ideologies that limit governments' ability to regulate corporate practices. International trade agreements and national policies have curbed government efforts to protect consumers and limit the destructive effects of large corporations. This has had devastating effects on worker safety, the environment, and on the stability of the global economy.[2]

As it has chipped away at the welfare and regulatory authority of the state, neoliberalism has also systematically undermined the power of workers by attacking reforms that had served to advance and protect workers' rights to organize and by advancing international trade and lending policies that prohibited governments from enacting laws to protect workers' rights and to

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[1] As Wallerstein (2004) observes, the notion that capitalism involves free or unregulated markets is essentially ideology rather than fact. In practice, capitalists prefer particular rules that reinforce their advantages in markets. Thus, institutions like the World Bank and IMF regulate government practices in ways that that privilege global over national markets. And within nations, policies such as those protecting intellectual property help reinforce the interests of large-scale enterprises or monopolies over competition.

[2] For instance, in 1999 the *Gramm–Leach–Bliley* Act repealed the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933, which was passed in the wake of the Great Depression in order to regulate banks and enhance financial stability.

support living wages. Thus, since the 1970s organized labor has declined substantially. At the same time, however, we have seen a dramatic rise in the power and concentration of transnational corporations. This is not an accident. Rather, we can identify particular policies that have enabled corporations to grow and consolidate (see, e.g., Harvey 2005). Deregulation contributed to a frenzy of corporate mergers and high levels of market concentration in many key industries. Corporations have used their vast resources to expand their political influence, and this influence has been used to shape both national and international policies. In the global arena, for instance, international trade agreements and World Bank loans are often crafted with the aid of corporate lobbyists (See Sklair 2001; Robinson 2004; Perkins 2004).[3]

If capitalist globalization can be seen as a class project, then we might understand the work of those resisting this form of global integration in similar terms. We might call this oppositional *project* aimed at advancing global integration based on democracy and human rights, or what may be called "democratic globalization" (Smith 2008). But regardless of what it's called, the key idea is that there is a basic *shared vision* of the purposes global integration serves and a *shared identity* among those groups whose actions, while largely uncoordinated, are oriented in ways that help advance or reinforce this project. In addition, organizations and networks that can help disseminate information and coordinate actions are crucial to advancing a democratic political vision against that offered by neoliberal globalizers (Smith 2008). The idea of "unity in diversity" has been emphasized by global justice activists to remind participants of the fact that while we share a larger vision, we retain important differences that contribute to our movement's vitality and its collective power. The goal of advancing "one world with room for many worlds," in the words of the Zapatistas, may be helpful in advancing thinking among Occupy Wall Street activists. This idea stresses the fact that we share a desire for a world that offers more economic, political, and cultural freedom but that is united around a commitment to defend shared humanity.

The key elements of a people's globalization project include: 1) Resisting and rolling back the neoliberal globalization project, or what Walden Bello calls *deglobalization* (2003); 2) Articulating alternative visions for globalization; and 3) Building collective power to advance alternatives. Resistance to neoliberalism is essential, since neoliberalism actively undercuts the abilities of non-elites to even survive, much less to build power. The neoliberal rules of the global economy—including the austerity measures implemented by national states-- must be rolled back and transformed into policies that better support people and communities. But in addition to rolling back the globalization project of

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[3] Steven Colatrella (2011) refers to this increasing harmonization of state policies to serve the interests of global capital as global governance, which he links to an increased frequency, size and intensity of strikes between 2007 and 2010. He argues that the prevalence of strikes in industries central to the operation of capitalist globalization (i.e., transport and energy) and their increased tendency to focus on state austerity policies that are driven by global governance imperatives make them particularly potent challenges to the legitimacy of the state and global institutions.

elites, oppositional forces must put forward an alternative vision of how the world might be organized. This vision helps dispel the myth that neoliberal globalization is inevitable, and inspires people to struggle for something better. Until people can imagine alternatives to the capitalist system, they will not be moved to participate in our movements. Thus, the creative work of imagining alternative worlds is an essential element of the people's globalization project. Finally, if alternatives are to be realized, much work remains to be done to build power of those outside the global elite. Although our numbers far outstrip those of our opponents, we lack the common sense of purpose and unity that is required to begin building another kind of world.

The metaphor of a river is useful for understanding how diverse movements combine energy, inspiration, and lessons across time and space. Many tributaries feed the main river, and sometimes wander off in varied directions drawing something from prior movements and flowing both towards and away from the river's main branch at different points. Like rivers, movements evoke images of fluidity, constant change and intermingling. An important question for activists today is how to connect this political moment of upsurge in popular protest with the ongoing networks and strategic paths forged by movements that precede this moment.

In this essay I examine three main streams of protest in the recent history of global justice or alter-globalization activism: the counter-summits against the international financial institutions and the G-8[4], local autonomous and Indigenous movements such as the Zapatistas, and the World Social Forum process. Of course, we can find evidence of all three of the practices or tasks of the people's globalization project in each of these streams, but one theme tends to predominate in each approach. The task of resisting and rolling back neoliberal globalization has been most apparent in the counter-summits. The work of demonstrating and articulating alternative visions has been central in the local and Indigenous struggles, whose histories extend back long before the origins of capitalism. And the World Social Forum process has been most deliberately engaged in the work of building movement power.

Resisting and rolling back globalization: counter-summits and anti-corporate activism.

The counter-summits can be traced to the early days of global neoliberalism, and some of the very first summits of G-7 leaders saw popular counter-summits organized by a group called TOES—The Other Economic Summit. TOES was formed by activists and scholars whose work critiqued the economic model

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[4] The G8 was formed in the 1970s, at the time when neoliberalism came to be a dominant force in world politics. It is an annual meeting of the governments of the world's leading economies to discuss and coordinate government policies relevant to global economic policy. While pressure from some of the larger countries of the global South forced the G8 to expand its numbers to the G20 after 2005 or so, the U.S. and other core members have continued to meet in smaller groups, as they plan to do in the spring of 2012.

being put forward by G-7 leaders. Their aim was to help expand popular discourses about the global economy at a time when the world's most powerful governments were expanding their efforts to coordinate economic policy on a global scale. TOES organized parallel summits to the G7 meetings through much of the 1980s, and they published books that collected evidence about the impacts of the neoliberal globalization project in different parts of the world—particularly in low-income countries.

The model of citizen's parallel summits was used by other groups seeking to affect human rights and environmental policies, and during the 1990s especially, there was a tremendous growth in transnational organizing around United Nations global conferences. Transnational alliances of activists came together in these settings—as they had in smaller numbers at the TOES meetings—to exchange ideas and compare experiences of people in different countries and contexts. These conversations all contributed to the tools activists had for organizing transnationally and for targeting international arenas. They also helped networks come together in new ways, as activists came to better understand each other and the inter-dependencies of the issues they were addressing (see, e.g., Friedman et al. 2005; Broad and Hecksher 2003).

During the 1990s activism in the UN and international economic arena increased and became more confrontational. In 1995 the World Bank and IMF celebrated their 50th anniversary, and activists marked the occasion by forming an alliance called "Fifty Years is Enough!" Following the 1995 World Bank/IMF meeting, there was a rapid expansion of critical research and activism on these institutions and on the newly formed World Trade Organization. Also contributing to this rising tide of critique were organizations and networks that arose in response to regional free trade agreements, especially the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Finally, in 1999 at the third Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization we saw one of the largest protests on U.S. soil against a global financial institution at the "Battle of Seattle."[5] The Battle of Seattle was seen as a milestone in the history of global protests against corporate-led capitalism. It was followed by large-scale and often militant protests at subsequent global financial meetings of the World Bank and IMF, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the G8, and the World Economic Forum (see, e.g., Starr 2000).

The significance of these protests has been to articulate opposition to the globalization project and to resist the expansion of neoliberal policies that is typically on the agenda at these meetings. Also, activists aim to bear witness to the negative effects of global trade policies and international lending by the World Bank and other entities, and to the role of corporations in shaping these practices. Often the official accounts leave out the negative effects, or the costs of economic globalization, which are often forced upon the world's poorest

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[5] In the years leading up to the Battle of Seattle, protests at the G8 summits had become quite large and confrontational, but these drew less attention than the resistance at the WTO conference.

people in the form of displacement, unemployment and precarity, vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, and various other forms of social exclusion. Thus, the efforts of social movements to give voice to those most harmed by economic globalization are important to both developing an analysis about how global capitalism works and to shaping public discourses and challenging dominant frames that ignore the problems and long-term risks associated with these policies.

In addition to challenging dominant approaches to the global economy, the global summit protests served to bring activists from different countries and sectors together in new ways. This allowed people to consider more complex interpretations of the problems and to investigate the limitations and benefits of different alternatives being put forward. For instance, it is common in these settings for labor activists to come together with environmentalists and with activists from poor countries and communities. As they have sought to build alliances to resist global trade and financial policies, they have learned to consider how diverse people and groups understand the problem. In the process, they have developed more nuanced approaches to their analyses and understand the importance of solutions addressing the needs of people in both the global North and South. Also, they have developed a critique of corporate-led globalization that shapes today's Occupy Wall Street movement.

For us today, this stream of activism reminds us of the need to be aware of how the larger structures of globalized capitalism constrain the people's ability to secure their own livelihoods as well as their democratic rights (e.g. Markoff 1999). These structures need to be resisted and rolled back to create spaces for new visions and relationships to emerge. This sort of resistance needs to happen in tandem with other efforts aimed at advancing an alternative project to global neoliberalism. In other words, they must remain attentive to the larger vision of a more desirable kind of globalization and be supportive of, or at least not destructive of, efforts to build a shared identity that can unite diverse groups in struggle.

The experiences in counter-summit organizing that brought together more formalized and professionalized transnational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and grassroots organizations generated some important conflicts and conversations about power inequities within movements. Although the tensions have by no means disappeared, as a result of the interactions that were possible in counter-summit organizing, there is greater knowledge and appreciation of the different skills and resources that less resourced, locally organized membership groups bring to global movements (Alvarez 1999; Plyers 2011). More importantly, there are now more direct transnational links among grassroots organizations and activists as a result of the counter summits, and activists are making use of these ties to coordinate their activities without professional NGO intermediaries (von Bülow 2010).

Advancing alternative visions -
local autonomy and Indigenous movements

One of the key inspirations to what is known as the alter-globalization or global justice movement has been the Zapatista movement that arose in response to the North American Free Trade Agreement and related neoliberal economic policies in Mexico. The Zapatistas came to international prominence when they rose up to oppose the NAFTA in 1994, and the writings of a key (multi-lingual) spokesperson, Subcomandante Marcos, have resonated with activists around the world. The Zapatistas called people from all around the world to convene in an *encuentro,* an encounter, or forum, to discuss the challenges of economic globalization and to begin a process of articulating alternatives and building opposition. The Zapatistas inspired many because they offered a sense of alternative cultural and economic practices that could replace the forms that many saw as inadequate for meeting people's needs.

Indigenous peoples in other places also began coming together and articulating their visions of how a different, and more human-centered world might look in response to the mobilizations around the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas. During the 1990s local Indigenous communities were coming together in new ways in order to challenge this celebration. Transnational Indigenous organizing was also facilitated by the UN's Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, which was part of the process that led to the establishment of a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2002. Indigenous leadership has remained an important part of contemporary global justice activism, and as many Indigenous people remind their fellow activists, they've been fighting global capitalism for 500 years and have some lessons to inform the larger struggle.

Thus, it should not be surprising to see the place Indigenous movements have held in the organization and discourses within the World Social Forum process. Despite small numbers, Indigenous groups have assumed an important role in the main plenary sessions and cultural activities surrounding many world, regional, and national social forums. Particularly notable is the leadership Indigenous discourses played immediately following the global financial crisis at the 2009 World Social Forum in Belém, which focused on "the civilizational crisis." Discussions at that forum highlighted the efforts in Bolivia and Ecuador to establish rights of Mother Earth in their national constitutions and stressed the need to establish better ways to measure progress and well being. The Indigenous notion of *buen vivir*, or living well, gained a large following in Belém and has become quite common in larger debates about responses to the economic crisis. Since 2009, these ideas have made inroads into official debates in the United Nations, through, for instance, the Bolivian government's introduction of UN resolutions to advance a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth. [6] In addition, these and other resolutions have called for a re-

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[6] Several UN resolutions have been passed to advance the call for Mother Earth Rights. In 2009, UN General Assembly Resolution 63/278 established April 22 as "International Mother Earth Day" (renaming the U.S.-designated Earth Day), and in each subsequent year resolutions have

assessment of conventional economic measures of well-being. In 2012, for instance, the UN hosted a High Level Meeting on Happiness and Well-Being, in response to UN resolutions sponsored by Bhutan (A/RES/65/L.86; and A/RES/65/309).

At the same time, autonomous groups were developing in other parts of the world to reclaim community rights. A group called Reclaim the Streets was formed in the UK and spread to other parts of the world, offering a critique of capitalism and its expansion to all aspects of social and cultural life (for a good overview of these, see Starr 2000). Ad Busters critiqued the culture of consumerism and the rise of marketing that accompanied neoliberal globalization. Local organizations of squatters and gardeners organized to control abandoned spaces in cities and to meet local needs. Common themes in these efforts are their connection to local communities, their sensitivity to culture and its corruption by economic forces, and their concern for local autonomy. These elements of movement were present at the protests and people's summits held alongside the global trade negotiations and meetings of the global financial institutions. They were also important foundations to the World Social Forum process that emerged in 2001 (Pleyers 2011).

In thinking about how this stream of activism can inform contemporary activism, what is perhaps most important is the ways these articulations of alternatives to globalized capitalism help expand the space for people to imagine different ways of organizing economic life. Such imagination is crucial to convincing people that challenging existing social relations is a viable project with potentially beneficial outcomes. Moreover, by actually practicing alternatives, activist groups can both advance the idea that "another world is possible," while also providing tangible benefits for people. As the crises of global capitalism intensify, moreover, these alternative projects will be increasingly essential to helping communities survive.

Indigenous peoples' traditions offer some particularly important insights, and this may account for their expanding influence in transnational networks. Perhaps most important is the stress upon the need for new relationships — especially between humans and the natural world but also within human communities. Indigenous traditions' notions of interdependence, cyclical understandings of time, and reciprocity have found resonance among those seeking to address global problems. Indeed, the fact that environmental degradation is typically accompanied by inequality and discrimination reinforces the idea that all social relationships need to be re-configured if we are to address global ecological crisis. Early in the OWS movement, Indigenous activists criticized the language of "occupation," raising consciousness about the long history of violent occupation that has been integral to Western culture.

been passed by the General Assembly reiterating a commitment to advancing greater harmony with nature (A/RES/64/196; A/RES/65/164; and A/RES/66/204).

Indigenous notions of autonomy (sovereignty) can also contribute to contemporary activist discourse and consciousness by helping structure better relationships within movements. Unlike some of the autonomist tendencies that have emerged with the Occupy Wall Street movement, for Indigenous peoples, autonomy is meaningless without the context of community. Thus, individual responsibility to the community is a key piece of the Indigenous visions of a preferred world. The idea of community self-reliance and *collective* autonomy is put forth as an alternative to the competitive individualism of the capitalist world-system.

Building power—the World Social Forums

Following the Battle of Seattle, activists struggled over questions of how best to challenge the juggernaut of neoliberal globalization. While many continued to resist at the sites where governments met to plan economic policies, others sought more offensive strategies that would allow the movement to more clearly articulate ideas about the alternatives. Up until now, the movement was largely reacting to government initiatives rather than offering a more pro-active strategy for advancing social change. Also, it was becoming apparent that regardless of how well planned protests were, it was impossible for activists to counter mounting government repression or to prevent small groups or agents provocateur from instigating vandalism and other forms of violence.

In this context, organizers from Brazil and France put forward the idea of convening a World Social Forum to parallel the annual World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland. There was already a tradition among activists of organizing resistance at the World Economic Forum, and this helped capture the imaginations of activists from a wide variety of places. What further attracted participants to World Social Forums was the idea put forward in its slogan, "another world is possible." The first WSF attracted four or five times as many participants as organizers had planned, and about 20,000 activists met in Porto Alegre Brazil for this inaugural gathering. In the years that followed, the annual World Social Forum grew to more than 150,000 and was held in various parts of the global South. Forums are places where activists converge to exchange analyses and ideas, develop strategies and coordinate organizing efforts, and build relationships.

Almost immediately, people began organizing local, national and regional social forums and connecting these to the analyses and themes of the global meetings. By 2006, WSF organizers made more deliberate efforts to decentralize the meetings and encourage more localized organizing, and in 2008 they made the world meeting a bi-annual event to further support this. Thus, in its first decade the WSF process has mobilized literally millions of people around the world. Moreover, it has cultivated networks of organizations and individuals through which critical ideas and information about the global economy and its alternatives can flow. Many of these networks are active in very local settings, but they connect people and ideas across national borders and identities. The

WSF Charter of Principles helps unite these diverse groups around a shared aim of resisting neoliberal globalization.

This proliferation of spaces of social forums and the fact that they are connected across time and place through networks and online communications is what is referred to by the notion of the WSF *process*. The WSF has survived in part because it refuses to become a platform for action, and has sought to remain an open space for the building of networks and ideas about how to make another world possible. Within these open spaces, however, activists and groups do plan and coordinate mass actions. For instance, the WSF process contributed to large-scale global protests such as the massive anti-war protests of February, 2003 and the World March of Women (Dufour and Giraud 2007). In addition each forum's Assembly of Social Movements generates numerous calls for "global days of action" to draw attention to and concentrate activist energies on particular themes. Nevertheless, emphasis on the idea of Forums are primarily open spaces has helped generate an unusual amount of *reflexivity* among participants, which has enabled it to change in response to criticism. In its attempts to t has also helped cultivate a diversity of leadership from groups outside those of relative privilege.

The WSF process (or something based on it) can help connect the new mobilizations of the current moment with movements past by providing a space or format for the convergence of networks and activists that can help articulate and crystallize the idea of an emancipatory political project. Because it reflects the collective wisdom of previous moments of mobilization along with a history of learning and experimentation enhanced by an ongoing process of reflection and transnational dialogue, it is a valuable resource for today's movements and can help avoid the repetition of conflicts and mistakes of the past.

The WSF's significance is that it helps bring together other streams of movement in a space that both encourages the search for alternatives to economic globalization and builds resistance to economic globalization. Thus, it draws in and complements the other streams of protest while helping activists gain greater awareness of one another and build collective power. An important part of the WSFs has been its encouraging of critical exploration of how the inequities of the global economic order are reproduced in social movements themselves. Activists in the WSFs have pointed to the ways earlier movements reproduced gender, class, racial, and other hierarchies and exclusions. They have been explicit in their intention to resist this tendency in their ranks, even if they have not always been successful.[7]

An especially important innovation that can challenge the many hierarchies and exclusions endemic to capitalist society is the US Social Forum's practice of *intentionality*, which has deliberately brought to the fore leadership from among those groups most harmed by economic globalization (Karides et al.

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[7] Frequent protests against WSF leadership such as the protests against the VIP lounge in 2001 and the Mumbai Resistance in 2004 have resulted in new sensitivities and practices in the WSF process (see Smith and Karides et al. 2007).

2010; Juris 2008; USSF 2012). Again, while the efforts at intentionality do not always produce the desired reversals of privilege and hierarchy in the movement, it is clear that the USSF has made important advances in making women, people of color, poor people, Indigenous, gender non-conforming, and other marginalized and excluded groups more central in the planning and agenda-setting of the forums.

The Occupy Wall Street movement has at its origins the idea that people must come together to resist corporate influence and the effects of globalized capitalism in their local settings. The emergence of the OWS protests has created opportunities for building new alliances and identities at the local level. But we must look beyond the local to find tools for advancing the project of building alliances that can challenge the larger structures targeted by OWS. Occupy activists can learn from the World Social Forum experiences ways to build relationships in our movement that don't replicate the inequalities of race, class, and gender against which we are struggling. Indeed, many activists who have been part of the WSF process are bringing these lessons directly into their local work with OWS networks (see USSF 2012). In addition to helping inform coalition work, the analysis of globalization advanced through the WSF's many years of organizing, meeting, and sharing experiences across diverse communities and regions of the world can bring many insights to local Occupy activists' discussions about what sort of world we want to advance, and how.

Conclusion

Movements of the recent past and from around the world offer important insights for those involved in the Occupy Wall Street movement. First, movements resisting globalized capitalism should consider themselves as engaged in a political project of building unity and power among those requiring alternatives to the capitalist model of economic and social life. The WSF process has shown that a unified vision of what sort of world is preferred is less important than a shared understanding of the key principles that should guide relationships among people and between people and the earth. This shared identification with core values can build power among "the 99%."

OWS and other activists have become more aware that what is needed is *global*-level change in the economic, political, and cultural system that structures our entire society. This requires a multifaceted but intentional effort to encourage struggle on many fronts. There must be work to roll back the policies and practices that undermine people's ability to live dignified lives both now and in future generations. But in addition to that, we need to put forward alternative visions that can capture people's imaginations and give them a sense that another world is indeed possible. *And* we need to work systematically to build unity and power among a very diverse population who are or will increasingly be the losers if the current model of economic globalization continues.

This work requires a humility and mindfulness that is reflected in the wisdom of many Indigenous peoples, expressed in the Zapatistas' call for "walking

questioning." We are building new kinds of relationships, new ways of doing politics, and a new culture, and we must remain open to possibilities and ideas we had not anticipated. We need to move outside our comfort zones and adapt our organizing styles as we learn from each other. We need to develop more active listening styles so that we are able to learn and adapt (see Doerr 2012). The consensus process embraced by OWS groups and by many previous movements reflects this aim of learning from one another, of building a collective wisdom about how to move forward together (see Polletta 2002; Smith and Glidden 2012).

I think a key lesson from the WSF process is that our effort to oppose dominant structures must be seen as secondary to the work of movement-building. For too long the reverse has been true, and building relationships in the movement was subordinated to the task of challenging those in power. How can we build unity among "the 99%" which is characterized by vast inequalities and differences? How can we build trust among groups that have long been pitted against one another by the forces of global capitalism? How can we restructure our relationships to base them on cooperation and solidarity rather than on competition, as is required by the capitalist world-system?

Defeating capitalism requires overturning its divisions and hierarchies. Thus, the key challenge for the Occupy movement right now is to focus much of its energy on the work of building alliances and trust among diverse segments of the 99%, even as it challenges power and builds alternatives. Clearly these are not mutually exclusive tasks, but without conscious attention to the former, the latter will be far more difficult to achieve. We must learn to come together in new ways in order to engage in the work of rolling back and building alternatives to globalized capitalism. All three of these tasks are interdependent and all are essential for our alternative political project to succeed. Fortunately, there are seasoned activists in the ranks as well as important stories from movements past that can provide lessons, warnings, and inspiration for the work ahead.

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About the author

Jackie Smith is professor of sociology at the University of Pittsburgh. She is part of the United States Social Forum's National Planning Committee and was active in Occupy Pittsburgh. She has authored, co-authored, or co-edited several books on transnational social movements, including *Social Movements in the World-System: The Politics of Crisis and Transformation* (with Dawn Wiest), *Social Movements for Global Democracy*, *Global Democracy and the World Social Forums* (co-authored with 11 others), and *Coalitions Across Borders* (co-edited with Joe Bandy). Email: jgsmith@pitt.edu.

Democratisation from Portugal to Poland, 1970s–1990s, and in Tunisia and Egypt since 2010

Kenneth Good

Preamble

Certain important assumptions underlie the arguments in this article, which are developed elsewhere.[1] Democratisation is essentially understood as the unending struggle of the weak majority against elites of wealth and power (this is well expressed in the slogan of the Occupy movement today: we are the 99 per cent, they the one per cent.) It is a socio-political process and a society and politics growing out of that where ordinary people are deemed capable of making the decisions affecting them. This was first and vividly seen in Athens 508-322 BCE. Democratisation is a matter of aspirations and impulses, which fail more often than they succeed, and yet re-appear. The control of elites is the vital accompaniment to the empowerment of the people if real democracy is to endure. This duopoly was Athens' outstanding lesson, but a good reminder was offered by the United Democratic Front (UDF) in South Africa in the 1980s in their Principles of Our Organisational Democracy and their practice of criticising elites not least their own. Democratisation is also a long historiography imbued with lies and deceptions: democracy is never the gift of elites or Great Men. In South Africa the African National Congress has propagated the idea that its external armed struggle 'set the people free', not the domestic work of the UDF, trade unions and community groups, and rule by its 'struggle heroes' constitutes democracy. Two main forms stand out: a liberal capitalist form revolving around periodic free elections, where elites get themselves elected, and the participatory kind. The former enjoyed predominance over a long period, but it is now being strongly challenged both internally, because of its extreme inequalities and dysfunctionalities, and externally from the successes—still limited and endangered—of the participatory aspirations of millions of people in Egypt and Tunisia since 2010.

Opposition to Soviet communist dictatorships in central Europe between the 1970s and the early 1990s, was everywhere the major force, and democratisation was a weaker and limited process, corrupted in various ways by elitism. Opposition to fascist domination in Portugal was, however, closely inter-linked with democratisation over an intense 19 months. To unravel the inter-relationships between the national and democratic issues, the immediate and the much longer term political processes, and to highlight their salient features, only a select number of countries will be considered. Portugal was first chronologically, but it was most outstanding for the role played by popular, left-wing military forces in ending a fifty year-old extreme right-wing dictatorship

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[1] In a forthcoming book, *Trust in the Capacities of the People: Democratisation Then and Now*.

which had enjoyed American support, and for the linkage perceived by the soldiers and people between decolonisation in Africa and democratisation at home. The mobilisation of a large popular movement based on work-places and neighbourhoods began immediately with the bloodless coup of 25 April 1974, and unleashed the energies of ordinary people. This unique revolutionary movement ended nineteen months later with the establishment of a constitutionally-based centrist government in Lisbon, backed by the then West Germany, with the aim, attractive to many out of work Portuguese, of European integration. Poland was notable for its long opposition to communism, and even more for the large size--literally millions of people--and determination of its organised working class in what became a moderate, 'self-limiting' democratisation. Suppressed by martial law in 1981, Solidarity redeveloped to total some 10 million members in 1989, and became for a time, in association with a strong intelligentsia, Europe's largest liberal social movement.

Anti-communism and freedom saw one of its most visible but restricted successes in the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) at the end of 1989, accompanied by the immediate absorption of the GDR into the much larger, richer and conservative Federal Republic, with the crucial backing of Herman Kohl in Bonn and the non-interventionist stance of Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow. This instant transition had rather less to do with democracy than a quest for stability and prosperity and the re-integration of the German people in a functioning liberal polity. Late opposition to Soviet dictatorship in Czechoslovakia, produced another 'velvet', non-radical reformist process, though the country had once possessed the strongest and most effective communist party in Central Europe (the KSC). It contested free elections in 1946 and obtained 38 per cent of the vote and 114 out of 300 seats in the National Assembly. Together with its social democratic allies, it held a narrow majority. But the assertion of Soviet power in 1948 followed by four decades of rigid dictatorship, opened the way for another liberal reformist process (Sassoon 1997: 101, Lodge 2001). Demonstrations were not used for mass mobilisation, but for levering concessions from the state. Stress was placed on abstract ethical values by leading intellectuals like Vaclev Havel (and Adam Michnik in Poland) as the bases for a new civil society and ultimately, they hoped, for an active popular democracy. Freedom and liberal democracy ostensibly triumphed, but it was in fact a simulacrum of Thatcherite Britain where power lay not with an active citizenry but with new nationalist elites who understood freedom as unchecked personal enrichment. Across much of central Europe, according to Michnik, "the worst thing about Communism [wa]s what came after"[2], the abandonment of shared communitarian values and the elevation of unrestrained, nihilistic elitism.

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[2] Cited by Judt (2010: 139 and 146). Judt adds that President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic typified the new elites' rush to make money.

The Carnation Revolution

On 25 April 1974, the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) rose in revolt against the dictatorship in Lisbon—the militarist regime of Antonio Salazar 1926 to 1932 and of Marcello Caetano subsequently; the world's most enduring fascist system. The coup caused the collapse of the regime, and it took the United States and major European states like West Germany by 'complete surprise.' In a matter of hours the streets filled with multitudes of people celebrating euphorically the overthrow, and showering the soldiers with red carnations. Having failed to follow the planned decolonisation policies of France and Britain that began a quarter-century earlier, small and under-resourced Portugal, with a population of less than ten million, faced a deep impasse attempting to sustain military forces in Africa of over 150,000. By the mid-1970s that war had lasted some 13 years and was consuming up to 50 per cent of the national budget. The physical burdens had fallen most heavily on the soldiers. 'Nearly every young man' was drafted for service in Africa. Many junior officers had served several tours of duty and, according to Hammond, were exhausted (Maxwell 2009: 144, Hammond 1988: 63 and 65). Many of them had concluded too that the war was unjust and unwinnable. Some of those who acted on 25 April had also acquired from their fighting experience a respect for the abilities of men like Amilcar Cabral in Guinea-Bissau, assassinated by the secret police, the PIDE, in 1973.[3] Hammond states that 'Guinea became an early centre for the MFA'. As officers were rotated home they regularly swelled the ranks of the new movement (Hammond 1988: 66). For Houser (1973: 3), no other African leader had a clearer understanding of the socio-political dynamics than he had: he had founded the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) in 1956, and had begun by organising in rural areas through the provision of schools and health centres. Armed struggle was not initiated until 1963, and a decade later the PAIGC was poised for victory. For Hodges (2001: 9), it was 'the success of the liberation movements in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau', in particular, that led to the downfall of the Salazarist-Caetano regime, and to independence for the colonies. In taking power the MFA committed itself to the restoration of civil and political liberties, to the democratic election of a constituent assembly within a year, to achieving a 'political, not military solution' in the colonies, and to an economic policy 'in the service of the Portuguese people, especially of the heretofore least privileged sectors of the population.' (quoted in Maxwell 2009: 15). Portugal recognised the independence of Guinea-Bissau in September 1974 (Hammond 1998: 92).

Democratisation and decolonisation in Portugal, 1974-1975, was a far more popular, revolutionary and conjoined process than democratisation in Central

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[3] His strategy was based on restraint and careful preparation; he stressed that 'our people are our mountains', that their fight was strictly against the authoritarian state, and that liberation would ultimately be accomplished with the assistance of Portuguese workers and peasants (Cabral 1969: 123-25). He was not the only nationalist leader assassinated, and PIDE's brutality was earlier displayed during a dock strike in Bissau in the 1950s when 50 workers were killed. (Hammond 1988: 49).

Europe fifteen years later. This came from the aims and experiences of the MFA, and from the pressures and energies emanating directly from a newly-freed people. Students, soldiers, landless workers, and the homeless in the cities forced the pace of change, in a sometimes chaotic movement, ahead for instance of the moderate tactics urged by the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) regarding land seizures and wage-restraint by urban workers. It was a movement, says Maxwell, 'born of struggle and conscious choices at critical moments' by men and women 'of all classes', regions and educational levels, and it was the combination of 'people power in the urban neighbourhoods and peasant power in the countryside' that constituted much of the country's democratic exceptionality.

But it was also consistent and responsible to the people to a large degree. After the establishment of a 'Council of the Revolution' as the supreme transitional authority of the state, on 11-12 March 1975, 'joined by an assembly of 240 representative of the three armed services', a number of critical measures followed, including the nationalisation of the banks and insurance companies, placing a major section of Portuguese industry and the media in public hands. At the same time, the original commitment of the MFA to the holding of elections for a Constituent Assembly within one year of the April coup was re-affirmed and successfully achieved. In the upshot the country placed itself among 'the most radical of European states' (Maxwell 2009: 147 and 151-53.)

Manifesting the country's distinctiveness in the context of the Cold War was the PCP, in 1974-75 the country's best organised party. Founded in 1921 and led by Alvaro Cunhal since 1943 (he had spent 13 years in prison in Portugal and 14 years in exile in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union), the PCP was an orthodox Leninist, cadre party, aligned with Moscow. But it also possessed diverse trade union support. According to Maxwell, it had a firm base in the grain-producing Alentejo, a region of large landed estates south of the Tagus River, with 'strongly implanted' support among the anti-clerical, landless rural labourers. Since 1970, they were also 'strongly entrenched in the metallurgical unions, and increasingly influential among lower-middle class white-collar workers, especially the bank workers' unions in Lisbon and Oporto (Maxwell 2009: 149). When the first civilian provisional government was named in May 1974, Cunhal was accorded the labour portfolio, because of the PCP's linkages to the trade union movement and its perceived moderating role therein (Hammond 1988: 77).

The Socialist Party (PSP) was then a much younger and weaker organisation, founded only a year earlier in West Germany, and led by Mario Soares, a Lisbon- based lawyer. But its potentialities were already present in Soares' friendship with Willy Brandt, a notable figure in Germany's Social Democratic Party and governing circles. While it had only 'a minimal organisational base in Portugal', it was affiliated with the Socialist International, providing institutional and other linkages to the then ruling social democratic parties in Germany, Sweden and Britain (Maxwell 2009: 149).

According the PCP a direct role in government, with significant political responsibilities, was a radical move in relation to the major Western powers. It was the first time that communists were represented in a Western European government since the beginning of the Cold War. Portugal had significance beyond its small size. It was a foundation member of NATO, and the country's airbase in the Azores provided an important military resource for the projection of United States' power into Africa and beyond. NATO and the United States reacted with horror. In classic Cold War thinking, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger is said to have believed that 'Portugal was as good as lost to a communist power grab', and he 'made his misgivings abundantly clear' to visiting President Costa Gomes and Foreign Minister Soares in Washington in mid-October 1974. But while the US toyed with the idea of a direct 'Latin American solution', to the supposed problem, Western Europe 'took the more practical approach' of infusing preferred parties with foreign cash, 'thr[owing] clandestine support behind the political parties of the centre in Portugal', in a partial return to the assistance offered under Marshall Plan auspices to non-communist parties in Italy and France around 1946. Soares and the PSP were the recipients of 'substantial subsidies from West Germany via the SPD and that party's foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung' (Maxwell 2009: 153 – 57). The Soviet Union's role, on the other hand, was uncertain and inconsistent with Kissinger's presumption of a power grab. Although it had 'invested heavily' in the PCP, it was divided on assisting the party during "the hot summer" of 1974-75. Portuguese communists, for their part, were obsessed by the fate of Salvador Allende, the elected and overthrown president in Chile just four years earlier, and the PCP had entered government with some reluctance, on the initiative of the then transitional president, the right-wing General Antonio Spinola.[4]

The Excitement of Revolution

The popular euphoria which had greeted the coup was maintained at an extremely high level over the subsequent year, as the revolutionary democratisation was extended into workplaces, neighbourhoods and rural areas. Workers responded enthusiastically to new political freedoms by demanding pay rises and major changes in their work processes. The authoritarianism of the Fascist state had been reinforced in harsh factory discipline, and workers 'immediately demanded that it be ended' and 'took over the fascist trade unions' (Hammond 1998: 77, 81). People spontaneously organised in urban neighbourhoods, setting up 'commissions' to assess and address housing needs. Not only the poor and the working class, but also 'moderately well off people', suffered over-crowded, unrepaired and absolute shortages of housing in the 1960s and 70s. Shantytown residents formed their own commissions. The Quinta das Fonsecas, near the University City in

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[4] President Spinola aimed to bring the bring the PCP into the cabinet as Minister for Labour, and name Cunhal as minister without portfolio, to promote restraint (Maxwell 2009: 152-153 and 158).

northern Lisbon, represented some 250 families. They held an assembly on 11 May 1974 to demand electricity, water and decent housing, and the entire meeting marched on the president's palace some eight kilometres away to deliver their demands. Other shantytown commissions were organised through the following spring and summer (Hammond 1998: 84-5). Shack dwellers acted similarly in South Africa later.

According to Hammond, the first year of the Portuguese revolution was a very exciting time for workers and people generally. They were 'constantly discovering new resources within themselves' and new powers over the employers and landlords who had dominated them. Many workers became active, even those who were not elected to commissions. The latter were said to be busy all day, every day, constantly confronting new problems. As one person explained it: "In a short time we lived centuries and centuries full of everything; people's lives changed completely. We would be at the factory, then the workers' commission, then the general assembly of all the workers. At night we would go to the popular assembly of all the workers' and neighbourhood commissions of the area. It was a time of tremendous excitement."

Popular mobilisation occurred too in schools and barracks, with similar effervescence and openness (Hammond 1998: 104-5).

Organising rural areas was difficult. In Alentejo, the farm-workers' tradition of struggle in association with the PCP offered a basis for rapid mobilisation, but in northern villages, where the peasantry had no such supports, the response was slow. In the summer of 1975 the Communist Student Union launched a campaign to "bring April 25 to the north". Students conducted brief literacy and health classes in villages, but could claim little success from their intervention (Hammond 1998: 87, 90).[5]

The close association between the MFA and the popular movement developed over time through their firm support for colonial independence and full, meaningful freedom at home. When General Spinola began to speak publicly of the dangers of domestic chaos and appealed to the country's silent majority to demonstrate in Lisbon on 28 September, left-wing parties and workers' commissions called on their members to mobilise against a threat from the right, the MFA acted and forced Spinola out of office. Though still without formal power, the MFA was 'clearly in charge', and its successful defence against a conservative coup attempt, 'enhanced its popularity'.[6] The organisational strengths of the PCP offered no threat to the MFA and the popular movement. The Party had repeatedly demonstrated its full support for the MFA, while from the other side, 'the entire far left had rejected the PCP's centralist model of

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[5] So-called 'dynamising cultural teams' sent out by the military to areas where the Catholic Church was strong, 'irreversibly alienated devout peasants', according to Maxwell (2009: 156).

[6] Soldiers and civilians had jointly manned barricades the night before the planned demonstration, three junta members were subsequently forced out of office and three right-wing parties which provided covert assistance to Spinola, the Party of Progress, the Liberal Party and the Labour Party, were banned. (Hammond 1988: 94-96).

society' (Hammond 1988: 75, 107). The MFA held executive and military power, and the popular movement stood with the MFA against a right-wing coup. The latter were also acquiring from their daily experience a deepening understanding of democratisation. This was, in Hammond's words, that they 'would not be content with representative democracy, but demanded instead political institutions based on the active participation of all citizens' (1988: 95-6). This was a realisation emerging from the new experiences of thousands of people, but notions of participatory democracy, if they were to be realised, would place Portugal well outside the liberal parameters of not least West Germany.

The Decline of the Revolution and the Rise of European Integration

During 1975 external events pressed heavily upon Portugal, stifling its revolutionary aspirations. With the defeat of Spinola and the consolidation of the MFA's power, differences between its radical and moderate factions on socio-economic issues were activated. A moderate faction argued for consolidation of the achievements to date so as to preserve the revolution's broad social support, and resist identification with the PCP. There were signs that the Party was losing popular support and might do badly in forthcoming elections (Hammond 1988: 109-11). Economic crises deepened and multiplied. The United States had utilised the Azores airbase during the October war, and a consequent Arab oil embargo hit the country hard (Hammond 1988: 109-11).[7] Decolonisation, earlier synonymous with freedom and democracy, soon acquired negative connotations, not only depriving the country of raw materials and markets—the colonies had accounted for 18 per cent of exports—but also sending home huge numbers of unemployed people; some 150,000 demobilised troops and large numbers of former settlers.[8] Domestic unemployment rose at the same time from other external causes, as Portuguese emigration to northern Europe, in further consequence of world oil shortages, fell from 120,000 in 1973 to 45,000 in 1975 (Maxwell 1995: 217-8).

Opposition from the United States and its allies to radical democratisation, combined with adverse international and domestic events sharpened these pressures. NATO had expelled Portugal from its nuclear planning group after the PCP was accorded a role in government, while the European Common Market promised economic aid and closer association 'only if the political course changed.' In August the United States acted similarly when it was asked for emergency assistance in airlifting large numbers of refugees out of a deepening crisis in Angola. Western political preferences were clear and sharp.

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[7] Until 1973-74 Portugal had encouraged the United States and NATO to utilise the Azores in its engagements in southern Africa, but thereafter the US had seen the Azores as a platform for its operations in the Middle East and Persian Gulf (Maxwell 1997: 178).

[8] 'Several hundred thousand' refugees poured into Portugal throughout the spring and summer of 1975, creating an atmosphere of African crisis not seen since independence in Congo in 1960 and the Algerian revolution (Maxwell 1995: 123, 127).

The CIA and West Germany's ruling party, as noted, 'financed the PS', while multinational firms were said to have curtailed their Portuguese operations and Western importers to have boycotted Portuguese products. The country's historic dependence on the major Western powers for imports, export markets, capital and labour markets rendered the country and its democratisation highly vulnerable (Maxwell 1995: 219-220). The import of these events and their domestic ramifications were not lost on the ARM. In late July, President Costa Gomes--the general officer chosen to replace Spinola because of his progressive reputation—called on the MFA's Assembly to recognise the new exigencies. While initially "practically the whole population was with our revolution, today...that is not true." He called for a slowing down of the revolution, and reminded delegates that "national independence will not be achieved in the short run by any path that alienates the West" (Maxwell 1995: 213-4). The corollary was of course that Portugal's independent popular democratisation was unlikely to be achieved along pathways supported by the United States and Germany.

National elections for the Constituent Assembly, held as promised on 25 April 1975, appeared to confirm that political sympathies had moved to the right. Cunhal's PCP got only 12.5 per cent of the vote, the Democrats (PPD) of Francisco Sa Carneiro, (soon renamed the Social Democratic Party PSD), won 26.4 per cent, and Mario Soares and the SP came top with 37.9 per cent. Turnout was an exceptional 91.7 per cent.

The PS had made clear that it had no intention in office of 'pursuing socialist policies' (Maxwell 1995: 250). It, 'and especially Mario Soares', made accession to the European Community 'the highest priority among [its] foreign policy objectives.' Integration into the European Community came in 1986 and into the Western European Union in 1988. Soares had been on to something in offering Portugal a European future. Polls in the 1980s showed opinion in favour of NATO was as high as 64 per cent, as compared with only 17 per cent in neighbouring Spain. And over the course of that decade, Brussels 'far surpassed Washington as a source of financial aid and assistance' (Maxwell 1995: 177-8). The European aspiration was encouraged, in Maxwell's chosen words, 'by the strong role played by outsiders in the struggle for Portuguese democracy, especially, although not exclusively, by the Germans' (Maxwell 1995: 177).

The decline of the revolutionary movement and the fracturing of its alliance with the military escalated through late 1975. As it looked for ways to coordinate its base organisations and increase its political power to meet challenges from rejuvenated centrist parties, the movement faced a weakening of its legitimacy with its grass roots, as it no longer worked exclusively in communities and workplaces. As a movement of mass organisations, it had claimed to be inclusive and representative of the whole community, but the demonstrated electoral appeal of the PS and PD/PSD undermined its old claims.

As demobilisation proceeded, indiscipline worsened, to the point of mutiny, especially in the army, the most militant and politically divided of the three services. When a conservative government was formed in Lisbon, the Left, in

opposition, mobilised against it. On 7 September masked soldiers appeared at a press conference to announce the formation of Soldiers United Will Win (SUV) to oppose the right turn in the Council of the Revolution and the government. Soon after SUV organised a large scale march of soldiers in Oporto, joined by popular organisations. Joint demonstrations of this kind occurred over weeks in Lisbon and other cities. 'Almost every night—and almost all night long—tens of thousands marched in Lisbon.' At much the same time, an army captain announced that he had gone underground with 1,500 G-3 rifles which he would turn over to "the masses". In similar incidents newspapers carried reports that thousands of weapons shipped back from Africa had disappeared from the docks (Hammond 1988: 233 – 5).

Confrontational tactics antagonised the right and increased fears among many others that the country was becoming chaotic. Hammond believes that the popular movement was responsible for very little actual violence, and that more violence came from the right. But large and inherently disruptive demonstrations appeared to be the preferred tactics of the left, in circumstances quite different from those of the previous year (Hammond 1988: 234). As soldiers routinely disobeyed orders to restrain civilian demonstrators, the popular movement was increasingly isolated and politically weak.

After further rebellious incidents involving paratroops, the military right moved decisively against left-wing units on 25 November. For Hammond, the action was 'fatal to the popular movement, depriving it of the support of the armed forces which had been its main resource'(Hammond 1988: 226). But this was only part of the complex of relationships between the MFA and the popular left from the beginnings in April 1974.

Then there had been significant agreement that the state should assert significant control over the country's economic resources, and early steps like bank nationalisation had been taken on this basis. Differences existed among those Hammond calls moderates and progressives only about the pace and rate of change. But a contentious issue concerned the MFA itself, with moderates wanting minimal and temporary powers for the MFA, a view consistent with the MFA's initial promise for early constitutional elections, while other progressives favoured a longer and more hegemonic role for the radical soldiery.

But he also says that it was 'only the power of the popular movement [that] had turned the coup into a potential revolution', and 'the movement's initiatives were responsible for the [subsequent] major steps forward.' This ignores the fact that it was the soldiers' long experience of the fighting in places like Guinea Bissau that enabled them to see the intimate connection between colonial freedom generally and democratisation at home. This insight was the soldiers' and it was this that had brought the jubilant crowds on to the streets in Lisbon, launching the Carnation revolution. Hammond was on firmer ground when he said that 'a stronger and more autonomous mass movement would have strengthened the revolution against its enemies' (1988: 258), strengthening, that is, both the popular movement and the MFA. But he here ignores the powerful influences which were working against the popular movement,

externally the United States, West Germany, NATO and the Common Market, and internally the rising strength and resources of Soares and the PSP, backed by those who favoured a return to civil order and good governance and turned out in large numbers in the first constitutional elections.

Democratisation in Portugal in the mid-1970s

The process was developed and carried forward by two main elements, the MFA and the Popular Movement, each composed of different groups and organisations. The MFA, under the circumstances of dictatorship, was the initiator, and was chiefly the army in Africa, the officers and conscripts engaged in actual fighting with the PAIGC (and Frelimo in Mozambique). It developed near the height of the decolonisation movement in Africa, with independence in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique impacting strongly on Zimbabwe, South Africa and Angola, with wide international consequences and ramifications; it was ideological and real-power politics bound up together, highlighted perhaps by the intrusion of multi-state Cold War conflict—South Africa, Cuba, the Soviet Union, the United States, et.al.-- directly into Angola in the second half of 1975, coincident with Angola's independence in November. Conflict was omnipresent, with Kissinger assessing the role of the PCP in Lisbon in the light of his close involvement in the overthrow of constitutional government in Chile and the death of President Salvador Allende a few years earlier. Portugal's membership in NATO and possible engagement in the European Union complicated matters further. Democratisation was also a struggle against one of the last remnants of Fascist power, which endeavoured to maintain its domination until the end. Alvaro Cunhal had spent 27 years in prison and exile, Mario Soares had formed the PSP only in 1973 in West Germany, and the MFA only manifested its potency on the morning of 25 April next year.

The Popular Movement was the larger and more diverse formation of tens of thousands of people in their neighbourhoods, work-places and 'commissions'. It was multi-class, where urban and rural workers were probably the more organised and active elements; the MFA based its initial economic program on the needs of 'the heretofore least privileged sectors of the population.'

The fall of fascism's half-century of domination unleashed great popular excitement and energies. People's growing consciousness of the powers latent within themselves and in the assemblies, neighbourhood and other groups they organised, was the essence of democratisation in revolutionary circumstances— paralleled a decade later in South Africa by the great number of civics and community groups that grew up around the UDF in the 1970s (Good 2011). The groups of the left shared a common aversion to the centralised controls favoured by the PCP. The MFA and the Popular Movement complemented each other-- the former as defender and guardian, and the latter as font of democratic ideas-- which may have extended to an interest in participatory forms of decision making. During their operations they faced big pressures from powerful Western institutions for the acceptance of orthodox liberal models and the

containment of their democratic aspirations. The developmental path supported by West Germany, Soares and the PSP, emphasised European integration, an attractive prospect for many poor and unemployed Portuguese. That they operated over nineteen demanding months, was an indicator perhaps of their durability, relevance and popularity. Revolutionary moments are often just that. Democratisation in Central Europe was sometimes merely a matter of hours and days, over before it had barely begun.

Central Europe: "When hope replaced repression"

Anti-communist democratisation in Central Europe faced far more favourable international conditions than Portugal had experienced fifteen years earlier. But the unprecedented popular uprisings—until Tunisia and Egypt eleven years later—that brought down Soviet dictatorships were soon followed by the rule of self-seeking nationalist elites, as in contemporary liberal capitalist democracies, over largely passive people, with the latter only active periodically in choosing between competing political elites. The ideas of figures like Vaclav Havel which had helped to inspire the rebellions were soon dissipated before the deregulation and privatisation policies of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, which resonated far more with the new Polish, German, Czech and Slovak rulers. The aggrandisement of the few was partnered, as in the West, by the weakness and disillusionment of the majority.

The German Democratic Republic is focussed on below because of the symbolism of the Wall and the immediate elevation of ethnic unity over democratisation; Poland because of the uniqueness of Solidarity and the role, first positively then negatively, of Lech Walesa a Man of the People; and Czechoslovakia too because its uprising rivalled in size and spontaneity that in the GDR, and what Havel had spoken of but failed to realise. The aims and achievements of these Velvet revolutions appear to compare poorly with those of the Carnation in 1974-75. The rebellions which toppled the already enfeebled dictatorships were accompanied by no sustained mobilisations for socio-economic development and no new popular parties.

In a knowledgeable and perspicacious article, Neal Ascherson noted that in January 1989 'business was much as usual' in Soviet-ruled central Europe. By the end of the year, however, communist regimes which had ruled for 45 years had been overthrown by extraordinary public uprisings. Polish communism went first for substantive reasons. In October and November in the GDR, 'the dauntless actions of millions of ordinary people in the streets, day after day', backed by the refusal of armed militias to fire on the demonstrators in Leipzig on 9 October, led to the ousting of Erich Honecker and his hated regime, and on 9 November the Berlin Wall was breached.[9] On 29 December, the dissident

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[9] It was a highly repressive system of personal rule. The Stasi was 'the mainstay of State power. At its height, it had 97,000 employees, in a country of 17 million people. It also controlled over 173,000 informers, comprising together one Stasi officer or informant for every sixty three people; in Nazi Germany, on Funder's estimates, there was one Gestapo agent for every 2,000

playwright Vaclav Havel became President of Czechoslovakia. Preludes to these and other big shifts were important, but Ascherson believes that it was in 1989 that 'ordinary people, on an enormous scale...lost their fear', having clearly seen over previous weeks that their rulers were incompetent and bereft of legitimacy (Ascherson 2009).

There is little doubt that these popular uprisings would not have happened so fast and with such apparent success if Mikhail Gorbachev had not become general secretary of the communist party of the Soviet Union in March 1985, and began promoting his new policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, or reform and openness. His message to the "captive nations" of Soviet Europe was propagated and dispersed. In Ascherson's summary, it was remarkable for its openness and moderation: 'You are on your own. We would like you to choose the socialist path. But whatever course your nation decides to follow, the Soviet Union will not invade with tank armies to stop you, as it did in 1956 and 1968. Even if your communists are swept from power, we will not use force to save them.' In June he declared that to oppose freedom of choice was an historical impossibility, and at the United Nations in December he unequivocally stated that "Freedom of choice is a universal principle. There should be no exceptions." When Gorbachev called the ruling communist leadership together to oblige them to understand that they could no long count on a Soviet rescue, his non-interventionist, freedom to choose message 'reached opposition groups and the people at large' (Ascherson 2009).

It may be noted that Gorbachev's highly progressive position won no recognition in Washington. Concentrating on the details of Soviet military withdrawals, US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, 'missed the bigger picture entirely'—the revocation of the old Brezhnev Doctrine, even as the European Soviet edifice crumbled in front of her. As the leading Polish activist, Adam Michnik had it, America was "sleepwalking through history."[10]

Poland was the first to dismantle communism for a number of critical and concrete reasons not fully accommodated within Ascherson's depiction. The earliest and most active was the rise of Solidarity, a classic working-class organisation, which in 1980 initiated a strike among workers at the Gdansk Shipyard, and 'created a mighty wave of strikes [that] flooded the whole country.' Supported by opposition groups, the intelligentsia and the Catholic Church, this led to the Gdansk Accords, and the establishment of trade unions independent of the communist regime (Darnton 2011: 14).[11] Solidarity was

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citizens , and in the Soviet Union under Stalin there was one KGB officer for 5,830 people. In 1973, Erich Mielke, a long-term communist security official, helped organise the coup which brought Erich Honecker to power in Berlin, and was rewarded with a Politburo position and material benefits. From that time onwards, says Funder, 'the two Erichs ran the country.' On 17 October 1989 Honecker was ousted by his deputy, Egon Krenz, who was younger but 'just as disliked' by the people(Funder 2003: 56-9, 65).

[10] Rice's later admission is almost verbatim (Meyer 2000: 63).

[11] According to Smolar (2009: 135), the 'unusual alliance' between workers, the intelligentsia and the Catholic Church was 'one of the strategic keys to the movement's power.'

outlawed under martial law provisions the following year,[12] but it grew again into a social movement of some ten millions. Its founder was Lech Walesa, who together with 'a dozen or so' compatriots, including Michnik, stood out in their audacity and understanding, and made Poland 'the first country to pull the brick out of the monolithic wall of Communism' (Darnton 2011: xvii). Solidarity believed that 'it was the only instrument able to force the Communist authorities to negotiate Poland's way out of dictatorship' (Michnik 2011: 5), stressing all the while its tactics of negotiations and readiness to compromise. When a new wave of strikes began in 1988, a nerveless and divided government re-legalised Solidarity and opened round-table talks with the opposition. Multi-party elections were approved, Solidarity reluctantly accepted that the polls would have to be distorted by reserving a block of seats for 'official' candidates, and in early September the first non-Communist government in Soviet Europe came into being (Ascherson 2009).

In East Germany, protests began suddenly when municipal election results in May 1989 were seen to be 'blatantly, crudely falsified'. About 60,000 East Germans were already in Hungary waiting the opportunity to move to the West others in large numbers were boarding trains for the frontier. Only then, notes Ascherson, did numerically tiny dissident groups dare to set up a new party, *Neues Forum*. In early November a demonstration by some half-a-million in Berlin thunderously called for change. As the militia in Leipzig had refused to heed Honecker's call for them to fire on demonstrators, border guards took no action when tens of thousands of East Berliners piled through the Wall and began its dismantlement. But what they wanted was apparently less democratisation and much more market choice and ethno-national unity. According to Ascherson, the end of the dictatorship came as follows: 'The communists lingered on for a few months, proclaiming their conversion to social democracy. *Neues Forum* and others made plans for a new, truly democratic East Germany. All were irrelevant. By late November, the crowds which had been roaring: '"We are the People!" had changed a word: "We are one people"...on 3 October 1990 a million people gathered in Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate to celebrate the formal reunification of Germany' (Ascherson 2009). A democratising East Germany was over before it began.

Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution preceded organisation and arose spontaneously among 'hundreds of thousands of ordinary men and women' around 17 November. That was the day on which students traditionally marched through Prague to commemorate a young man killed by German occupation forces. The police were said to have suddenly rushed at the marchers beating them with clubs. A rumour spread that a demonstrator had been killed, and in the confusion, students 'occupied their universities and larger, angrier crowds

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[12] The crackdown was initially brutal, with 'several fatalities' and 'at least 10,000 people imprisoned and interned' (Smolar 2009: 137). 'Pushed underground, Solidarity endured seven long years. It survived repression, some of its activists capitulated dramatically, while many went abroad. It owed its survival to the attitude of its leaders, especially Lech Walesa...and also thanks to reason.' (Michnik 2011: 29).

began to gather in the streets.' It was 'a true mass uprising', as 'the people took over the city.' Some days later, the communist leadership resigned. Vaclav Havel and a few friends from the Charter 77 human rights movement were said to have commandeered a theatre and, on the spot, 'invented a new movement called Civic Forum' and started to debate where the revolution should go. Within a few days, as Ascherson relates, 'they found that they were turning into a revolutionary leadership, then a provisional government.' A meeting of a quarter of a million people, jingling their house keys in unison, symbolically informed the regime that its time was up. Crowds were chanting "Havel to the Castle", and after 'first treating the idea as a joke', he accepted. After becoming president on 29 December, he freed political prisoners and abolished the political police. Those participating in these events—among them the historian Tony Judt--had "the intoxicating feeling that history was being made by the hour" (Ascherson 2009).

Havel, says Meyer, was 'a legend in his own time'; he had been jailed many times, once for four years, and believed that writers in a totalitarian society had a special responsibility to speak out when few others did. He was the intellectual voice of what was until the end of November 1989 an almost nonexistent opposition, and Czechoslovakia's foremost dissident 'almost by default' (Meyer 2000: 135-7).

Judt's recent thinking cautions against over-inflating the achievements of the Velvet Revolution and the role of Havel therein. Admiration for Charter 77 should not ignore the fact that 'only 243 people signed it in the first place and about a thousand more over the course of the next decade.' A 'retreat from politics', and a privatisation of opinion, had gone 'a very long way' in Czechoslovakia since Moscow's crushing of the Prague Spring. Thousands of Czechs and Slovaks had abandoned public life in favour of political conformism and material consumption. Havel himself, says Judt, was obviously 'not a political thinker in the conventional, Western sense' (Judt 2012: 234-5).

Nonetheless Charter, formed in 1977 when the Cold War was near its height and the idea of freedom in Central Europe seemed hopeless, attracted people of great rectitude. Jiri Diensthier was a leading journalist, purged after the Soviet-led invasion of 1968, and became a furnace-stoker on the Prague subway. Persecution and jail followed his signing of Charter 77, so he founded and edited an underground paper, *Lidove Noviny* (The People's News). He was a leading figure in negotiating an end to communism, and became the free country's foreign minister in 1989. His achievements were rapprochement with Germany and the dismantlement of the Warsaw Pact. His career ended after he left office in 1992, but he remained on the margins of public life until his death in January 2011.[13]

If 1989 was the *annus mirabilis* in central Europe, what followed was a transition from communism to Thatcherism, and a slough of division and dissatisfaction for many. Ascherson believed that what most ordinary people

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[13] 'A Czech's Career', *The Economist*, 15 January 2011.

wanted in the new decade was 'something like social democracy'—freedom, a regulated market economy and a strong welfare state. But big divisions existed among the emerging political elites, and with the removal of the glue of anti-communism, it became clear that what many of the new nationalists wanted, as Michnik noted, was the freedom to make money. Ordinary people were much mistaken in their communitarian concerns, as the countries in transition from Soviet communism 'imported an undiluted version of Thatcherism' (Ascherson 2009). The communism to anti-communism transition was a move from 'repressive egalitarianism to unconstrained greed' (Judt 2010: 146). Price controls were abolished, subsidies cancelled, currencies floated. State industries were privatised. Huge gaps appeared between rich and poor, with a new predatory super-rich class, on one side, and near destitute pensioners and the redundant on the other. Social services like the elaborate network of free day nurseries for working mothers in East Germany vanished (Ascherson 2009).

Many Central European intellectuals were not in a good position to understand the enormity of Thatcherism, even if they wished to do so. For Judt, and for his collaborator Snyder, they had 'given up on economics'. Economics by the late 1980s 'had come to seem like political thinking and therefore corrupt.' Havel was one of those who was inclined to see macroeconomics as 'repressive in and of itself.' This was their position at just the time when Thatcher was radically changing British society and Friedrich Hayek was persuasively asserting that state intervention in the economy was 'always and everywhere the beginnings of totalitarianism' (Judt 2012: 242-4).

The transition soon carried away the revolutionaries themselves. Leaders of *Neues Forum*, like Baerbel Bohley and Jens Reich, returned to teaching and painting. In Poland, a new group of professional politicians had replaced the Solidarity veterans by 1993. Lech Walesa, the Gdansk electrician who had personified the hopes of millions of people about freedom and justice (Darnton 2011: xvii),[14] now destroyed his own image, says Michnik, by a ruthless pursuit of the presidency, undermining the constructive efforts of colleagues.[15] He proved to be an incompetent and unpredictable president, and became the first to employ 'the rhetoric of boorishness [in public discourse] that found so many followers later on' (Michnik 2011: 6). He was out of office by 1995.

In Czechoslovakia, which split into two in 1993, most of the Charter 77 leadership were by then without office. Vaclav Havel stayed on isolated in the Castle until 2003 (Ascherson 2009). An exemplar of the new ruling elite, was Vaclav Klaus, a state economist, who named Milton Friedman as the greatest living American, and proclaimed "I am our Milton Friedman." In 1991 he founded the Civic Democratic Party, which became one of the country's largest

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[14] Poland was in part 'a different story' to most of Central Europe thanks to the linkages built up between its genuine working-class movement and former student radicals and intellectuals (Judt 2012: 234).

[15] He identifies Tardeusz Mazowiecki, advisor to Solidarity, founder of a Catholic periodical, and prime minister in the first post-communist government (Michnik 2011: 6, 214).

and most right wing parties. Prime minister 1992-1997, he defeated Havel to become president in 2003, subsequently re-elected (Meyer 2000: 184, Ascherson 2009).

Michnik, in the early 1990s, was using his editorship of the *Gazeta Wyborcza* to argue for morality and dignity against 'mindless self-defeating vengeance and retaliation',[16] some of the more noxious features of post-communism. He vividly recalled August 1980 when "Poland changed the face of the world...it was a beautiful time with beautiful people. I was thirty four years old and convinced that my generation was writing an important chapter in history." Ascherson (2009) reported that 'nobody regret[ted] being part of a great and good revolution.'

But those who were without satisfying outlets for their ideals and experience, had little choice but try to enjoy, if they could, the normality of their daily lives. Ascherson recalled a Polish woman from 1989 as an 'intrepid conspirator for freedom'. Later, married with a grown-up daughter, she said: "I have a glass of fresh orange juice, an uncensored newspaper to read, a passport in my desk drawer. It's enough." In post-communist Poland, some of the revolutionaries made do with poetry. A girl in Leipzig said that in 1989, "I felt that I could fly." Ascherson concludes with the words that when the winds of history blow, people, like lovely birds, grow wings. And in that year 'for a few beautiful months, they flew.' Undoubtedly true, but scant compensation for post-communism's poor majority, whose needs were political and their material needs basic.

Solidarity provided a strength and determination that Central Europe otherwise lacked, and a decade's durability until communism's collapse. That event had a great deal to do with Gorbachev's determination to let the 'captive nations' choose their own developmental paths. The international terrain in the latter half of the 1980s was highly favourable to the central European anti-communist revolutionaries, unlike the Portuguese anti-fascists and radical democrats earlier. Despite these advantages, some of Solidarity's strength was in its anti-communism, and after 1990, Walesa, Michnik and the other old revolutionaries were obliged to manoeuvre largely as individuals against the rising tide of nationalist, pro-market elites. Reform communism had found no purchase, as the quick demise of *Neues Forum* and Civic Forum showed. If Ascherson is right to state that ordinary people wanted social democracy, Havel and Michnik have other weaknesses to answer for regarding the practicality, currency and political relevance of their ideas. Vaclav Klaus arose with speed and smoothness on a Thatcherite programme that had produced social decay in Britain when its progenitor was being swept from office by her own party. Havel's dismissal of economics was a costly omission for his fellow citizens.

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[16] An example of incoherent vengefulness was possibly the following: 'At the beginning of 2005, Poland was shocked by the publication of a long list of Secret Service functionaries, agents, and people whom the Secret Service had wished to recruit or failed to recruit. The names were listed at random, and it was impossible to discover how they had been categorised. Thousands of people felt slandered, and this was only the beginning of the show...' (Michnik 2011: 34).

North Africa since 2010: ousting the despots

Two countries are concentrated upon below, respectively the first and second to arise in the Arab Spring. Their democratisations were and are more real and rational than the megalomania prominent in Libya and Syria and unencumbered by reliance on heavy military force.

Egypt dwarfs Tunisia in population, territorial size and in GDP (where the ratio was approximately $217 billion to $44 billion), but in opposition to autocracy it showed the way forward in just a few swift weeks near the end of 2011. The catalyst was the immolation of a young, impoverished peddler, on 17 December in the inland town of Sidi Bouzid, who had endured too much everyday brutality at the hands of officialdom.[17] News of the self-sacrifice was suppressed, but soon reached Tunis via social and foreign media. President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali reacted to the unprecedented tumult with military force. On 14 January Ben Ali and his family fled the country with much of the loot he had acquired over the past 23 years. The significance of the events could not have been greater. For the first time in the Arab world, Chrisafis wrote, ordinary people in the streets had ousted a brutal dictator. It had been a spontaneous, popular and apparently leaderless and non-ideological action.[18] Their 'most impressive achievement' was to tear down the "wall of fear" carefully constructed around the regime (Shahshahani and Mullin 2012: 93). Acting in Havel- and Michnik-like terms 'as if they were free', Tunisians had moved decisively towards seizing that freedom. According to Fisk, the power of Arab dictators like Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak was based on three inter-related factors: terror (or fear), corruption and propaganda.[19]

Widening information about the unfitness of the regime and growing contacts between the people played a big role. A secret despatch (of 2009) from the US ambassador to Tunisia, Robert Godee, to Washington, released by Wikileaks in early 2011, described how Ben Ali and his clique "tolerate[d] no advice or criticism, whether domestic or international. Increasingly, they relie[d] on the police for control and focus[ed] on preserving power...Corruption in the inner circle [wa]s growing. Even average Tunisians are keenly aware of it." In publishing this informed assessment, the *Guardian* included comments from a pseudonymous young Tunisian, 'Sam', noting, in mid-January, how "a resigned cynicism about the regime under which he had grown up turned to hope...Then a young man immolates himself. And then 20 Tunisians are killed in one day. And for the first time we see the opportunity to rebel..." (Leigh and Harding 2011). Between 10 December and 11 January, an estimated 219 Tunisians were killed.[20] When thousands of protesters were gathered then in the centre of

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[17] Mohammed Bouazizi, age 26, peddled vegetables from a handcart to help feed his mother and younger sister, but constantly faced extortionate bribes and arbitrary harassment.

[18] Angelique Chrisafis in *Guardian Online*, 7 February 2011 and 17 June 2011.

[19] Robert Fisk, in *Independent Online*, 31 December 2011.

[20] *The Economist*, 16 July 2011.

Tunis, the locus of the fear surrounding the regime had seemingly shifted from the people to the despot himself; he claimed on 20 June that he had been deceived into leaving the country by reports (from the head of his presidential security) of a plot to assassinate him.[21]

Ben Ali had constructed an elaborate security system over the decades. Ramifying unpaid debt endlessly renewed was a foundational aspect of the 'Security Pact', which financed government action, supported the banking system and supposedly addressed social problems. A Fund of National Solidarity received obligatory voluntary contributions from companies and enterprises, and worked to eradicate what were officially termed 'zones of shadow', like poverty and inequality. The extensive chain of dependencies disguised accountability, while the Security Pact 'ensured peace and order over a long period.' The system focussed, according to Hibou, on the prevention or management of crisis 'by caution, by consensus and by the support of all.' Power was not asserted by radical measures and shocks, but through small-scale interventions and halftones that ultimately enabled most people to compromise. As important as fear in this system was silence, as active ongoing public agency over the decades. Consensus was, as Hibou puts it, 'indissociable from silence.' The consent of individuals was based on a mutually supporting silence. Until Bouazizi's flagrant, unanticipated sacrifice made this impossible.

Protest began initially among young people in peripheral and marginalised regions where job creation was parlous since 1990 and even bleaker after 2008; every year there were some 140,000 new job seekers, vying for at most 65,000 jobs, mainly located in the greater Tunis area and along the coast. Official data, under the rubric of silence, disguised such information and unemployment was not discussed. The integration of youth in the interior into Ben Ali's security pact became increasingly difficult, as their needs focussed directly on basics like jobs and bread. Hibou calls them 'the spearhead of opposition', which soon expanded to embrace 'all generations, classes and regions'. Daily demonstrations in support of the martyr were brutally suppressed and Tunis was engulfed in revolt. The security system then worked not to protect its creator, the President, but to preserve the regime. According to Hibou, a palace revolt was 'orchestrated by the general staff of the army and a section of the elite in power for over twenty years.' Their aim was to prevent the transformation of the popular uprising into a revolution (Hibou 2011: Preface, Introduction and pp. 25, 44, 59, 180-85, 193 and 206). Ben Ali was able to move himself, family and wealth into exile in Saudi Arabia, presumably with the assistance of the country's major Western allies. No physical assassination was plotted, but rather a political assassination was smoothly effected.

In 2012, Hosni Mubarak had ruled for 30 years, seven more than Ben Ali. But when the Egyptian people began to move decisively such longevity profited him little. This process too had its probable beginnings in a specific incident of egregious state brutality. On the night of 6 June 2010, Khaled Saieed, age 28, of

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[21] *Guardian Online* 20 June 2011.

Alexandria, was beaten to death in public by two plain-clothes police. The young man reputedly spent his time with a computer, a guitar and a number of cats, and on 6 June he had greeted friends in the Space Net cybercafe not far from his home. Without preliminaries of any kind, the two police spent 20 minutes kicking Saieed and slamming his head into the concrete floor while he pleaded for mercy. This was witnessed by various people, and the assault only stopped when a physician managed to convince the police that they were beating a corpse. After family members were called to identify the body, a relative managed to take a cell phone camera photo: it showed Khaled's face cut and mangled, several teeth missing and blood pooled under his head. Along with a parallel earlier image, which could have been any modern Egyptian youth, the picture exploded on to the country's internet. According to Mahmoud Salem, aka 'Sandmonkey', a progenitor of the Egyptian blogosphere, it was the picture of Khaled before he was killed that "galvanised people." The two together "showed the middle classes that their devil's bargain with the Ministry of the Interior meant nothing. Being silent and minding their own business wouldn't protect them."

The government attempted a crude cover-up of the killing, then tried to sweep it under the rug. But existing rights organisations like the April 6 Movement 'immediately rallied around the issue, and entirely new movements were born from it.' Khalil and others see it as the real start of the Egyptian revolution. The owner of the Space Net said that soon after mid-2010, "there wasn't anybody in Egypt who didn't know who Khaled Saieed was" (Khalil 2011, chapter 4).[22]

 State brutality in Tunisia and Egypt, and peoples' reactions to it, were immediately intertwined. Fisk reported his Egyptian colleagues saying that Tunisians had shown them "how to have pride", while Soueif writes that when, on or around the 25 January 2011, 'the Egyptian street started to move for the first time in thirty years' it did so 'under the leadership of the *shabab* (or youth) of Egypt' (Fisk 2011, Soueif 2012: 192). The older despot's end came relatively quickly thereafter, in just 18 days, with various delays and prevarications—he dismissed his cabinet on 28 January, vowed a few days later to stand down at the next 'elections' scheduled for September, claiming as he did so that he had "exhausted [his] life in serving Egypt and my people", and insisting, with evident reference to the already absent Ben Ali, that "I will die on the soil of Egypt and be judged by history." [23]

A fourth pillar of Mubarak's power, as more fleetingly of Ben Ali's, was the support of the United States, and this axis had its own big complications. Washington was experiencing evident difficulty in choosing between its immense strategic interests in Egypt and the Middle East and its support or otherwise for Arab democracy. Well after the crackdown on the protesters was

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[22]. He sees Khaled as 'the Emergency Law Martyr', with reference to the sweeping powers of detention and trial conferred on the police after the assassination of President Anwar Sadat, Mubarak's immediate predecessor in 1981, which lasted for the next 31 years. See also Ali 2012.

[23] Jack Shenker, et.al., in *Guardian Online*, 2 February 2011.

underway, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton referred to Mubarak as a loyal friend and indeed as "family",[24] and not until 1 February, did President Obama state that the transition must be meaningful, peaceful and begin now. Ambassador Godee's cable of 2009 had summarised Egypt's ongoing, vital importance—it supported peace between Israel and Egypt and ensured critical access to the Suez Canal and Egyptian airspace for American military operations sometimes on short notice. Washington's military aid was running at some $1.3 billion a year, and Egypt's leadership, said Godee, saw this as "untouchable compensation" for making and maintaining peace with Israel. Other factors were also part of this strategic relationship. Egypt played a key role in keeping Hamas bottled up in Gaza and in slowing the flow of Iranian weaponry to them. And Cairo had cooperated enthusiastically with President George Bush's programme in the 'rendering' and interrogation of suspected terrorists.[25]

Obama's reluctance to act firmly against Mubarak came at the cost of heavy repression. One estimate of 'the number killed, minimum' in clashes with security forces in Egypt, January through February 2011, was 846. Soueif refers to an exhibition of 'the murdered' in the Midan in Cairo, describing various pictures: 'Sally Zahran, massive blows to the head'; 'Muhammad Abd el-Menem, shot in the head'; 'Ali Muhsin, carries a laughing toddler'; 'Muhammad Bassiouny, shot, lies back with his two kids'; and among others, 'Muhammad Emad holds his arms open wide and wears a London T-shirt'. Pictures of '843 more' existed. She does not specify the time period, but the tenor of her book suggests similarity with *The Economist*.[26]

Tunisia's population was less than 11 million people, but they were ethnically and religiously homogenous and enjoyed relatively good standards of health, education and housing at least in coastal cities. For some two decades before the uprising, the economy had grown, on tourism, manufacturing and offshore services, at an annual average of five per cent. Perhaps most prominently, the status of women was unusually high. Polygamy and forced unilateral divorce, for instance, were banned, and the minimum age for marriage was 18. More than 80 per cent of adult females were literate; women made up half the student population, a third of magistrates and a quarter of the diplomatic corps.[27] These were some of the factors for which Bel Ali had liked to be known to the world. But there were limitations here too. Though women 'had been key players' in the uprising, whether as members of the educated elite of doctors, lawyers and academics, or among the large numbers of unemployed women graduates, they still lacked, in the first months of the 'Arab Spring', what Rachid Ghannouchi called political leadership status. As the country's first parliamentary elections approached, 'women made up only 6 per cent of the leading candidates at the

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[24] Cited by Ali 2011. Prime Minister Tony Blair described Mubarak as " immensely courageous and a force for good." Citation by Owen Jones, *Independent Online*, 1 June 2012.

[25] *The Economist,* 5 February 2011.

[26] *The Economist*, 16 July 2011, and Soueif (2012: 181).

[27] Chrisafis, in the *Guardian Online*, 20 October 2011.

top of party selection lists, which meant [under the electoral rules] that 'very few had a chance of winning a seat.'[28]

Maintaining the Regimes, Restricting Democratisation

Six months after the start of the Tunisian uprising, Chrisafis could report few signs of optimism on the streets of the capital about progress. According to Bassem Bouguerra, a blogger she spoke to: "Tunisia doesn't know where its going. But it knows where it came from and it doesn't want to go back there."[29] Bouguerra, along with more than a dozen journalists, had been beaten by police in May when they covered a renewed anti-government demonstration. Many of the same police who served Ben Ali still held their posts. The interim government was fragile and expected elections had been postponed. When people went to the polls in October, they voted, she and colleagues reported, 'in the shadow of the old regime.' Police brutality continued: Ben Ali's cronies and sympathisers 'still dominated a crooked justice system [and] corruption had worsened.' In the new year, censorship continued along with 'growing intolerance': a liberal writer told Fisk that 92 per cent of books then being published in Tunisia were Islamist. Bookshops outside Tunis just sold school notebooks and tracts.[30] Material conditions were also very grim for many. The jobless rate for graduate women was above 40 per cent, and double that number in the interior. Of the country's working-age population of 3.5 million, *about 800,000* were unemployed. [31]

In Egypt, the dumping of Mubarak quickly proceeded when the arrangements were clarified between the American and Egyptian military. US Defence Secretary, Robert Gates, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, and other senior Pentagon figures were in regular contact with their Egyptian counterparts all through the last days of January and the beginning of February. In an interview with ABC television, Mullen described existing American aid as a "significant investment" that has "paid off for a long, long time". The two large armies were described as closely interlinked, through joint training and exercises as well as aid.[32]

By 11 February, the authorities had little choice but to act decisively and quickly against the President. On that morning, in Cook's description of the events, 'millions of Egyptians poured into the streets all over the country to demand Mubarak's ouster' (Cook 2012: 294). In Cairo 'a mass of humanity' streamed

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[28] Chrisafis, *Guardian Online*, 20 October 2011.

[29] Bouguerra had been detained and assaulted a month earlier when he tried to film police beating a cameraman at a demonstration. Chrisafis, *Guardian Online*, 17 June, and Chrisafis, et.al., *Observer Online*, 22 October 2011.

[30] Fisk, *Independent Online*, 21 February 2012.

[31] Fisk, *Independent Online*, 21 February 2012 and Chrisafis, *Guardian Online*, 17 June 2011.

[32] Ewan MacAskill, *Guardian Online*, 4 February 2011.

toward Mubarak's compound while hundreds of thousands kept up their protest in Tahrir Square. These numbers were much greater than those seen in the uprisings in Central Europe a decade earlier. At six pm Vice President Omar Suleiman took less than a minute to announce on television that Hosni Mubarak had stepped down and power had been handed over to the military. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was instructed to manage an orderly transition. SCAF would be headed by Field Marshal Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, commander of Egypt's armed forces.[33]

Suleiman's role and proclivities were antithetical to constitutionalism and the rule of law. He was chief of Egypt's General Intelligence Service, 1993-2011, but assumed a more public role in the foreign ministry after 2001. He was known as 'the CIA's main man in Cairo' and 'Egypt's torturer-in-chief'. Under President Bush's war on terrorism, rendition was directed less at putting suspects on trial and more at obtaining 'actionable intelligence'. For the Bush administration. Egypt was 'a torture destination of choice', and at least one person rendered there, the Egyptian born Australian citizen, Mamdouh Habib, was tortured by Suleiman himself. According to US ambassador, Edward Walker—in a document released by Wikileaks—Suleiman was "very bright, very realistic...[and] not squeamish, by the way."[34]

The power of the Egyptian military went well beyond the aid it received from the United States and its broad association with the superpower. It was much more than a military machine, and its tentacles reportedly reached everywhere. It was a business empire that included construction, hotel and petrol sectors, worth around 20 per cent of the country's economy.[35] Retired army officers 'were accustomed to receiving title to public lands', and turning them sometimes into housing and agricultural projects and hotels. It possessed unaccountable and largely independent powers built up over some sixty years, permeating the country's laws, institutions and the six million-strong bureaucracy. Such agencies and operatives constituted a 'shadowy matrix' or 'deep state'[36]—in other words, the core of the regime, intended to endure regardless of who or what held the formal powers of the state. With the handover of executive power to SCAF, the military had acquired powers which it had not enjoyed, according

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[33] Cook (2012: 294); McGreal and Jack Shenker, *Guardian Online*, 11 February 2011.

[34] Habib was said to have been seized off a bus in Pakistan in October 2001, and in Egypt, apart from electric shocks and immersion in water, his fingers were broken and he was hung from metal hooks. The beatings were so hard that at one point his blindfold was dislodged, revealing the identity of Suleiman as his torturer. The subsequent Vice President was also 'directly implicated' in the death of Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi in Libya in the early 2000s. Lisa Hajjar, in *Jadalliya*, 30 January 2011, with reference to Jane Meyer's *The Dark Side* and Habib's memoir, *My Story: The Tale of a Terrorist Who Wasn't.*

[35] *Aljazeera* online, 14 August 2012.

[36] *The Economist*, 19 May 2012. Shatz notes differences between the military and the investigative agencies and Ministry of the Interior, favoured by Mubarak. This had the effect of insulating the army from the daily work of repression, shielding it in turn from public rage when the uprising began (Shatz 2012: 15, 17).

to Shatz (2012: 17), since the early 1950s, and might find difficult to sacrifice. A year after Mubarak's demise, the core of the regime (or *nizaam*) 'remain[ed] in place' (Teti and Gervasio 2012: 102). What facilitated the United States abandonment of Mubarak also constituted of course a deep problem for the democratisation movement. On the assessment of Hossam Bahgat, a prominent human-rights lawyer, the "real, dangerous struggle" was not along a religious-secular divide, but "between civil society and the deep state."[37]

But civil society in Egypt was not without strengths of its own. This stemmed from the size and diversity of the population, and in particular from its youthfulness, its high educational levels and associated organisational skills. By 2010 there was rapid growth in the 20-24 age group. Of those officially unemployed at the start of the uprising, about half were aged 20-24. As more than 43 per cent of the unemployed had university degrees, the impact of the uprising came from well educated youth in both a formal and a general sense. According to Salt (2012: 58), the young had the networking skills to draw 'millions of people' affected by low wages and rising prices into the protest. It was a movement, Nogam reports, composed of 'tech-savvy students...labour activists, intellectuals, lawyers, accountants [and] engineers' which 'had its origins in a three-year-old textile strike in the Nile Delta, and built upon an alliance of new and old opposition groups. One was the April 6 Youth Movement, formed in 2008 in support of the workers' struggle in the industrial town of El-Mahalla El-Kubra. National minimum wages had remained stagnant for 'over two and a half decades'. At issue too was the restructuring of unions that had 'hitherto functioned with government appointed leaders'. April 6 endeavoured to rally middle class youth behind the strike. But the military occupied the factories, and demonstrations faced a brutal crackdown (Nigam 2012: 166).

Workers' action had a fairly long history in Egypt, but it had spiked when Mubarak pushed ahead with a neoliberal agenda of privatisation, low wages and reduced benefits. In 2006-2008 almost the entire textile industry and the eommunities supporting it were on strike, and the Mubarak regime was forced to recognise the first independent trade union since 1957. Labour activism thereafter became 'the primary form of resistance to the regime' over the decade preceding the uprisings.[38] The protest leaders and the workers were intertwined. Tens of thousands of workers in both the public and private sectors, covering sectors from petroleum, through banking, transportation and health care, to heavy industry and the Cairo stock exchange, struck on 10 February 2011, the eve of the ousting, and joined the protesters in the streets. In Tunisia too, education unions played a key role in the uprisings, organising unemployed youth, many of whom as noted were educated, and endeavouring to combine demands for political reform with bread-and-butter issues. The military, Galvin notes, watched this action 'with trepidation.'

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[37] Cited in *The Economist*, 19 May 2012.

[38] James Gelvin, author of <u>The Arab Uprisings</u>, *Jadaliyya*, 25 July 2012.

Labour activist Hamdy Hussein, also says that labour protests served as a catalyst for Tahrir, linking popular protest over corruption and poverty with workers' demands for better pay and conditions. Textile workers have continued their activity and they are prominent in both their large numbers and militancy. In mid-2012, a strike by 23,000 employees at Misr Spinning and Weaving, the country's biggest weaving company, was in its fourth day and had been joined, according to Hussein, by 12,000 workers in other state firms. Egypt had around 300,000 textile workers, including 100,000 in the state sector. They were facing strong competition from foreign and privately owned companies. Labour unrest was also occurring in the ceramics industry, and disputes at Ceramics Cleopatra, Egypt's largest privately owned ceramics firm, had brought clashes between workers and police at much the same time. This action was unlikely to decrease, according to Hussein. Workers had sparked the revolution against Mubarak's despotism, only to be "crowded out", along with sympathetic left wing groups, by Islamists and the army in the immediate aftermath. "The coming revolution", he believed, "will correct the path of the first one [and] it will be a labour revolution."[39]

Independent worker organisations were a direct threat to the privileges of the military elite. Soon after the transfer of power to SCAF, 'an unprecedented wave of union activity rolled across the country...involving hundreds of thousands of workers.' Earlier it had issued a decree banning strikes that could harm "the wheel of production". The military continued its backing of state-run unions, and the harassment of union organisers (Mackell 2012: 28).

Groups concerned with workers' and human rights have stood their ground against the regime. Teti and Gervasso have identified among such groups the Hisham Mubarak Law Centre and the Centre for Trade Union Workers' Services. They note too that among new independent trade unions, the Real Estate Tax Collectors union (RETA) was the first established in December 2008, and it was followed since the uprising by 'literally hundreds' of others, including the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), formed on 31 January 2011. They see the independent unions and "activist NGOs" as 'certainly the most important component' of the democracy movement, in both their independence and in the 'efficacy of their action.' In so doing, they have devised and utilised a variety of instruments and methods to spread their messages among the people (Teti and Gervasio 2012: 104).

Hossam el-Hamalawy is a journalist, blogger and activist and, judging by a photograph, he is of the mid-20s age group. He believed that independent unions "are the silver bullet for any dictatorship." What he called mass strikes were continuing. While attempts were being made by middle-class activists to confine the revolution to the realm of formal political institutions, he believed that the main part of the revolution lay in the socio-economic emancipation of the people, which was just beginning. What we need to do now, he said, "is to take Tahrir to the factories, the universities, the workplaces. In every single

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[39] 'Labour Unrest Spreads in Egypt', *Aljazeera* online, Middle East, 20 July 2012.

institution in this country there is a mini-Mubarak who needs to be overthrown. In every institution there are figures from the old state security regime who need to be overthrown." It must be assumed that everyone who belonged to the old regime or enjoyed privileges under it is going to defend those privileges. There was, he said, huge resentment among the Egyptian working class about the neoliberal policies that have impoverished them over recent decades. He did not doubt that the western powers and Arab monarchs who are already deeply unhappy at what they have seen in Egypt will be even more dismayed at the second revolutionary phase. But 'however much pressure they put on the military junta, the pressure of the street can be stronger" (El-Hamalawy 2011).

Democracy's Gains and Losses

One year is an extremely short time on which to assess progress in a country as large as Egypt, where democratic processes are just beginning. But in consideration simply of discernible tendencies, it might be thought that the balance is at best mixed, and the gains are mainly in symbolic and long-term aspirational areas and very limited in the key formal institutions, parliament, the presidency and the constitution.

Key parliamentary and presidential elections were opportunities largely missed by the people. Islamic parties dominated in parliament along with remnants of the dictatorship. Two-thirds of voters in the November 2011 parliamentary elections supported the candidates of either the Muslim Brotherhood's FJP, or *al-Nour*. Both were well organised, untainted by past corruption, and typically faced weak and divided secular parties especially in rural areas. The Brotherhood's strength was based on its half-million committed members and its unmatched capacity to mobilise the numbers.[40] It won 36.6 per cent of the 9.7 million votes cast. Number two was the unequivocally anti-democratic *Al-Nour*, which advocated strict curbs on art and personal freedoms, and drew support from hard-line Salafi Muslims, and obtained 25 per cent.[41] The two together held a solid majority of the vote. After subsequent elections for the upper house or Shura Council—where turnout fell to some 6.5 per cent—*The Economist* believed that 'over 70 per cent of seats in parliament' were held by the Brotherhood and *Al-Nour*.[42]

An immediate and vital task of parliament was to choose the composition of a proposed 100-person assembly which would re-write the country's constitution. Under existing laws power was of course vested in the presidency. Liberals were

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[40] *The Economist*, 19 May 2012.

[41] Alastair Beach, in the *Independent Online*, 5 December 2011. The party's spokesman in Cairo, Yousseri Hamad, said that democracy allowed man's law to override God's: "In the land of Islam, I can't let people decide what is permissible or what is prohibited. It is God who gives the answers as to what is right and what is wrong." Interview with Associated Press, *Guardian Online*, 2 December 2011.

[42] 10 March 2012.

reportedly seeking representation for civil society in the writing of the new constitution, including professional associations, intellectuals and trade unions. Voting for the presidency was a related and equally big long term issue, and on both the Brotherhood's actions offered no secular or democratic assurances. After earlier pledging that it would not contest for the presidency—given its parliamentary dominance—it reversed its position and announced at the end of March that it would contend. Results in the first round of presidential elections saw Freedom and Justice again coming first, with a candidate of the regime a close second. The Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi won 24.3 per cent, and Ahmed Shafiq, a self-styled law and order candidate, former air force chief, and Mubarak's last prime minister, was second with 23.3 per cent. Other significant contenders were Hamdeen Sabbahi, variously described as an independent Nasserist or 'populist socialist', with 20.4 per cent, and Abdel Moneim Abul Fotouh, seen as an independent or mild Islamist, with 17.2 per cent. The second and decisive round in June was thus restricted to Morsi and Shafiq; Islam or the military, the entrenched poles of Egyptian society and politics over decades, still unchanged. Turnout in this vital contest was a pitiful 46 per cent of registered voters.[43]

Informed opinion on the likely role of Islamist parties in a democratising state was divided. Marc Lynch has looked at the recent successes of Islamists in elections in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt and sees no cause for alarm; it was inevitable that groups like the Brotherhood would benefit from the opening-up of politics after the long dictatorships—which sometimes bore heavily on their leadership--[44] and their democratic pretensions should be put to the test.[45]

Despite the reportedly wide-spread pessimism on the streets, Tunisia's parliamentary elections on 23 October 2011 went well, and lent credence to Lynch's view. *Ennahda* (Renaissance), the heavily repressed Islamist party under Ben Ali's domination, had already shown considerable political capacity. It had reestablishd its leadership from prison (some 4,000 were jailed in the 1990s) and exile, rebuilt party structures and entered the elections within a few months of Ben Ali's expulsion: before January 2011 the party had no offices or visible signs of its existence. It won some 41 per cent of seats in the assembly. Led by Rachid Ghannouchi, an intellectual who had written on Islam and democracy in the 1980s (Haugbolle and Cavatorta 2012), it ran a supposedly exemplary democratic campaign against a number of small secular parties,

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[43] Ian Black and Abdel-Rahman Hussein, *Guardian Online*, 29 May 2012, and *The Economist*, 2 June 2012.

[44] For example, Khairat al-Shatir, senior member of the Brotherhood's leadership and a wealthy businessman, spent 12 years in prison, and was only released as a result of the uprising in 2011. *BBC News Online*, 31 March 2012.

[45] Review of Marc Lynch, *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East, The Economist*, 21 April 2012. Some historical experience also pointed towards inclusion. When the Islamic Salvation Front comfortably won general elections in Algeria in 1991, but was prevented from assuming power by the army, a decade of bloody civil war followed. 'Briefing: Islam and Democracy', *The Economist*, 6 August 2011.

stressing its long opposition to the old regime, and 'its identification with working class authenticity', in contrast with the orientation of Tunisia's traditional Francophone elite. On an estimated turnout of 60 per cent of eligible voters—usually a larger category than those who were registered—*Ennahda* secured 90 seats in the 217-seat assembly. Its nearest rivals on the results were the Congress for the Republic, led by a prominent human rights campaigner, with 14 per cent of the seats, and Popular Petition on 13 per cent. In power, it established a coalition government and appeared to accept such key principles as individual liberties and the rule of law. It was early days, but Tunisia's elections had made a strong case for letting the people choose on contentious issues like the role of political Islam in a democracy.[46]

Samir Amin held a strong contrary opinion. He allowed that political Islam in Egypt 'still enjoys "legitimacy" among the general public', but sees this as a mistaken perception. If it takes over government, he stressed, 'it will continue to impose itself...for a long time.' He does not see the Brotherhood as primarily an Islamic party, but as 'firstly a reactionary party', ready and able if it gains power to collaborate with imperialist powers against democratisation (2012: 37, 39).

In contrast with Tunis, Islamism in Cairo continued to obstruct democratisation. The Brotherhood's representation predominated in parliament, but deadlock persisted for weeks over the composition of the constitutional assembly, and hence of its first meeting. Here was a large vulnerability which the military could exploit in order to hold on to power. SCAF had already said, in December 2011, that the upcoming parliament would not be representative of all Egyptian people, and it could therefore not be accorded the final say in the drafting of the new constitution.[47] After the rejection of a proposed constitutional panel in April 2012 by the Administrative Court in Cairo, supposedly because it gave a near-majority of the membership to Islamists and under-represented women, secularists and youth, Field Marshall Tantawi reportedly gave parliament a deadline to name a representative body.[48]

Progress was being achieved, however, in many informal areas in highly meaningful long-term ways. One was an attempt to record and document the revolution as it had been occurring on the streets in Cairo and elsewhere. The historian, Khaled Fahmy, said that Egyptians were highly sensitive about official attempts to write history and create state-sponsored narratives about historical events. Inherent tensions existed, he believed, between mass popular participation and official attempts to catalogue and record them. These insights

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[46] *The Economist*, 29 October 2011 and Shahshahani and Mullin (2012: 67 and 85).

[47] Major General Mokhtar el-Mulla, a leading member of SCAF, in an interview with foreign media,

Jack Shenker, *Guardian Online*, 7 December 2011.

[48] The reported membership of a more representative body of 100 included in part thirty members from parliament's lower house; 15 judges and legal experts; one seat each to the armed forces, police and the justice ministry; four from the Coptic Church;13 delegates from trade unions and 21 public figures. *BBC News Online*, 8 June 2012.

led to the formation of the Committee to Document the 25 January Revolution, staffed by volunteers and drawing on everything from official records and insurrectionary pamphlets to multimedia footage and updates on Twitter. The immediate aim was to gather as much primary data as possible and deposit it in the national archives for the free scrutiny of the people and posterity. The bigger plans accommodated practical and political concerns. Over the first five months of 2011, the ruling military junta—SCAF—had been seeking to 'limit the [accepted] scope of the revolution both rhetorically and legally, applying the term strictly to the 18 days of street demonstrations that led to Mubarak's resignation', and contrasting these supposedly "selfless" protests with the allegedly "disruptive" and "self-interested" strikes and sit-ins held subsequently by workers and other groups demanding political change.

Questions abounded concerning the scope of the revolution and the democratisation process. One of the Committee's working groups had decided to change the 'start date' of their enquiries from 14 January 2011 when Ben Ali was forced out, back to June 2010 when the Alexandrian youth Khaled Saieed was battered to death in public by police. The 'finish date' of the project was an unresolved problem. The recognition that revolution, like democratisation, is a long-term process, rarely a single event, is of profound importance. Fahmy's own feeling was that "the revolution is very much incomplete, and this second stage—which requires overcoming the army—may prove even more difficult than the battle to topple Mubarak."

The project was also battling against the denial of public access to official information in Egypt and other Arab countries, both by legal measures and by burying depositories in basements and cellars. What was happening in Tunisia and Egypt appeared to validate strongly the belief, found in Marx, Brecht and elsewhere, that people not generals or leaders make history. "But if it is the people who make history, then they should be the ones who write it and read it as well," Fahmy concluded: "This was a leaderless revolution...which came about through mass participation." The writing of history now "ha[d] to be part of the same process"(Shenker 2011b).

The ongoing protest had many specific targets in the military and security forces. The demand that police and other former regime officials be accountable for the violence inflicted on demonstrators had seen armed security men fighting long running battles with civilians in Cairo and Suez at the beginning of July 2011, after police accused of murdering protesters were released on bail. "The demands of the revolution have not changed since day one", declared the 25 January Revolution[ary] Youth Coalition in an online statement. "It was not just about toppling the old regime but about building a state where people can have freedom, dignity, rule of law and social justice." In an apparent attempt at appeasement in the face of the protests, the interim interior minister, Mansour el-Essawy, 'promised to purge up to 700 corrupt senior police officers'. But five months after Mubarak's fall, with by then 'almost a thousand dead', only a single officer had been convicted--but not then imprisoned-- for his crimes. Many newspaper articles, among them one by the noted author Alaa al-Aswany,

decried the continuing presence of Mubarak-affiliated ministers, judges, security officials and journalists, among the political elite. The revolution was at a real fork in the road, said al-Aswany; it could accomplish its goals, "but it can also lose, leaving the old regime to return in a slightly different form," he said (Shenker 2011a).

 In these critical circumstances, activists were proposing new forms of grassroots political participation, including what they called a "civil referendum". This would see questionnaires about Egypt's future distributed among demonstrators and then dropped in manned ballot boxes throughout Tahrir square (Shenker 2011a). At the same time, existing youth groups were flourishing despite or because of the continuance of the military junta. The April 6 Movement, for instance, had grown seven times in size, embracing at the start of 2012 some 20,000 activists across Egypt.[49]

The revolutionary process was producing understandings of historical and universal importance. When once the Arab world was seen as a stagnant pond of retardation, tyranny and fatalistic submission, now protest movements in the United States, Spain and elsewhere—for instance the Occupy Movement and the *indignados*--saw Tunisia and Tahrir as inspiration for their own actions. The lesson was a dual one: no longer was the west to be a democratic beacon to the Middle East, and additionally, once again, democracy has become a revolutionary force. In the words of Occupy: 'From Tunisia to Tahrir Square, Madrid to Reykjavik...people are rising up to denounce the status quo'. Where supposedly democratic systems exist, they have been 'emptied of meaning, put to the service of those few interested in increasing the power of corporations and financial institutions.' In the commentary of Chomsky: things that were sort of known, though hidden in the margins, 'are now right up front—such as the imagery of the 99% and 1%; and the dramatic facts of sharply rising inequality.' And for Chakrabortty, Occupy had succeeded in just one year in turning "we are the 99%" into one of the most resonant slogans in campaigning history. In a world where 'the history of political activism is the history of setbacks and unexpected advance,' what Occupy has clearly got right 'is its targets'. That the liberal capitalist model is broken 'shows in the policy exhaustion of those still trying to patch it up four years after Lehman's collapse' (Occupy Movement 2012, Chomsky 2012, Chakrabortty 2012).

What the Arab revolts represented for Bottici and Challand (2012) was the return of 'a truly combative civil society' possessed of spontaneity and grassroots organisation, and 'operating outside the framework of formal political institutions.' It is a civil society 'very different from the reformist one depicted by western political theorists.'

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[49] Tom Perry in *Mail and Guardian Online*, 18 January 2012.

Military Domination Versus Presidential Authority

But parliament, the Muslim Brotherhood and the people have left it late to strengthen and activate the formal political institutions. From the beginnings of Tahrir, the people had harboured the illusion that the military, unlike the police forces —especially the Interior Ministry's Central Security riot police-- represented no physical threat, and were rather benign, even protective, as regards peaceful democratisation.[50] The absence of physical intimidation had been stressed by protesters, and other forms of control emanating from the military had been ignored or neglected.

Beginning in mid-June, SCAF took a number of steps which cumulatively appeared to indicate that there would be no meaningful handover of power on 30 June, as previously and repeatedly promised (Human Rights Watch 2012a). On 14 June the recently elected parliament was dissolved and sweeping powers, including those over legislation, assumed by the military. Decrees of 4 and 17 June re-empowered the military to arrest and try civilians and expanded its role in internal as well as national security affairs. On 14 June, General Mamdouh Shaheen declared on television that "the good of the country require[d] a presence for the armed forces in the street to protect the country since the police are still unable to fully perform." A so-called "Constitutional Declaration" of 17 June indicated the military's wide powers and its presumptions of superiority with regard to the presidency and the people: "[I]n cases of internal disturbances that require the intervention of the armed forces, the president may ask the SCAF for permission to order the armed forces to share in law enforcement duties and the protection of public institutions."[51] In a few weeks SCAF had acquired powers in internal affairs that went far beyond what the military held under Hosni Mubarak.[52]

Brutality at the hands of the Egyptian military was of course a harsh and largely unaddressed reality. Human Rights Watch had documented 'dozens of cases of torture by the military during arrests and in detention, most recently in Abbasiya in May, and before that...brutal beatings of male and female protesters in December 2011. On 9 March 2011, military officers had subjected female protesters in detention to virginity tests.' (in Human Rights Watch 2012a.) In late October 2012, Human Rights Watch noted that, over the previous 18 months, 'the military ha[d] been getting away with murder, torture and assault.'

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[50] Consider this description of popular behaviour in Cairo on 1 February 2011 soon after SCAF had declared that the armed forces would never fire on the Egyptian people. 'Battalions of people are continuing...to surround the tanks, lean on them, climb on to them...stick flags and flowers on them.' Eventually a young officer made a speech urging us to maintain our determination. 'He was lifted on to people's shoulders and carried round the Midan. "The People ! The Army ! One Hand! The People! The Army!..." (Soueif 2012: 53). Khalil (2011: 161, 211) notes that the military's statement against the use of force (of 31 January) also acknowledged "the legitimacy of the people's demands."

[51] Exerpt from article 23, in Human Rights Watch 2012a.

[52] Assessment of Joe Stork, deputy Middle East Director of Human Rights Watch. in Human Rights Watch 2012a.

Military courts had enjoyed sole jurisdiction over any act committed by military personnel and 'consistently failed to investigate properly the army's abuses against protesters.' And the same courts issued harsh sentences, 'including many death sentences', for crimes committed by civilians, and there was even a 'significant discrepancy in sentencing when a military officer [was] tried, sometimes for the same crime' (2012b). In a long and detailed report, Amnesty concluded that the 'army [was] above the law' over the eighteen months of the SCAF's domination. For instance, 'no members of the military forces, including paratroopers and commando units, had been charged with any crime, despite killing at least 17 people and injuring around 1,000.' 'Only time will tell' whether the military junta had been put under elected civilian control. Ambivalence and uncertainty prevailed. President Morsi, for example, had appointed the commander of the paratroopers as commander of his presidential guard. He also promoted the head of the Military Judiciary to become one of his aides: a person 'responsible for overseeing the unfair trials of thousands of civilians before military courts.' Overall, 'the military forces appear to remain beyond the reach of justice...It is unlikely that they will ever be held accountable' (Amnesty International 2012: 40 − 44).

Certain disturbing incidents were widely publicised. One, in December 2011 in Cairo, showed a woman, seen in photos as 'young, slim and fair', lying on her back 'surrounded by four soldiers, two of whom are dragging her by the arms...She's wearing blue jeans and trainers. But her top half is bare...' Soldiers had also taken 'a distinguished older lady [who had] become known for giving food to the protesters and slapped her repeatedly about the face till she had to beg and apologise.' The army's message was said to be clear: 'Everything you rose up against is here [and] is worse. Don't put your hopes in the revolution or parliament. We are the regime and we're back' (Soueif 2011).

When the results of the presidential election were still awaited, and big demonstrations occurred in Tahrir square, Mohammed Morsi published a statement indicating his future plans. If he was elected, he noted, "I alone [would] represent an unequivocal departure from the old regime." People must be free to choose public officials through fair elections. "No party or group or class must ever be allowed to monopolise the political power in the country" (sic). He intended to transform the office of the president, into "an institution with clear and delineated roles given to a number of vice-presidents (representing political and social forces other than the Freedom and Justice party)." They will work in a transparent political environment, "subject to oversight by parliament and civil society." "Inclusion", he stressed, would be "at the core of my economic vision." Scholarly research indicated that most of the country's privatisation programme had "benefited only 30 families", while 40 per cent of the population could not spend even $2 a day. "Balanced economic growth and social justice will be the ultimate objective of my programme, as it was for our great revolution as a whole" (Morsi 2012).

When Morsi became president elect on 24 June, he had received 51.73 per cent of the vote against 48.27 per cent for his rival Shafiq, an improvement on the

one per cent that separated them in the first round. Perhaps further reflecting the invidiousness of the choice for many voters, turnout was only 51.58 per cent. He reportedly resigned from his positions within the Brotherhood, and an assistant, Dina Zakareya, affirmed on 25 June that the new government would be "a coalition government without a FJP majority and led by an independent figure."[53]

Morsi was sworn in as president at the end of June at the Supreme Constitutional Court. The day before SCAF supposedly handed over power to him after a military parade outside Cairo. Field Marshal Tantawi declared that the military "ha[d] fulfilled our promise...before God and the people", decorated the President with the Shield of the Armed Forces, and shook hands with him several tines.[54]

But the divisions were many between SCAF, the Supreme Constitutional Court, and the President, with the latter the only popularly elected entity, but unsupported by a parliament and a constitution, parliament having been partly dissolved by the decision of the Constitutional Court and *in toto* by a subsequent SCAF decree. According to Mahmoud Helmy of the FJP, the Court's original decision had been "specifically regarding the unconstitutionality of a third of the parliamentary seats, not the entire Assembly". The President, he told the *Guardian*, "had no objection to there being new elections, but for now, we will go about our business as usual."[55] This was wishful thinking. Without decisive action President Morsi was unable to act independently of the judiciary and military.

A leaderless uprising certainly drew the people into Tahrir Square and kept them there until they had ensured Mubarak's expulsion, but it brought big problems of organisation and leadership in its wake. A newly risen people were unable to deal with the detailed immediate issues, like ensuring good turnout in key elections, and in meeting constitutional demands such as the convening of a representative Constitutional Assembly, where the Brotherhood was allowed to sit on its hands over weeks. Democratic institutions were denied validation and activation. The uprising was also at fault in its failure to understand the military and the intentions of its commanders to hold on to power.

Military power was extended in the days before Morsi's inauguration when it was revealed that Tantawi would remain head of SCAF and commander of the armed forces, and be defence minister as well.[56] The notion of remnants was used against deeply tarnished figures like Ahmed Shafiq and ex-Vice President

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[53] *BBC News Online*, 24 June 2012 and Abdel-Rahman Hussein in *Guardian Online*, 26 June 2012.

[54] Magdi Abdelhadi in *BBC Online*, 30 June 2012.

[55] Abdel-Rahman Hussein in *Guardian Online*, 26 June 2012.

[56] Reuters, 'Egypt's Defence Minister Hangs Defiantly on to Power', *Guardian Online*, 28 June 2012.

Omar Suleiman,[57] but it is possible that not enough recognition was given to the great size of the Mubarak regime,[58] and that many within it were much closer to SCAF than to Morsi, as Alaa al-Aswany had warned in mid-2011, the Constitutional Court being not the least of these. "There is no power above people power", Morsi abstractly intoned on the eve of his inauguration, and promised a "civil, nationalist and constitutional state".[59] But he did not invoke the distinctiveness of his position as sole elected representative of the people, and the unique authority this conferred on his decisions. When he attempted to recall parliament in early July, the Supreme Constitutional Court overruled him.

When Secretary of State Clinton met president Morsi on 14 July in Cairo, at the start of a two-day visit to Egypt, this was said to be the highest level meeting between a US official and the Muslim Brotherhood, Washington had previously been inclined to see the organisation as a supporter of terrorism. Nevertheless the views which Clinton now expressed were firm, clear and pro-democratic. The United States, she said, "supports the full transition to civilian rule with all that entails". There was more work ahead, she stressed. "I think the issues around the parliament, [and] the constitution have to be resolved between and among Egyptians." She looked forward to discussing these issues with Field Marshal Tantawi "and working to support the military's return to a purely national security role."[60]

Tantawi, however, rejected such recommendations almost out of hand. Speaking just hours after his meeting with Clinton, he upheld the political supremacy and guardianship of the military, portrayed the Brotherhood as a foreign intrusion and accorded no role to democracy. "Egypt will never fall. It belongs to all Egyptians and not to a certain group. The armed forces will not allow it. [They] will not allow anyone, especially those pushed from outside, to distract it from its role as the protector of Egypt. The army will never commit treason and will continue to perform its duties..."[61]

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[57] Shafiq was reported to have left Egypt with most of his family for Abu Dhabi on 26 June, hours after investigations were opened into claims he misused public funds as a minister of the former regime. Suleiman had gone the same way earlier that month. AP, *Independent Online*, 27 June 2012.

[58] Inquiries within parliament's Planning and Budget Committee (which died when the assembly was dismissed by SCAF in mid-June) revealed that there were 5.7 million government employees in 2009, and close to 7 million by 2012 (El Rashidi 2012).

[59] Abdel-Rahman Hussein in *Guardian Online*, 26 June 2012.

[60] A Reuters report on her visit in *Guardian Online*, 14 July 2012.

[61] *Aljazeera* online, Middle East, 16 July 2012. Founded in 1928 in opposition to British occupation, it is difficult to depict the Brotherhood as foreign. It has influenced Islamist ideas across the region, while professing a relatively moderate version of Islam at home. It is known for its discipline, secretiveness and political awareness. *The Economist*, 4 and 10 December 2011.

On 14 July, as if anticipating the military's intransigence, the Secretary of State had reportedly urged President Morsi to "assert the full authority of his office."[62]

Protests against the United States and the Brotherhood had seen tomatoes, shoes and plastic bottles thrown at Clinton's motorcade, support for the 'jihadists' and a 'theocracy' were denounced, while other demonstrators had chanted "Monica" in a clear reference to Monica Lewinsky and President Bill Clinton.[63] Yet on any objective criteria then, the Secretary of State was seemingly the best interlocutor then available to President Morsi. This was borne on the United States' regular financial assistance which went largely to the military, and which was considered untouchable and valuable by both sides. Financial resources were of proven importance to the military. During her meeting with President Morsi, Secretary Clinton was said to have pledged 'hundreds of millions of dollars in debt relief, private investment and job creation funds.' When this economic package was discussed with Tantawi, the Field Marshal stressed, according to an official present on the occasion, 'that this is what Egyptians need most now, help getting the economy back on track.'[64]

The political problems facing Morsi were equally pressing. Direct action by millions of people had introduced democracy, accompanied by intense workers' struggles. In the immediate aftermath popular experimentation with democratisation had begun. But elections had seen no upsurge in participation, and had instead accorded a large and disproportionate role to Islamists. The latter might respect the formalities of democracy, but their understanding of democratisation as a deep and long term process was limited at best.[65] Morsi came to the presidency with 'a reputation as a plodding technocrat.' But when he purged the upper ranks of SCAF in August 2012, he initiated some important gains for elected executive power. He retired Tantawi and his next in line, the chief of staff. The moves were strongly welcomed in Tahrir Square where demonstrators celebrated with chants of "Go away Field Marshall." Replacing Tantawi in SCAF and as minister of defence was the head of military intelligence, General Abdel-Fatah el-Sissi. El-Sissi was described as considerably younger than Tantawi, and to have 'br[ought] with him several younger officers' (El Amrani 2012). The military retained economic and political power, but the President would now be dealing with 'a new, potentially more compliant and more competent generation of officers.' Some members of SCAF had apparently assisted President Morsi in his move, and they could be

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[62] *Aljazeera*, 16 July 2012.

[63] *Aljazeera*, 16 July 2012.

[64] *Aljazeera*, 16 July 2012.

[65] When the uprising had started 'Islamist leaders were nowhere to be seen. The Brotherhood did not

expect to wield power in Egypt so soon, and they resisted taking power over the military until February 2012. Many of their affiliates were said to be internally divided and 'unsure of what to do now that they are in power.' Editorial, *The Economist*, 18 February 2012.

beholden to him for their positions in his administration.[66] Uncertainties continued. Both Tantawi and Anan received high military honours, prompting some speculation that this could be part of a 'safe exit scenario' which would allow members of SCAF to leave office without fear of prosecution for crimes against demonstrators. Such prosecutions were of course specific demands of the demonstrators.

As significantly, Morsi also cancelled SCAF's constitutional declaration in June curbing presidential powers. Legislative powers thus reverted to the President. He further decreed that fresh parliamentary elections would be held 60 days after the ratification of a new constitution in a popular referendum. Speculation focussed on a possible renewed challenge from the supreme constitutional court. Perhaps with this in mind, Morsi also appointed senior judge, Mahmoud Mekki, as a Vice President. Mekki was prominent in the independent judges movement which agitated for judicial independence under Mubarak.[67] Additionally, Mahmoud's brother, Ahmed Mekki, who was also part of the judicial Reform Movement, was named as justice minister. According to Hearst, 'civil society and the rule of law could not have two better non-Islamist champions.'[68]They would also strengthen the President in any future challenge from the Constitutional Court.

The plodding continued. In early August, Morsi acquired a prime minister, and shortly after a cabinet. The new administration did not inspire revolutionary enthusiasm. Led by Hisham Qandil, a pious bureaucrat who had served as irrigation minister, its ministers were 'mostly grey figures sympathetic to the Brotherhood'. The interior minister was a police general.[69] A coalition government, pointed to before Morsi's inauguration, had not been realised. But there was also no sign of greater Islamisation. In December 2011, it was reported that the Brotherhood leadership had assured the British ambassador in Cairo, James Watt, that they had no wish to impose sharia law on the country or to cancel Egypt's treaty with Israel.[70] But Morsi was also utilising presidential authority to chart a more independent international role. Within his first 100 days, he had 'sent a clear message to Washington that he is distancing himself from Hosni Mubarak's unquestioning support for the United States, insisting that foreign relationships will be based on "mutual respect"'[71]

The 'revolution's second stage', was a large part of what had produced the first stage, ousting despotism, and it was still sought after by workers, activists, intellectuals and the youth. A more decisive President had moved to limit the overweening power of the military and to check interference from the old

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[66] *The Economist*, 18 August 2012.

[67] Abdel-Rahman Hussein, in *Guardian Online*, 12 August 2012.

[68] David Hearst, in the *Guardian Online*, 13 August 2012.

[69] *The Economist*, 4 August and 15 September 2012.

[70] Donald Macintyre, *The Independent Online,* 26 December 2011.

[71] Among countries Morsi had visited were China, Iran, and Turkey. *Aljazeera*, 9 October 2012.

regime's judiciary. Greater space and opportunity was thus available for democratisation.

Civil society, with its educated youth, women and an organising working class, possessed as noted great potentialities. Principles stressed by Benoit and Challand were 'the urgency of a renewed sense of citizenship', and of 'inclusion' seen specifically in the widespread role in the uprisings of women and youth. 'Spontaneous and leaderless movements' characterised the uprisings in North Africa and later the Occupy movement, and the absence of leaders, they said, did not mean the lack of organisation or of vision' (Bottici and Challand 2012). But this characterisation ignores the big differences between the two movements and the problems they faced. Democratisation in North Africa was about gaining control over government and furthering a 'second stage' of the revolution: and the leaderless movement in Egypt had shown an inability to respond adequately to important formal institutional demands—to turnout in large numbers for key elections, to support new, non-Islamist political forces, and to press for a democratic constitution, for instance.

Democratisation and Constitutionalism

Ordinary people in their millions had brought an end to despotism, and youth, women, intellectuals and organised workers had endeavoured to promote democratisation in varied ways—in the writing of history by those who had actually been making it, in the recognition that independent trade unions were 'the silver bullet' for 'mini Mubaraks' everywhere, in on-going protests against state brutality and in many participatory initiatives. But initial comment on the country's new draft constitution indicated that new and serious limitations were about to be imposed on democratisation.

The drafters had taken their inspiration from Egypt's 1923 constitution drawn up under British military occupation, that also of 1971--sometimes transcribing their very words--from the principles of the French Fifth Republic, from Islam, and little or nothing at all from what had been actually happening all round them over the last two years. Adding insult to inquiry, there had not been any 'semblance of public consultation during the writing process' (Sedra 2012). To highlight some main points. According to Goldberg's analysis, the country was about to acquire 'a very powerful executive authority rooted in but not managed by an elected president.' There would be 'a strong president whose goals are accomplished through an unelected prime minister subject to a vote of confidence by an elected legislature. Educated professionals would play 'a dominant role in administration and legislation', while the approximately 'sixty per cent of Egyptians who are poor or illiterate...will have no role in its institutions and relatively little in its politics.' The existing People's Assembly and Consultative Assembly would be replaced by a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate. Literacy and educational qualifications, unknown most everywhere else in the contemporary world, were to be introduced to exclude ordinary people from the legislature. To qualify as a Deputy a person must be more than 25

years old and have completed primary education. Goldberg estimated that this would exclude seventeen per cent of the male population and thirty five per cent of women, more than half of the poorest and weakest. Educated professionals would 'play a dominant role in administration and legislation', and compete for power with each other in elections. The military and judiciary will retain significant levels of autonomy, the former continuing as a 'self-contained hierarchy' and the latter with greater institutional divisions (Goldberg 2012).

The legislature has limited powers. Deputies who join the government lose their seats. The president names the prime minister who then forms a government and presents its program to the Chamber. The latter (the former parliament) will have only 'limited powers'. It can propose legislation, but largely 'responds to the executive'. The autonomy of the military counter-balances the president and prime minister. The president is the supreme commander of the armed forces (article 152) and makes appointments within the military. But it is the prime minister who appoints the defence minister, and the defence minister is also named as "the general commander" of the armed forces: additionally the defence minister must be a member of the officer's corps (article 198). The past intrusiveness of the military and the judiciary was to be checked in two main ways. Military courts would in future only try cases involving military personnel, and civilians may not be brought before military courts. The Supreme Constitutional Court would lose its powers to declare elections, and elected legislatures, invalid. On Goldberg's (2012) summary the new proposals amounted to 'an elected constitutional monarchy'.

When Manal al-Tibi resigned from the Constitutional Assembly she had noted that an institution that that was made possible through revolution had perversely come to 'serve the purposes of counter-revolution'. They were creating a constitution that "would maintain the same primary foundations of the regime that the revolution had risen up to overthrow, while only changing the personnel."[72]

The popular referendum which is required to approve the draft constitution has now acquired even greater importance. If democratisation is not to be grievously set back, a huge turnout and firm rejection was essential.

Progress was notable in Tunisia. The demands of the revolution, stemming from December 2010, were focussed upon the writing of a new constitution in which the rule of law, human rights, and above all, "Work, Freedom and Dignity", were to become the foundations of the new republic. The three main parties elected to the constitutional assembly on 23 October 2011 had committed themselves to the task. But not all was plain sailing. *Ennahdha* had sought to assert the supposed 'complementarity' of women in relation to men, and an 'Islamic Supreme Council had also been proposed. New political parties had arisen, and peace and security remained fragile nationally. Clashes between people had become common in many places, Salafists sewed disorder, and insecurity was in

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[72] Cited in Sedra 2012.

consequence widespread. 'And yet', said Weslaty (2012), 'particularly among the younger generation, a revolutionary spirit, a spirit of defiance, still exists.'

Tunisia now possessed 'an active civil society with press conferences, assemblies, meetings, discussions and different forms of citizen action being organised every day.' Even though the old structures of the dictatorship have not been completely eradicated, 'the people now have the required weaponry-- the pen and freedom of speech--to bring them down.' Tunisia had come to be regarded, she said, 'as the cradle of revolution', and international help for its democratisation was on offer (Weslaty 2012). Cautious revolutionary determination seemed appropriate.

European and North African democratization

For all their differences, Portugal, Egypt and Tunisia have the most in common in the revolutionary, popular and the exciting qualities of their democratisations. The ousting of the old regimes was quickly accomplished in the earliest of the three, which was also the most radical, ambitious and organised over the 19 months of its existence during the height of the Cold War and the advance of European integration. The collapse of foreign dictatorships in Central Europe, by contrast, was followed by little or no democratisation, as Solidarity withered and no new popular democratic organisations appeared. New nationalist elites feathered their own nests and ignored the needs of the people in emulation of Thatcher and Reagan. In the GDR re-unification immediately trumped all. Havel and Michnik ignored economic realities to their peoples' cost, but their ideas like acting as if you were free saw increased validation in 2010-11 against Ben Ali and Mubarak. Anglo American liberal capitalism has lost its hegemony and it seems unlikely to regain it. New opportunities are being offered to democracy, if it is popular, organised and actively, constantly anti-elitist.

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About the author

Kenneth Good has taught and carried out research in Papua New Guinea and at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, as well as in Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. He was Professor of Political Studies at the University of Botswana in Gaborone for 15 years, until 2005, when he was declared a Prohibited Immigrant and summarily expelled from the country. In May 2010, the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in Gambia found comprehensively in his favour. Although legally bound by this decision, the Botswana government is yet to meet its obligations.

Good has published widely, including *The Liberal Model and Africa: Elites Against Democracy* (Palgrave 2002), and *Diamonds, Dispossession and Democracy in Botswana* (James Currey and Jacana Media 2008). His interests are broad, focussed upon democratisation and development; poverty and inequalities; corruption and non-accountability; the rights of indigenous peoples (esp the San/Bushmen); and southern African politics and development.
Most recently, his research, writing and teaching has concentrated on the comparative and historical analysis of democratisation. At present he is adjunct professor in Global Studies at RMIT in Melbourne, visiting professor in Political and International Studies at Rhodes University, and an honorary fellow at Melbourne University. He can be contacted at kenneth.good AT rmit.edu.au.

From terrorists to revolutionaries:
the emergence of "youth" in the Arab world and the discourse of globalization

Mayssoun Sukarieh

Abstract

Why are the Arab Revolution dubbed as Youth Revolutions? Who is pushing for this label? And why? Prior to these revolutions and specifically after 9/11 Arab youth were dubbed as terrorists, and their state of Arab youth has become one of global concern. How over night can terrorist youth turn into revolutionary youth? Why has youth become a focus of concern now? What is at stake here and for whom? How does this shape how we think about social, economic, political, historical issues in the Arab world, and what issues does it obscure? The paper focuses on the historical emergence and transformation of "Arab youth" in the new millennium marked by the war on terror and opening up of the market in the Middle East in the hope that this historical account might shed light on the current label of Arab Revolutions as Youth ones.

Introduction

The past decade has witnessed a "youth turn" in the Arab world. Youth ministries have been formed and national youth strategies produced; there has been a surge in NGOs tailored to youth, and curriculum changes dedicated to making youth "employable;" youth parliaments have been formed in many Arab countries to increase political "participation" among youth. In Egypt, for example, 60% of youth NGOs were created between 2003 and 2006. Many reports about the state of Arab youth have been released. The Arab League dedicated its 2005 and 2006 reports to the subject of Arab youth. Newspapers have dedicated weekly pages to Arab youth. The Arab Network of NGOs dedicated its 2007 annual report to analyzing Arab youth and civil society. Policy-making centers dedicate sections to youth – such as the Issam Fares at the American University of Beirut and the Dubai School of Government.

Prior to this surge of interest in youth in the Middle East itself, a parallel surge of studies and policy-making documents tailored to Arab youth were released in the US, immediately after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Initiatives were taken to tackle the issue of Arab youth by the *Muslim Youth Initiative* at the Rand Corporation[1], the *Middle East Youth Initiative* at the Brookings Institute (which partners with Issam Fares and the Dubai School of Government program)[2], as

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[1] http://www.rand.org/international_programs/cmepp/imey.html

[2] http://www.shababinclusion.org/

well as the US State Department's *YES Program*. NGOs tailored to serving youth in the Arab World were also formed in the US during the period, such as the Education for Employment Foundation. International organizations such as the UN soon followed suit: the *UN Millennium Goals: Arab Youth Lens* was designed[3], and the ILO also released a special report on Arab Youth. Besides these special documents on Arab youth, documents that were meant to reform the Arab World overall – such as the *Arab Human Development Report* – also included special focus on the "youth question."

Why is this turn to youth happening now? How are youth presented in these documents and organizations? Is there one single class of youth? What is the rhetorical, social and political function of youth in this discourse? According to most academic and policy documents on the subject, this newfound sense of priority stems logically and immediately from a concern with the conditions of youth in contemporary Arab society. From these documents, whether in the Arab World or in the West, one can highlight three central reasons behind the recent turn to youth: (1) a demographic "bulge" that has made the current generation of youth in the Arab world the largest in history, with youth comprising 60-70% of the population in most Arab countries; (2) an increased demand for higher level skills, which are usually acquired during youth, as Arab countries move from manufacturing, resource and agricultural to "knowledge" based economies; (3) a growing threat to international peace and security by this large mass of youth, unable to find employment due to their lack of higher-order skills, and easy prey for recruiters from Islamic fundamentalist groups.

But these reasons provide at best only part of the story. The new turn to youth, though ostensibly drawn by a commitment to protecting the rights and interests of youth, receives its deeper motivation from a commitment to serving a coalition of dominant political and economic interests in the region made up of the US state, multinational corporations, as well as local Arab elites. In this paper, I focus on the particular case of youth programming in Jordan to illustrate how the contemporary Arab youth turn works to promote a neoliberal model of economic and political reform in the region, that distracts attention from structural injustices and inequalities, places responsibility for resolving regional insecurities onto individual youths themselves, and primarily benefits the interests of wealthy and powerful Arab, Western and American political and economic elites. This youth turn, moreover is based upon and, in turn, promotes, an Orientalist, cultural deficit model of Arab culture.

For the last decade, when talk of the Arab world is invoked in the west, the focus has always been on military invasions and occupations – from Iraq to Somalia, and from Palestine to Sudan. In the past year, however, the focus has shifted on popular uprisings, in what has been dubbed in the west as the Arab spring. What I want to focus on here is another crucial element for understanding the region that has received less attention but is vital to understand the connection of both the military interventions as well as the Arab spring. On the one hand,

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[3] http://www.arab-hdr.org/publications/other/undp/mdgr/regional/mdg-arab-07e.pdf

the US-led project of reasserting its power and interest in the region, and military, though obviously overwhelming, was only one leg of this policy. While the jet fighters were still bombing Iraq, Bremmer was writing his laws that looked like a neoliberal dream, and most Arab states were continuing their neoliberal economic and political reforms. While, the military effort may have had resistance and mixed success in constricted areas in the region, arguably, this political and economic agenda has had more far reaching impact in the region and is essential to recognize. On the other hand, despite inspiring efforts and real possibilities for change as a result of latest uprisings, it is still early to know the outcome exactly, since there is already evidence of incorporation or counter-revolution that these same Arab Elites and their global counterpart are playing a major role in. Hence, to understand these, one needs to understand the role of this decade-long project of political and economic reform and the incorporation of regional and global economic and political elites, as a result, in one neoliberal project.

Positivist vs. social constructivist models for thinking about youth

Conventional, mainstream and positivist models for thinking about social identities such as youth considers these identities to be natural, objective and concrete entities out there in the real world, independent of discourse, rhetoric or perception (Ariès 1965, Gillis 1974). If there is an increase in talk about Arab youth in the current period, then this is simply the automatic effects of an increase, for example, in the numbers of youth in Arab populations today. However, the sociological and historical study of youth in the West has shown that this way of thinking about youth is inadequate: for youth, like all social identities, is always and inescapably socially and culturally constructed (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998).

The salience of youth as a social category emerges, in part, as an effect of social, cultural and economic shifts. In the West, for example, youth emerged with the rise of industrial capitalism, the emergence of large corporations and the creation of the modern bureaucratic nation-state, that together led to an increased demand for clerical, managerial and engineering labor, the spread of formal systems of schooling and extended durations of education that we today associate most closely with youth identity. Changes in family structure and home life in response to the introduction of industrial wage labor – the separation of work and home, parental daytime absence, shifting responsibility for socialization of the young and decreasing family size, for example – created a new sense of well-defined gaps between generations, a distinct separation of childhood from adulthood, and youth as an extended period of transition between these now separated spheres of life, age and activity. The development of state, school and corporate apparatuses for the centralized social control and reproduction of large-scale populations led to the spread of standardized, rationalized and finely age-grade distinctions in law, classification and institutional regulation that made chronological age socially, politically and

economically relevant in a way it simply had not been previously (Sukarieh and Tannock 2008; 2009).

But youth as a social category is never simply a side effect of political and economic development: it plays a far more integral role at the core of such development, and is regularly, explicitly and deliberately invoked and shaped by elites in the service of their political and economic agendas and interests. In the economic sphere, youth has historically been invoked by corporate enterprises and capitalist entrepreneurs as a way to secure cheap and compliant sources of labor to produce commodities, and as a way to construct markets to purchase commodities. From the rise of the industrial textile industry in early nineteenth century America, to the spread of fast-food and retail franchise chain outlets in the 1950s, to the creation of enterprise export zones for textile and electronic manufacturing across the global South since the 1970s, the construction of the "youth worker" has been a pivotal labor recruitment strategy. Likewise, the concept of the "teenager" was essentially invented as marketing demographic in America in the post-war period, identifying a new market niche for which goods and services could be produced, targeted and sold (Foner 1977, Dublin 1979, Klein 1999).

In the political sphere, youth has long been invoked as a threat and problem to be solved, on the one hand, and as the promise and vision of a better future to be embraced, on the other. To use the example of the spread of industrial capitalism in the West again, capitalist development caused massive social and geographical dislocations, leading to the growth of large populations of unemployed, unsupervised youth, often in urban settings, who were attached to identities and ways of life that were oppositional, alternative or exterior to corporate-led capitalism. Invoking scientific discourses of "juvenile delinquency," based on standardized and universalized notions of proper stages of youth development, teams of psychologists, educators and social workers in the early twentieth century took what were actually conflicts across the divisional lines of class, race and competing social and economic systems, and reframed these as individualized problems in normative adolescent development, to be corrected through the application of expert knowledge and intervention (Willis 1981, Griffin 1993, Sukarieh and Tannock 2008).

On the flipside, youth has long been deployed by political parties and elites, whether on the left or the right of the political spectrum, as a way to promote and turn into reality their own ideological visions for the future of society. They do this practically by creating youth wings in their political parties, and seeking to use schools, the media and other educational sites to train future generations in their preferred ways of viewing the world. They also do this symbolically by linking their parties, platforms and politics with images and rhetoric's of youth – and thus, of the new, the future and the modern. Thus, whenever and wherever we see an explosion of talk about youth, whether in the Arab World or anywhere else, it is never sufficient to simply say that this is because, there is a growing number of young people in society. Rather, we need always to ask who is talking about youth, in what contexts, and toward what larger economic and

political ends. Only then will we be able to understand the significance of the emergent youth turn in the Arab World today.

Youth in the contemporary Arab world

> The large youth population in the Arab World presents both challenges and opportunities for Arab countries...and can be either a demographic gift or a demographic curse, depending on whether countries can use the human potential represented by their populations well enough to satisfy people's aspirations for a fulfilling life. For example, a large, rapidly growing population can be an engine of material development and human welfare when other factors conducive to economic growth—such as high levels of investment and appropriate types of technological know-how—are present. Absent such factors, however, it can be a force for immiseration as more and more people pursue limited resources and jobs.

> - Arab Human Development Report[4]

When we examine the contexts, and agendas of the current youth turn in the Arab World, we find that youth discourse is made up of a tightly knit set of claims: (1) There is a demographic bulge of unemployed and underemployed youth in the Arab World; (2) This marginalized and excluded youth population poses a threat to regional and global security, and is a fertile breeding ground for fundamentalism and terrorism; (3) To help Arab youth and fight terrorism, there is an urgent need to develop and integrate Arab economies with western economies, specifically through promoting a neoliberal model of market liberalization. This discourse is found throughout most recent American and international reports on Arab youth. Graham Fuller, author of the Brookings Institute's *The Youth Factor* and former Vice-Chairman of the CIA National Intelligence Council at CIA, warns, for example:

> The existence of a relatively large youth cohort within the population of Middle Eastern societies serves to exacerbate nearly all dimensions of its political, social and economic problems. It is youth that often translates broader social problems into an explosive and radicalizing mixture.... The great question for most Middle Eastern societies is who will be able to politically mobilize this youth cohort most successfully: the state, or other political forces, primarily Islamist? The attitudes that this youthful cohort will have toward the West is a particular concern, given an already serious deterioration of views of the U.S. Barring dramatic change in the U.S. approach to the Middle East, continuation of present trends will almost surely lead to new generations becoming socialized into an attitude of hostility to the U.S. and its policies. This increasingly youthful population may be destined to translate such feelings into political expression and even violent action.

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[4]   UNDP. (2002). Arab Human Development Report. New York: UNDP

Indicators are that the U.S. probably will not succeed in the foreseeable future in capturing the imagination of most youth sufficiently to overcome anti-U.S. feeling at the political level or for offering the West as a plausible and attainable alternative model as a path for future development. Attitudes for resentment will also grow toward most regimes in the area. This creates an incredibly destabilizing mix, which could articulate itself in greater levels of terrorism, violence, and underlying instability, enduring over a period of generations (Fuller, 2006, pp.2-4).

But this frame for talking about youth in the contemporary Arab world is echoed by local Arab elites as well. The speeches of Queen Rania of Jordan are typical:

I meet with you, today, as I, together with the people of Jordan, recover from the criminal acts that struck our beloved country on November 9, 2005. These vicious acts have reaffirmed that we can stand up against this evil ideology, and have reinforced, without doubt, that we are witnessing a clear battle between two conflicting ideologies. One that is based upon the principle of life and hope, and another that is rooted in murder and chaos. We believe that the future is what counts, while they live in the past and seek to destroy that future. This future, represented by a fourth sector in society, is the target of today's ideological struggle. We have become accustomed to dealing with three classical sectors: The public, private and civil society sectors. We have overlooked the fact that a fourth sector is the true representative of our future, one that comprises more than 200 million Arab citizens, citizens whose voices have not been heard through the three-sector equation.[5]

Likewise, much the same rhetoric is espoused by the local elites represented in groups such as the Young Arab Leaders. Saeed Al Muntafiq, the head of the Young Arab Leaders, reflects in a personal interview, for example:

Well, we were in the World Economic Forum after September 11; a group of people met in New York and debated the main causes of the tragedy. Through the discussion, one of the main issues we all focused on is to how to prevent another 9/11 from taking place again.... We agreed that this could only happen if we manage youth, who have the future in their hands and who can effect positive change. Youth are the future, the saviors, if we do not catch them early on in life, I do not think we will have anything to look forward to. We need to create a culture of hope among them.[6]

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[5]
www.queenrania.jo/content/modulePopup.aspx?secID=&itemID=1035&ModuleID=press&ModuleOrigID=news - 22k Accessed January, 29,2009.

[6]   Personal Interview, November 20, 2007. Dead Sea, Jordan.

These claims about the current state and significance of youth in the Arab World are repeated so frequently that they become naturalized and universalized, and come to seem self-evident and obviously true. But there is nothing natural, universal or inevitable about any of the claims or assumptions made in this youth discourse. Rather, they perform a series of ideological and political moves that work to shut down debate, critique and questioning.

First, this youth discourse asserts that helping youth in the Arab World is the same as fighting terrorism, and is the same as promoting neoliberal economic reforms: these are all one and the same thing; they fit naturally together. Second, the youth discourse proposes that there is a natural affinity between the interests of US and local political elites to preserve their bases and structures of power, the interests of multinational and local business elites to grow their markets and profits, and the interests of Arab youth in healthy and fulfilling development. Third, the youth discourse suggests that fighting terrorism and promoting neoliberalism can be said to be done not for western, American or local elites, as we might expect, but for the benefit, first and foremost, of one the region's most marginalized population groups: that is, poor and working class, unemployed and underemployed Arab youth.

Quite obviously, it can be politically useful for US, international and local elites if their agendas can be framed as serving not themselves but poor, working and middle class youth in the Arab region. But the youth frame accomplishes more than this. It silences a whole set of questions and critiques: Are Arab youth really a threat to local and global security? What exactly is meant by "terrorism" and "fundamentalism"? Does the promotion of the US war on terror and the neoliberal economy actually help the mass of Arab youth – or does it cause them harm? Is it really the case that there is such a close affinity of interests between Arab youth, local and US elites – or is there actually a conflict of interests that needs to be addressed? According to the youth discourse, we need not worry about any such questions of ideology, political economy, or relations of power within or between nations. Indeed, specifics of local history, culture, social relations and political conflicts are essentially absent from these youth documents, or at best, visible only in the margins and background. Instead, all of these issues in the Arab world can be tied to a single, universal, unilinear and standardized model of healthy youth development in society. This universalizing and depoliticizing youth frame takes what are actually conflicts of ideology, class, nation, region and so forth, and re-positions them as a matter of healthy versus delinquent or stunted youth development. Thus, the specific social, political and economic agendas now being promoted in the Arab region are framed not as simply one choice among many other possible alternatives: they are presented instead as necessary and inevitable because they are, first, in terms of social generations, modern rather than backward, and second, in terms of individual age, demanded by the development needs of the local youth population.

1. Identifying youth: young global arabs vs. local Arab youth

Although the rhetoric used by Arab elites and international organizations speaks of targeting "youth" in the Arab world, in reality there is not a single class of youth that is being worked with. The discourse of youth serves to posit a false universality and cross-class unity that does not exist in the Arab World. Indeed, youth programming tends in practice to be oriented to one of two distinct classes of youth: the "Young Global Arabs," on the one hand, and "Arab youth," on the other hand. While both groups are talked about in terms of youth, the kinds of programming directed to each are radically different.

The Young Global Arabs class is comprised of the young members of local and global elites, who share the same perceptions and agendas as the Arab governments, international organizations and the United States. These individuals have mostly been educated in the West: 93.2% of them were educated in the UK or US, 3.4% in Jordan, and 3.4% in American universities in the Middle East, namely AUC and AUB. They choose to speak English as their language of preference, and are leaders of the private sector who have reaped the benefits of privatization and the free market economy. They own businesses and work as heads of NGOs.

The Young Global Arab position themselves are forward-looking reformers, who work in alliance with international and western groups to manage and reshape the broader class of local "Arab youth," a group that is represented in starkly contrasting terms, as being backward, lazy, unskilled, unmannered, undisciplined, narrow-minded and susceptible to fundamentalism and terrorism. The Young Global Arabs in effect become "domestic Orientalists," promoting a stereotyped vision of Arab culture, as incarnated by the local youth population. The problems of youth are the problems of Arab culture. The youth do not have entrepreneurship skills because we lack it in Arab culture. The youth do not value work because we have a culture of shame in the Arab world. The youth are terrorists because we lack a culture of hope in the Arab world. The youth are terrorists because the Arab mind is extremist. The youth are suicide bombers because the Arab culture is a culture of death. The youth are intolerant and do not accept others, because the Arab culture is fundamentalist. For the Young Global Arabs, the local youth/culture needs to be managed, for otherwise terrorism will take over the region. For this reason, they join hands with the "orientalists" of the West – in the American administration and other international organizations, such as the WEF, World Bank, and UN – to "manage" this local youth/culture that breeds terrorism. The young elites talk constantly about the "youth", an abstraction that allows them to easily label them since they are speaking of an idea, youth, and not specific individuals.

Hence, the rhetoric of youth is not exempt from all the hierarchies embedded in Jordanian society. The notion of "youth" differs when used in reference to the young King, Queen and elites as opposed to referring to Jordanian youth in the rest of the population. The notion differs between the young, who are agents, and youth, who are their subjects. If youth is about change, there are the young – the King, Queen and elites – who design and implement programs of change,

in close coordination with US and international organizations, and then there are the youth, on whom these programs are implemented, and on whom change should be affected.

For not only do the reformers ally themselves with global elites, they also refer to the reformed as the local youth. Being affiliated with all sorts of global youth organizations, such as the Young Global Leaders, the Young Presidents Organization, the Young Arab Leaders, the Young Business Association, the World Economic Forum and its baby, the Arab Business Council, and having themselves started new organizations in Jordan, such as the Young Entrepreneurs Association and the Young Economists Society, these young reformers identify themselves as global and refer to the youth who are to be reformed as local. Many were the times when my young reformer interviewees referred to Jordanian youth as the local youth.

These "Arab" Young Global Elites have adopted the same view as the American administration about youth and have joined hands with other global elites to fight terrorism. Perceptions of youth among these young elites can be divided into two categories: the first pertain to the problems of youth, and the second to the solutions to this problem. Since fighting terrorism is done through integrating the non-integrating gap through the opening up of a market economy, perceptions of both the problems of and solutions for youth are projected in economic terms. Youth lack the skills to work in the global economy, they are lazy, they expect the government to help them, they are intolerant of others, and they are irresponsible, they do not like to take risks and be entrepreneurs, they do not know how to work in teams, and they are politicized and prone to fundamentalist recruitment. Youth thus need to be managed, protected from the fundamentalists; they need to learn to be entrepreneurs, to take responsibility for their lives, to accept the virtues of work, and to learn tolerance.

So what makes these elites perceive their culture the same way the orientalists do? Who are these elites? How do their interests converge with that of American imperialism? And what are their interventions? The split between Young Arab Elites and Jordanian youth tends to be represented by elites and international actors in Jordan as the division between the new society and the old society in the country. The new elites are always referred to as the new guards, who are for change, flexibility, openness and globalism. They are at war with the old guards, who are resistant to change, and who are against the reform projects just for the mere reason of being against change. As one of the new Arab Global leaders explained to me, "As products of the old guard, Jordanian youth, who have not had the chance like the young Arabs to study abroad and broaden their horizons, incarnate these values they inherited from the old guard and hence the need to work on them." The whole political and economic struggle against the Hashemite reform project has been reduced to a cultural problem that can be resolved through a cultural intervention, led by USAID, without any need to reconsider what has the reform projects have inflicted upon Arab society.

The young new guards are mainly private sector actors, who are becoming increasingly important in Arab economy since the withdrawal of the state through privatization and structural adjustment programs. The emergence of such elites is not the outcome of competitive economic and entrepreneurial criteria, such as having leadership skills and creative ideas. Rather, these elites have been able to gain advantage by supporting the Palace, manipulating reform policies, and exploiting a system of personal networks to benefit from the new economic arrangements produced during the reform process. They are fluent speakers of English, which they embrace as if it were their native language. They are well educated and highly connected with global corporations and institutions such as the World Economic Forum.

This new generation has also benefited from their parents' generation's traditional economic bazaar-style networks, on top of which the new generation has created an international and modern network. Though the new Global Arab Elites present themselves as the new guards who are fighting against the old guard and all what it represents (i.e., nepotism, corruption and patronage), they continue the same practices of the old guards (who happen to be their parents), but now as part of the neoliberal as opposed to the welfare state. Their self-appointment as young agents of reform of Arab youth and society was only made possible by their inherited positions of privilege in the party system. Moreover, the patronage system inherent in the welfare state that they now condemn is replaced by a new patronage system based in the private sector. In fact, the private sector in most of the Arab world is dominated by relations of dependence on the government or on family, all cemented together by patronage-clientele networks implicit in the Wasta system. The reforms initiated in Jordan have been implemented within a system of rent-seeking and have preserved a network of state-business relations. The beneficiaries from such arrangements have been not only politicians, tribal leaders, and the traditional economic elites, but also a new generation of entrepreneurs, many of them the sons and daughters of the old political and economic elites.

Thus, although they position themselves as reformers and people who will fight against corruption, nepotism and connection to build the model society the US is calling for, stories of reform suggest the exact opposite to this is happening. Corruption and nepotism are fought when it comes to using public resources to get the public jobs, but not when it comes to getting public project contracts for elites. The Arab World has seen the emergence of a young entrepreneurial oligarchy, some of whom are more influential in determining political and economic policies than the prime minister or his government. The main player in this group is Bassem Awadallah, director of the King's Office and former finance and planning minister. Another major player is Sharif Zu'bi, who was once minister of industry and is now minister of justice. A law firm his family owns handled several mega-deals in Jordan before he took office, including the privatization of the telecom and mining sectors and other infrastructure deals that have influenced economic policy. The corruption of the old guard that stemmed from abusing Jordanians through promising them jobs in the public sector is replaced now by the new entrepreneurial oligarchy's use of their

political leverage to avoid implementing reform projects that harm their interests.

2. Disciplining youth: creating the compliant, neoliberal subject

Although official youth rhetoric speaks grandly of preparing young Arabs to work in a high skill, global knowledge economy, many youth programs in fact are geared to promoting discipline, work ethic, time manage and culture of responsibilization – all of which are more typically thought of as basic level, "soft skills." Youth programming in the Arab world works to adapt youth to the extensive neoliberal economic reform process that has been pushed through by the most Arab governments since the late 1980s.

But in order for a neoliberal market economy to function, without facing massive political opposition and social unrest, the youth need to be trained to act and think as neoliberal, free market, enterprising subjects: not just by being provided with the requisite "skills," but behaviors, attitudes, values and ideologies as well. While national identity promotion through Campaign like Jordan first, Lebanon first and others, is the responsibility of the public sector and civil society, with help from the private sector, American and international organizations are taking on the responsibility of promoting neoliberal free market economy to Jordanian youth. What are these programs teaching? What youth are targeted by these programs? The claim is often made in the West that Jordan is the focal point and one of the best examples of international efforts towards democracy promotion, youth empowerment, and modernization in the Arab world. A closer look at what is going on, however, reveals a promotion of neoliberal free market economy under the rubrics of democracy and promotion of nationalism rather than democracy in the political sphere.

The main organizations promoting these ideologies are Injaz - the Arab affiliate of Junior Achievement. Having had royal patronage- queen Rania of Jordan, Shikha Hassa of Bahrain, sheikh Moza of Qatar and the Young Arab Leaders of the World Economic Forum- and the support of major private sector corporation, Injaz have good media coverage in most of the Arab countries. It is mainly through this media promotion that Injaz is reaching out to almost all the youth population in the Arab world, beyond the number of students who are attending its courses. Hence, parallel to the 160,000 student participants of Injaz courses and programs, there are millions more youth who are being exposed to Injaz ideology though the media coverage of the organization.

The main objective of these programs is to empower youth and provide them with skills that will make them employable in the global market economy. This is achieved through a series of courses at two levels, secondary and post-secondary. Courses offered at K to 12 school levels are: Personal Life Planning, Personal Economics, and Enterprise in Action, Success Skills, Leadership Courses, Travel and Tourism Business, Entrepreneurial Master Class, My Money Business. Courses provided at the university level are: Fundamentals of Market Economy, Success Skills, Business Ethics, Leadership Course, Company

Course, Entrepreneurial Master Class, and Easy Learning. Through these courses, youth learn about the benefits of the free market economy, the importance of entrepreneurialism, and the primacy of business interests.[7]

The goal of these courses is to promote a sense of individual responsibility for economic well being in Jordan. What determines whether a young person makes it in the system or not is whether an individual has a good work ethic, is disciplined, has a sense of leadership and entrepreneurial skills. This promotes the myth that the free market economy is open to everybody: it is just a matter of skills you learn in order to succeed. It also obscures the structural injustices inherent in the system and the withdrawal of the government from providing for the public welfare. If this is true at an individual level, it is also true at a state level. Youth are taught that the US is the leader of the global economy, not because it is exploiting other nation's resources but because young people there have a set of skills that make them competitive, and this is due to the successful education system in the US that is designed to this end.

In this way, these programs work not only to pull youth into the global market economy but also to address the problems of economic instability that have been caused by the economic reform process in Jordan. Aware of the insecurities that the economic reforms for extending the free market economy will reproduce for Jordanian society, and bearing in mind the riots that erupted in the two phases of reforms during the reign of King Hussein in 1989 and 1996, USAID is implementing programs such as Najah, Injaz and the curriculum reform in order to prevent any such riots, by turning the insecurities of the system back onto individual themselves. Not only are youth made to internalize these insecurities, they are also made to believe it is their choice, turning them away from making demands on the state for protections from the shocks of the market. If in the old system, they were the workers by necessity, today they are the entrepreneurs by choice.

Injaz promotes a model of education where education is considered relevant when it is tied directly to the interests of the market and the private sector. This involves opening up the direct participation of the private sector in public education reaching UNRWA schools lately. The Injaz program itself involves corporations such as McDonalds, Safeway and Aramex in consulting on the programs, providing volunteers to teach Injaz courses, hosting internships, presenting their "success stories" to public school students, sponsoring schools (which gives them a space to advertise for their corporations), and most importantly, funding Injaz in its entirety since the conclusion of the initial grant period of USAID.

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[7]   http://www.injaz.org.jo/SubDefault.aspx?PageID=153||Node=183 Accessed on July 27, 2007

Conclusion

Are these projects tailored only to youth? Is the ideology spread through programs tailored to youth confined to them or is it spread through other projects tailored to other social categories in the Arab world? If the same sets of ideas are promoted to different categories how are to think about youth? Would it be more critical if we consider policies that are being promoted for what they are, to see whose interests are being served and what alternative could be chosen instead? And if same policies are being promoted to different categories in the Arab region in this historical moment a question poses itself: what is the function of youth now?

From research on the topic, one can infer that there are five functions of youth that seem to be clearly serving interest of elites as well as international community at the moment. First, youth fits into the ideas of change needed for the region: youth are always thought as the agents of change so this will legitimate the project of change and reform through which interests of US policies are carried out. It goes along well with the whole infatuation with change, a way of framing the project of development as a single evolutionary process; youth are unfinished adults and need to be brought into adulthood; Like the Arab world is underdeveloped and needs to be brought into global economy in order to develop, Arab youth need empowerment in order to be competitive in the global economy. Second, youth discourse promotes an orientation to the future, delays of desires and suspensions of dreams, asking people to invest in projects now on the understanding it will lead to returns in the future. To reach this future, forums are established" forum for the future, and funds are allocated, funds for the future targeting projects with youth. Third, youth provides a neutral category, a euphemism that can avoid talking about other categories like class, although targets of youth programs are designed according to class, mainly the middle class and the poor youth, and religion that can be more politically charged, and this helps the process of depoliticization, aiming at the creation of politically docile citizens/consumers. Fourth, fostering divisions among generations constitutes part of a process of atomization, which follows neo-liberal democratization through decentralization and the separation of economics from politics, helping the process of control. Fifth and finally, youth discourse legitimates intervention, training and paternalism that constitute the American project in the MENA region.

If this paper focused on specific political agendas of work with youth in the Arab World, it is important to keep in mind, however, that youth appeals to different groups not all of whom share the kinds of political agendas this paper tried to cover. This however, makes us recognize that this is precisely why youth is promoted as a frame by political and economic elites in this part of the world in such a historical conjuncture: simply due to the fact that it has broad appeal and it can become a good marketing tool for projects they need to effect in this part of the world. Researchers need to look at why it is being promoted now, by

whom and to what ends. The same applies for the promotion of the latest development in the Arab world as youth revolution.

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About the author

Mayssoun Sukarieh is a assistant professor of Anthropology at the American University in Cairo, Egypt.

Abolitionist animal rights:
critical comparisons and challenges within the animal rights movement

Corey Wrenn

Abstract

The abolitionist movement is an emergent and radical approach to nonhuman animal rights. Calling for a complete cessation in nonhuman animal use through the abolishing of property status for nonhuman animals and an adoption of veganism and nonviolence, this approach stands in stark contrast to mainstream approaches such as humane production and welfare reform. This paper describes the goals and stances of abolitionism; the basic debate between abolitionism and other nonhuman animal rights movements; and the current state, challenges, and future prospects for abolitionism. It is argued that abolitionism, as developed by Francione, is the only morally consistent approach for taking the interests of nonhuman animals seriously. Further, it is suggested that the newness of the abolitionist movement and the mainstream nonhuman animal welfare movement's dismissal of abolitionism has thus far prevented any substantial abolitionist success.

Introduction

The abolitionist nonhuman animal rights movement, a movement distinct in its explicit rejection of welfare reform and violent advocacy, established following the emergence of Gary Francione's Abolitionist Approach, an internet blog and information website (Yates 2008a, Yates 2009a). While nonhuman advocates have long called for a complete cessation of nonhuman use, the modern nonhuman movement, since its inception in the 19th century, has relied heavily on welfare reform (Beers, 2006). Thus, while the abolitionist goal is certainly not new, the tactics and repertoires utilized in the Francionian approach are distinctly so. Indeed, the abolitionist movement, comprised of grassroots and often localized individuals and small groups self-identifying according to Francione's theory, is less than a decade old.

Despite considerable productivity prior to the launch of *Abolitionist Approach*, Francione's work was largely unknown. Rather than advocating an incremental regulatory approach to reformed nonhuman animal use, Francione's abolitionist approach requires incremental cessation of use that culminates in the altogether elimination of nonhuman animal use. Though Francione had been arguing for an end to nonhuman animal use with ethical veganism as the moral baseline for

two decades, it was not until his entry into the internet community that his theory found a sizeable audience.

Francione's theory improves on that of Tom Regan's notion of inherent value. Here, Regan (1983, 2004) argues that beings that are subjects of life possess worth, regardless of their capacity for suffering. However, Regan's life-boat scenario (the thought experiment whereby a boat could only stay afloat if either a human or a nonhuman was thrown overboard) posits that regardless of inherent value, the interests of human animals can override that of nonhumans because of their greater potential for, and appreciation of, future satisfaction. Francione departs with Regan here and argues that any being that is sentient should not have their interests overridden and that both humans and nonhumans alike have an interest in continuing to live with an equal potential for future satisfaction (Francione and Garner, 2010). Regardless of Regan's problematic moral hierarchy, he does explicitly recognize the need to abolish use, rather than modify it. Thus, Regan's work stands as the foundation of abolitionist theory from which Francione and others build.

This paper will explore abolitionism as an emergent and critical concept in the nonhuman animal rights movement. The primary concepts and stances held by abolitionism will be explored followed by a comparison to the humane product trend and welfarism. Finally, a critical examination of the current state of the abolitionist movement and existing challenges will be presented. It is argued that taking our moral obligation to nonhuman animals seriously necessitates the adoption of an abolitionist vegan approach to animal rights. Furthermore, I see the humane product and welfarist movements as counterproductive in the struggle to support nonhuman animal rights. Finally, it is suggested that the relative newness of the abolitionist movement and strong countering from the mainstream nonhuman animal welfare movement has prevented abolitionism from obtaining a large presence within the nonhuman animal rights movement.

Because the literature on abolitionist nonhuman animal rights theory and the debate is relatively scant, there is a heavy reliance on the works of Gary Francione and Bob Torres. There is also a substantial use of unpublished works of influential abolitionist academics (namely Gary Francione) and those critical to the debates surrounding abolitionist theory. It is suggested that these sources provide an important insight into emerging discourse within the nonhuman animal rights movement. Furthermore, the terms "nonhuman animal" and "human animals" will be utilized in this writing as a rejection of speciesist language in recognizing the potential for language to demean, exclude, and reinforce normative values (Dunayer, 1990).

Major concepts and stances

Despite a brief allusion to the intersections between the human abolitionist movement and the nonhuman abolitionist movement in Boyd's 1987 essay *The New Abolitionists: Animal Rights and Human Liberation*, in its application to nonhuman animal rights, abolition is indeed new. However, nonhuman rights

abolitionism is based on the much older human abolitionist movement that preceded it. Francione (2010) highlights the parallel between the two movements in that the systems of human and nonhuman animal slavery both commodify sentient beings and respect their interests only insomuch as they are economically beneficial. Yet, Kim (2011) notes that while the comparison between the two systems of oppression is morally defensible, it could prove politically problematic for nonhuman animal rights activists in ignoring white normativity and thus challenging the potential for creating cross-group alliances. The nonhuman animal rights appropriation of these concepts also conflicts with other understandings of abolition. Certainly, the abolition of human slavery did not necessitate the abolition of racism and discrimination. Abolitionist work continued after the American Civil War. Of note, DuBois critiqued the failure of the reconstruction period and recognized that true abolition relies on representation and integration (Lewis, 1995). Likewise, Davis (2005) highlights continued oppression of people of color in other structural systems of inequality, the prison system in particular (2005). Neither of these applications of abolitionist thought are directly relevant to the nonhuman animal issue as yet. As such, the nonhuman animal rights understanding of abolition harkens to human abolitionist activities that specifically challenged the property status of human slaves and discriminatory ideology. Indeed, a popular human and nonhuman abolitionist website, *Quotes on Slavery* (2012), juxtaposes excerpts from the human animal and the nonhuman animal abolitionist movements with no distinction between the two.

Drawing from the human animal abolitionist experience, abolitionist nonhuman animal rights is based on the premise that nonhuman animals are functionally and legally property in human animal society (DeCoux, 2009; Francione, 2000). So long as nonhuman animals are considered property, their interests can always be overridden by human animal interests in conflict situations (Francione, 1995). There is not a push for equal rights between nonhuman animals and human animals, as nonhuman animals have different natures than human animals (Francione, 2000; Rollin, 1993), but rather a push for equal consideration based on the specific requirements of nonhuman animals based on their telos. Central to these specific requirements, it is recognized that nonhuman animals have the right not to be treated as property. Recognition of this right necessarily entails an abolition of institutionalized nonhuman animal use and exploitation which perpetuates the property status of nonhuman animals. Likewise, abolition recognizes and rejects societal speciesism. Speciesism is the prejudice against nonhuman animals that arbitrarily assigns varying values and levels of moral worth (Ryder, 2000). Dunayer (2004) elaborates on Ryder's definition adding that it is, "a failure, in attitude or practice, to accord any nonhuman being equal consideration and respect" (5). Speciesism manifests in differential treatment and discrimination based on species, notably in the human practice of exploiting nonhumans for flesh and labor. It is understood that there are no meaningful differences between nonhuman and human animals which would justify unequal consideration: "The species of a sentient being is no more reason to deny the protection of this

basic right than race, sex, age, or sexual orientation is a reason to deny membership in the human moral community to other humans" (Francione, 2009e). Thus, the abolitionist nonhuman animal rights movement calls for a rejection of the property status held by nonhuman animals, a rejection of speciesism, and a need for equal consideration.

Abolitionism, as defined by Francione, also entails a strict adherence to nonviolence. Violence entails any action that causes harm physically or emotionally: this would include bodily harm, threats and intimidation, property damage (as it has the latent effect of instilling fear and creating the potential for unintended harm) (Francione, 2007; Francione, 2010b). The definition of violence certainly fluctuates significantly in the nonhuman movement, and many reject that certain tactics, particularly property damage, can constitute violence. However, any action that causes harm and, "[...] treats others as means to ends rather than as ends in themselves" (Francione, 2007), is considered antithetical to the peaceful society Francionian abolitionists hope to create.

Ahimsa, a rule of conduct borrowed from Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, is often used to describe this notion within the Francionian abolitionist movement: "Ahimsa is the principle that we should not act violently toward others in our thoughts, speech, or action" (Francione, 2009b). A practicing Jain, Francione draws on the principle of ahimsa as the "highest religious duty" (Francione 2009a). Thus, the Francionian abolitionist plan of action dismisses violence as a useful or acceptable manner to work towards ending nonhuman animal use:

> Violence is the problem; it is not any part of the solution. Those who advocate violence against institutional users of animals fail to recognize the simple fact that these users are only responding to a demand created by others. The real exploiters are those who create the demand. Therefore, violence against institutional users makes no sense. (Francione, 2009b)

Violence, which is often negatively associated with the nonhuman animal rights movement due to the activities of the Animal Liberation Front and the subsequent animal terrorist laws (Lovitz, 2010; Potter, 2011), is seen as both detrimental and counterproductive to abolition by many abolitionists (Hall, 2006). State reaction to violent activism increases costs of all nonhuman activism, even that which is peaceful. Further, according to Francione, embracing nonviolence and adhering to ahimsa is essential to challenging the violence towards nonhuman animals which advocates seek to end. As such, ahimsa and veganism are "inseparable and presuppose each other" as "All animal products—including dairy and wool—involve inflicting suffering and death on mobile, five-sensed-beings" (Francione, 2009a: 9). Other nonhuman animal rights theorists have eluded to the religious basis for respecting the rights of nonhumans as well (Linzey, 2009; Page, 1999; Schwartz, 2001). However, there are an increasing number of atheistic abolitionist activists who

recognize the parallel between nonhuman animal rights and moral rationalism and reject the spiritual element entirely (Johnson, 2012a). Indeed, many abolitionists adopt the notion of nonviolence without any reference to the principle of ahimsa.

A rejection of violence, however, remains a commonality among abolitionists. It is a continuation of nonviolent collective action drawn from the human abolition movement as well as contemporary social movements. Nonviolent resistance is thought to impose less risk and thus increases movement participation. Abolitionist activists believe that it increases participation, which in turn, increases resources and movement power (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). What's more, the adherence to nonviolence is believed to increase credibility and is thought to be congruent with the nonviolent society abolitionists hope to create (Hall 2006).

Subsequently, abolitionism adopts veganism as a necessary baseline. Veganism both challenges the property status of nonhuman animals and is consistent with nonviolence (Francione, 2009b):

> As a direct protest against the commodity form and property relations that animals are subject to, it is a great refusal of the system itself, a no-compromise position that does not seek reform, but which seeks abolition. For anyone who wants to end animal exploitation, living as a vegan is living the end that we wish to see—no one will exploit animals for mere choices of taste and convenience (Torres, 2007, p. 131)

Abolitionism requires a complete rejection of nonhuman animal consumption and production both directly (as food or fashion) and indirectly (as entertainment, research subjects, or companion and "pet" animals). It is understood that it is logically inconsistent to strive for an end to nonhuman animal use while continuing to consume them. Recognizing that there are no defensible grounds for excluding nonhuman animals from moral concern (Rollin, 2006), human animals must extend equal consideration to nonhuman animals (Francione, 2000). The principle of equal consideration means taking nonhuman animal interests seriously. It recognizes that nonhuman animals, like human animals, have morally significant interests in not suffering and in not being used as resources (Francione, 2000). It follows, then, that respecting a moral obligation to nonhuman animals as objects of moral concern with interest in not suffering could not reasonably include consumption: "Veganism is the only way forward that does not trade off the interests of animals today in the vast hope of some bright future right down the road" (Torres, 2007, p. 136). The assumption here is that consumption necessarily entails harm. The use of nonhuman animals as resources, fatally or not, constitutes harm to the nonhuman animal whose interest lies in not experiencing use or suffering. Adherents to the abolitionist movement are expected to both adopt veganism and promote the growth of veganism necessary for effectiveness through education (Francione, 2009b).

Critical comparisons with humane products and welfarism

The trend towards humane products and welfare reform are dominant approaches within the nonhuman animal rights movement. Abolitionists believe that neither of these approaches fully address the necessity of abolishing entirely the use of nonhuman animals. Rather, they focus on modifying use (Francione 1996). The argument could be made that the humane product trend and welfare reform are at times one and the same. However, a distinction can be based on the economic focus of humane products as opposed to the welfarist movement's addressing of a wide array of nonhuman animal issues beyond food. Importantly, the humane product trend is comprised of nonhuman animal exploiters while the welfare movement is largely comprised of nonhuman animal advocates. The argument for these approaches will be explained, followed by an abolitionist critique that will be argued that both the humane products and welfare reform movements seriously fail to satisfy our moral obligations to nonhuman animals.

The Humane Products Trend

The humane product trend, representing the recent growth in humane product availability and discourse, is an approach to nonhuman animal use that does not challenge the property status of nonhuman animals, but does address the ways in which those animals are treated (Nirenberg, 2005; Singer and Mason, 2006). Largely commercially driven, this approach recognizes a consumer concern with the humaneness of the nonhuman animal products and attempts to improve the welfare for the nonhuman animals involved. Labeling is used to highlight process and quality (Barham 2002). Labels such as "free-range," "grass-fed," "organic," "humanely-raised," "cage-free," and so forth all contend with consumer concerns with the treatment of nonhuman animals. The humane product trend purports to respect the telos of nonhuman animals, adhering to what "nature intended" (American Grassfed Association, 2009) and farming in "harmony with nature" working with "animals' natural behaviors" (Organic Valley, 2009). They are also less likely to see death as a harm, as the actual killing of nonhuman animals is not considered in defining humaneness of production. If use of the nonhuman animals can be understood as in accordance with the telos of those nonhumans and the nonhuman animals are not harmed by death, the humane products approach is not likely to see any contradiction in the human moral obligation to nonhuman animals.

The humane product approach exists in opposition to abolitionism because it is not concerned with the possibility that human animal society will ever be willing to abolish nonhuman animal flesh and excretions from the diet. Here, there is recognition of continued demand for these products coupled with a growing conscious consumption (Whole Foods Market, 2009). The humane trend is, at its heart, an economic enterprise which intends to profit from nonhuman animals. Tellingly, grocery stores such as Whole Foods are adopting labeling

schemes to promote nonhuman animal products of higher welfare practices as beneficial to their business (Whole Foods Market, 2009).

Unfortunately, it appears that this approach is not improving welfare for nonhuman animals as consistent with popular belief. Values-based labeling can often be misleading (Abrams, Meyers, and Irani, 2010; Merchant, 2008). Investigations initiated by mainstream nonhuman animal welfare organizations are uncovering evidence that humane products vary dramatically in levels of suffering imposed on nonhuman animals and are often substantively minimal in improvements (Farm Sanctuary, 2009). Regardless of any improvements, nonhuman animals raised for flesh will unavoidably lose their lives. Additionally, direct death or indirect death following over-expenditure in egg, dairy, etc. production is inevitable. Furthermore, the move to humane products continues to support institutional exploiters with no goal of ever abolishing the exploitation. This is problematic if we wish to enact equal consideration: "The moment we use another being instrumentally, we have denied that being its right to exist on its own terms [...]" (Torres, 2007, p. 27). Here, the use of nonhuman animals is not a relevant issue. Instead, supposedly more humane use becomes commodified. Consumers can pay extra for peace of mind and nonhuman animal agriculture, as a business, is happy to oblige: "Though some producers will be slow to come along, the industry operates on thin enough margins that it will recognize a market opportunity when it sees it, and happily provide alternatives for people of conscience, provided it can reasonably profit from those alternatives" (Torres, 2007, p. 100). The industry of humane products, then, fails to challenge nonhuman animal use, and instead exploits public concern with nonhuman animal suffering and death. There is no expectation that use will decrease or cease. Certainly, as those involved with this movement profit from nonhuman animal use and have no desire to see it end, not much in the way of abolition is to be expected here. It remains problematic, however, in that much of the public and many major nonhuman animal rights organizations believe that this movement towards higher welfare could lead to abolition (Francione, 1996).

Another concern with this approach is the inherent contradiction created by managing values-based labeling of products within a capitalist framework (Johnston, 2008). The genuineness of the producers' commitment to nonhuman animal welfare will necessarily come into question when profits are involved. Likewise, as the niche market for more responsible products increases, adherence to the initial moral vision will necessarily be challenged (Raynolds, Murray, and Wilkinson, 2007). Furthermore, the use of the term "humane" is questionable. It is difficult to argue that exploitation and death could ever be defined as humane. Based on this misleading terminology and minimal improvements in rearing nonhuman animals, it is probable that consumers would be left with a confused understanding of the reality behind the products. Likewise, it can be questioned as to what psychological impact the humane products trend is having on a public concerned with the use of nonhuman animals. Humane labels must certainly assure consumers that the interests of nonhuman animals are being adequately addressed and create a

social comfort with nonhuman animal use (Francione, 2008; Francione and Garner, 2010). With labeling and governmental reform, consumers can unquestioningly assume necessary changes have been made (Raynolds, 2009). This can create complacency with concern over moral obligation and even increase consumption: "Such promotion [of humane nonhuman animal products] may actually increase consumption by people who had stopped eating animal products because of concerns about treatment and will certainly provide as a general matter an incentive for continued consumption of animal products" (Francione, 2008, p. 16). Ultimately, the reality of humane products remains contrary to the perpetuated popular myth.

Equally unsettling, the humane product approach and the welfarist movement often overlap. Several welfarist organizations work directly with the labeling of humane products. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), for example, are partners of Humane Farm Animal Care, an organization which certifies humane treatment (Humane Farm Animal Care, 2009). Compassion Over Killing operates a long-standing campaign for the reformation of Animal Care Certified labeling (Compassion Over Killing, 2009). This partnership proves contradictory and problematic and will be discussed below.

The Welfarist Movement

Welfarism will be treated as a distinct movement from the humane products trend as it does, for the most part, seriously consider our moral obligations to nonhuman animals and is more expansive in its involvement with nonhuman animal use. Furthermore, the humane product trend is generally run by institutional exploitative producers, whereas welfarism is generally not-for-profit. Welfarism is the dominant ideology within the animal rights movement and is distinguished from abolition in its strategy of regulation and reform (Francione, 1996): "[...] the ethic which has emerged in mainstream society does not say we should not use animals or animal products. It does say that the animals we use should live happy lives where they can meet the fundamental set of needs dictated by their natures and where they do not suffer at our hands" (Rollin, 1993, p. 11). That is, welfarism focuses on suffering, not use (DeCoux, 2009).

Welfarism may or may not expect an eventual end in nonhuman animal use based on ideological differences. Francione (1996) distinguishes between traditional welfarism and new welfarism. Traditional welfarism adopts instrumentalism and is concerned with humane treatment and prevention of unnecessary suffering. There is no long term goal of reduction in use: "[...] animal welfare is seen as important enough, so long as it does not interfere too much with farming and economic concerns" (Sankoff, 2005). New welfarism differs in that it recognizes a goal of abolition, but utilizes welfarist tactics in an effort to achieve that goal (Garner, 2006). Abolitionist tactics are assumed to be ineffective in the immediate future (Garner, 2006). In the meantime, the short-

term tactic of welfare reform is adopted (Francione, 1996): "[...] it represents a realistic appraisal of what can be achieved now and in the short term, given the present vulnerable and arrogant state of the human condition" (Garner, 2006). Therefore, while those in the new welfarist movement espouse an abolitionist end, welfarist reform is assumed to be efficacious (Garner, 2002) and morally acceptable as a means to achieve that end (Francione, 1996).

Welfarists criticize abolitionism on two major points: we must work to reduce suffering in the here and now (Garner, 2006) and total abolition of nonhuman animal use is an unachievable goal (Rollin, 2006). Those arguing that total abolitionism will never be attained maintain that resources spent towards an unrealistic goal of abolition are wasted (Francione and Marcus, 2007). That is, if abolitionism is wasting resources, the suffering of presently exploited nonhuman animals remains unaddressed. Alternatively, it is sometimes suggested that the uncontrolled suffering of nonhuman animals is somehow beneficial to the abolitionist cause (Ball, ~2009; Francione and Garner, 2010). Here, it is presumed that abolitionists advocate extreme suffering under the assumption that the public will become so disgusted that an eventual backlash will develop in favor of abolition.

Importantly, these critiques do not give much weight to veganism as direct and immediate action. Abolitionism, which endorses veganism as a necessary baseline, can be argued as reducing suffering in the here and now by reducing consumer demand through a consistent promotion of and adherence to veganism:

> [...] Abolitionists identify the promotion of veganism as the one essential tool for bringing an end to the exploitation of animals. Instead of pursuing legislation or litigation intended to reduce the suffering of animals, Abolitionists educate people about veganism in order to make veganism more prevalent and thereby eventually eliminate the exploitation of animals. (DeCoux, 2009, p.14)

Furthermore, according to abolitionists, welfarism itself is not reducing suffering in any significant way (DeCoux, 2009). While the modification of confinement, for example, might make life for nonhuman animals slightly less sufferable, the suffering reduced is generally trivial in relation to the immense anguish and eventual death that remains unaddressed by reform. Furthermore, regulation of nonhuman animal use might have the psychological effect of making human animal consumers more comfortable with the exploitation (DeCoux, 2009; Francione, 2008a; Francione and Garner, 2010). Thereby, the actual use of the nonhuman animal is not addressed and use will invariably continue: "[...] we cannot hope to produce a world that is free of animal suffering and exploitation by promoting gentler forms of suffering" (Torres, 2007, p. 135). Lastly, it has been the case that most regulation has been imposed only when economically beneficial to the institutional exploiters (Francione, 1996).

Francione points to the Humane Slaughter Act and the campaign to adopt controlled atmosphere killing of chickens as to key examples of the marriage of nonhuman animal welfare reform and increased profitability and efficiency of exploitative institutions (Francione, 1996; Francione 2008b). The passage of the Humane Slaughter Act of 1958 (amended in 1978) proceeded with the support of producers, as it improved efficiency by reducing carcass damage and worker injury (Francione 1996, U.S. Congress 1978b, U.S. Congress 1978c). The vice president of the American Meat Institute reported that his organization was urging the approval of this legislation: "The experience of our members has been that humane slaughter methods are efficient methods. They result in improved productivity [...]" (U.S. Congress, 1978, p. 6). Likewise, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and HSUS have promoted the controlled atmosphere killing of chickens as profitable to producers through increased production capacity, affordability of gases, improved working conditions, improved food quality, shelf-life, safety, and reduced carcass damage and labor costs (Francione, 2008b; HSUS, ~2008; HSUS, 2009; PETA, 2007). The push to end castration, too, is marketed as a profitable move for ranchers. It is argued that failing to castrate will result in faster growth, shaving approximately three months from the raising process at an increased profit to ranchers (Rollin, 2009). How could the increased efficiency of exploitative institutions be much good to the nonhuman animals whose continued suffering remains unchallenged? Here then, the concern of welfarists with our moral obligation to nonhuman animals becomes enmeshed with the desires of profit-driven institutional exploiters:

> While we may be able to make that commodification "nicer" through "compassionate" or "happy" meat, or measures like eliminating gestation crates, commodification will never simply fade away on its own, as it is the foundational logic of the system itself. Provided it can continue to commodify animals as property, the system will adapt, even to the most stringent regulations. What's more, if those regulations become too onerous domestically, it seems likely that the industry will simply increase the already substantial offshore production taking place to skirt around these domestic regulations. For these reasons, our activism must fight the system at its roots, targeting property and the imposition of the commodity form on animals, rather than hoping that an ethically bankrupt system will do the impossible task of reforming itself given demands to do so. (Torres, 2007, p. 104)

The insistence of mainstream nonhuman animal organizations to continue to support such reforms is resulting in questionable alliances and counterproductive results. The abolitionist nonhuman animal rights movement is largely defined by its rejection of this aspect of welfarism: "We recognize that we will not abolish overnight the property status of nonhumans, but we will support only those campaigns and positions that explicitly promote the abolitionist agenda. We will not support positions that call for supposedly "improved" regulation of animal exploitation" (Francione, 2009e).

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The abolitionist agenda and subsequent challenges

Abolitionism seeks to reach its goal of ending nonhuman animal use through consumer-based resistance. Consumption-based resistance is a political strategy adopted by many social movements in response to injustices involved with product content and preparation (Goodman and DuPuis, 2002; Micheletti and Follesdal, 2007). Consumers are seen as active holders of responsibility with the ability to change both market capitalism and society (Dickinson and Hollander, 1991; Micheletti and Follesdal, 2007; Piven, 2007).   Personal consumption, in other words, can become a political action (Parker, 1999). Abolitionism seeks to reduce and eventually eliminate consumer demand for nonhuman animal use as consistent with a serious consideration of our moral obligations: "Essentially the demand is the demand of speciesism: the view that human beings can legitimately use and override the rights of nonhuman animals for a whole variety of purposes" (Yates, 2009c). Central to consumption-based resistance is abolitionism's vegan baseline. It is presumed that through the implementation of vegan education programs, a critical mass of vegans will materialize. With this critical mass should come political power and social influence. However, resistance that continues to function within capitalism might not be sufficient in adequately challenging the problems with an economic system that is built on consumption and exploitation (Johnston, 2008). What's more, capitalist-based resistance could potentially delude social responsibility and obligations in reducing participation to purchases in the checkout lane (Johnston, 2008; Wrenn, 2011). It might also run into problems of access with minorities and lower income individuals as fresh and whole food products can often be more expensive or difficult to find (Harper, 2010; Johnston, 2008). In addition to these potential problems, abolitionism is a relatively new movement (DeCoux, 2009) and is subsequently quite small with limited power. DeCoux (2009) suggests that abolitionism's overreliance on the property status of nonhuman animals and its failure to adopt depictions of suffering has stunted its success.

Furthermore, abolitionism has been heavily criticized as utopian, as depicted in welfarist critiques that find goals of ending nonhuman animal use to be unobtainable (Ball, ~2009; Francione and Marcus, 2007). However, it is important to recognize the newness of the abolitionist movement as it pertains to nonhuman animal rights. And, given DeCoux's (2009, 2010) critiques, abolition may still have room to grow so far as putting theory into practice. Further, many mainstream groups that are decidedly not rights based, such as PETA, lay claim to the term "rights," further confusing our moral obligation to nonhuman animals: "People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), with more than 2 million members and supporters, is the largest animal rights organization in the world" (DeCoux, 2009). Yet, PETA does not explicitly campaign for veganism or the end of nonhuman animal use, but rather the modification of use (promotion of controlled atmosphere killing, vegetarianism and single issue campaigns such as fur bans). Nonetheless, the organization has become the face of "animal rights." This misuse of the term "rights" can only further complicate the sluggish path to abolition.

Importantly, abolitionism has been effectively shut out of mainstream nonhuman animal welfare organizational claims-making. Ending use entirely is downplayed in the mainstream agenda. Veganism, too, is only weakly supported, if at all: "Unfortunately, the current groups making up the mainstream animal rights movement have a rather spotty record promoting veganism as a viable alternative, and very few groups have made it a primary focus of their outreach and activism (Torres, 2007, p. 137). Furthermore, the momentum of abolitionism is quickly slowed as countermovements are constructed by institutional exploiters of nonhuman animals and welfarist organizations alike (Yates, 2009b). As Francione notes, "Abolition has not taken center stage because the welfarist organizations do not want it as center stage. It is easier to fundraise when you promote welfare reforms and do not seek to persuade people to make changes in their lives" (Francione and Garner, 2010: 227-228). Indeed, abolitionists are often labeled as extremist or fanatical. Building on Francione's observations, two reasons might be given for this exclusion. One, it might be assumed that the radical nature of such an absolute goal might deter participants and potential participants in the nonhuman animal movement. Secondly, as previously noted, the abolitionist goal is often seen as utopian.

Abolitionism, unlike the approaches previously discussed, is asking human animals to completely reconfigure their understanding of nonhuman animals to one that recognizes nonhumans as persons requiring moral obligations. This is a much larger task than simply asking human animals to modify use, as this does not touch deeply rooted speciesism. Thus, the abolitionist movement will necessarily be slow moving, as it must undertake an enormous societal shift in the gestalt: "Social change is happening, but social change is slow" (Yates, 2009a). Unlike any other nonhuman animal social movement, the abolitionist movement is addressing rampant inequalities that invade nearly every aspect of human animal existence. Human animals have been effectively exploiting nonhuman animals for thousands of years. Furthermore, nonhuman animals are largely voiceless and lack the capacity to effectively communicate in the human animal arena. While Hribal (2010) documents a rich history of nonhuman animals engaging in individual resistance to their oppression (retaliations, escapes, etc.), it remains the case that nonhuman animals will likely never be able to become a class for itself in the Marxian sense and be able to collectively act on their own behalf. Hence, the movement to end speciesism and nonhuman animal use is facing unique and difficult challenges.

Furthermore, the nonhuman animal welfare movement dominates nonhuman animal rights discourse and is consequently able to influence nonhuman animal rights ideology. Control over ideology is maintained through framing and the active construction of meaning (Snow and Benford, 1988). Within a paradigm dominated by welfarism, abolitionism must struggle for recognition (DeCoux, 2009). Further, abolitionism is often framed negatively (Ball, ~2009; Fastenberg, 2009; Francione, 2010a) and what it means to recognize our moral obligation to nonhuman animals is constructed according to the dominant ideology. Abolitionism faces the challenge of channeling enough power and

resources to adequately challenge this ideology, reframe the abolitionist representation, and begin reshaping societal understandings of our moral obligation to nonhuman animals.

In changing deeply held societal views, the end goal of abolition may appear distant. It should be recognized that the abolitionist movement, as a distinct movement in nonhuman animal rights advocacy, is a comparatively new development: "I suggest the a [sic] useful mindset to adopt is one that recognizes that we are pioneers of a recent idea, an idea that is just making its first impacts on 'the social': in other words, the vegan-based animal rights movement is new" (Yates, 2009a). Abolitionism is still in the process of gaining momentum and is still establishing itself as a viable movement. On the contrary, welfarist reform has been operating for several centuries and nonhuman animal use has been increasing exponentially (DeCoux, 2009; Francione, 1996). Abolitionism remains locked out of mainstream advocacy: "The problem [...] is that the mainstream animal rights movement has never really tried such activism in earnest. Instead, it relies on a weak system of reforms, with the hope that these gradual changes will someday, in some way, in some distant and far-off future, lead to the complete abolition of animal exploitation" (Torres, 2007, p. 93). Furthermore, criticisms that label abolitionism as utopian, may be representative of fizzling motivation: "This kind of pessimism -- dressed up as realism — reveals a poverty of ambition and probably indicates a degree of 'burn-out' that many social movement participants experience" (Yates, 2008b). Because abolitionism as a clear and distinct movement is quite new, it is too early, Yates argues, to become pessimistic. Only with increased acceptance and adherence will real social change emerge (Torres, 2007).

DeCoux (2009) suggests that abolitionist success has stagnated because the movement fails to create a critical mass of vegans because of its reluctance to utilize descriptions of suffering. The welfarist movement, she argues, has been able to tap into the empathy and concern that is resultant from descriptions of suffering. Welfarists have thus been able to dominate mainstream nonhuman animal rights and channel those emotional reactions into ineffectual tactics. Jasper and Poulsen (1995) also point to the importance of incorporating this strategy to increase recruitment. Others, however, question effectiveness. Moral shocks can be off-putting rather than engaging or entirely ineffectual for peripheral groups such as vegetarians (Mika, 2006). Regardless, the context of social movement tactics can influence their effectiveness (Einwohner, 1999). The abolitionist movement might find it difficult to direct emotional reactions towards abolishing use in a society heavily influenced by welfarism where reactions are generally directed towards reform. So long as welfarism remains the dominant paradigm, there is a strong potential that moral shocks might pull recruits towards a desire to reform use, rather than abolish it.

Conclusion

The abolitionist movement has been criticized for adopting a time-consuming approach that allows nonhuman animals who currently suffer to continue suffering. Further, critics argue that a world entirely free of nonhuman animal use appears utopian and unreachable. However, the abolitionist movement as a functioning and coherent movement in the nonhuman animal rights arena is still in its infancy. Furthermore, a move towards abolition through the promotion of veganism is certainly beneficial for nonhuman animals suffering now and for those who would otherwise suffer in the future. The recent expansion in availability of vegan foods might be explored both to demonstrate the efficacy of consumer-based resistance and as a possible motivation for veganism through increasing visibility and consumer options. Further, while species inequality may never fully be eradicated from human animal society in the foreseeable future, we can realistically strive for the social condemnation of such institutions and a steady progression to the ultimate goal of equal consideration. Abolitionism does not naively predict an overnight revolution: that is not the nature of social change. However, further investigation into the efficacy of tactics, specifically vegan outreach and moral shocks, would prove immensely useful to the movement.

Fundamentally, abolitionism is critical in that it represents ethical consistency with the human animal moral obligation to nonhuman animals. Humane products and welfare reform fail to address the property status of nonhuman animals and the perpetuation of violence. Furthermore, neither of these approaches significantly address veganism, and within the abolitionist framework, it is impossible to seriously challenge the exploitation of nonhuman animals while continuing to consume them. It is also impossible to seriously address exploitation while reinforcing the ideologies of domination through regulation. Abolitionist rejection of the property status of nonhuman animals and adherence to nonviolence marks a unique consistency with the human animal moral obligation to nonhuman animals. This consistency contrasts with the counter-productivity and moral tension so characteristic of other nonhuman animal factions. This dichotomy highlights abolitionism as a viable movement with great potential for affecting change.

Currently, the abolitionist movement is primarily active within internet-based social networks and academic scholarship. Indeed, the dominance of online advocacy in this movement provides an excellent resource for exploring social movement mobilization on the internet. The internet has reduced the costs of mobilization and has allowed activists to communicate and network outside of the welfarist movement's dominant discourse (Francione and Garner, 2010). Several internet radio series and podcasts operate with sizeable followings. Abolitionism is also creeping into dozens of internet blogs and news editorials. Social networking sites and discussion forums proliferate as well. For a movement that has only been functionally present for less than a decade, these developments are promising.

Yet, while online mobilization is highly useful for a movement with limited resources, limited participation, and a heavily dispersed membership, the risk of cyberbalkanization is certainly real. Cyberbalkanization occurs when interest groups use the internet to exclude contradictory views and information (Alstyne and Brynjolfsson, 2005). This phenomenon can impede communication with other groups and stagnate movement progress. Although it is true that the abolitionist movement can appear rather exclusionary, because the movement is so heavily built on the criticism of mainstream nonhuman animal advocacy, there is a great deal of watchdog monitoring of welfarist and humane movement activity. Indeed, abolitionism also facilitates quite a bit of debate between the groups. For example, Francione's 2010 release, The Animal Rights Debate: Abolition or Regulation?, takes on co-author Robert Garner, a champion of the welfarist movement. The Animal Rights Zone forum, blogs, and podcast (moderated by Yates) also makes a point to incorporate the wide variety of perspectives in the nonhuman animal rights movement with abolition receiving no more prominence than other positions. However, it should be noted that this organization's new welfarist framework has been criticized in failing to present the abolitionist message clearly (Johnson, 2011).

In addition to its heavy reliance on internet mobilization, the abolitionist movement is unique in that it materializes as a collective of individuals and there are no large, professionalized organizations in its leadership (PETA and HSUS for example). Though, local small-scale abolitionist organizations such as the Boston Vegan Society, VeganUK, and Peaceful Prairie Sanctuary are expanding. Indeed, abolitionism is distinctly grassroots. And, while much of the abolitionist movement has traditionally operated under the leadership of Francione, many abolitionists have begun to detach themselves from his "Abolitionist Approach." Of note, VeganUK promotes a moral rationalist perspective of abolitionist advocacy that challenges the increasingly theistic connotations of Francione's theory (Johnson, 2012b). Still others have reabsorbed into the mainstream nonhuman animal rights movement and work side-by-side with welfarist advocates to reach a larger audience. Yates, in particular, criticizes Francione's "Abolitionist Approach" as failing to resonate with audiences. Reasons cited include a lack of reflexivity and the increasingly "dogmatic," "shrill," and "hysterical" tone the approach has utilized (Yates 2012). However, many abolitionists reject the ability to coherently advocate for abolition within a welfarist context as Yates has promoted (Johnson, 2011).

Despite substantial criticism, abolitionism offers a unique and valuable approach to nonhuman animal advocacy that esteems nonviolence, maintains veganism as a moral necessity, and offers nonhumans the possibility of equal consideration. These qualities differentiate abolitionism from mainstream trends in humane products and welfare reform and thus offer an important foundation for radical social change. As the abolitionist movement grows in numbers, resources, and strength, adoption of veganism is likely to increase. Increasing diversity within the movement is also likely to strengthen abolitionism's reach. In the meantime, the movement is vastly understudied and shows many gaps in need of research, particularly within the frameworks of

social movement theory. Specifically, how potential recruits may or may not be convinced to forgo a deeply engrained dependency on nonhuman animals would be especially beneficial. Further research into the impact of online advocacy on movement success would also be fruitful.

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About the author

Corey Wrenn is currently working towards her Ph.D. at Colorado State University with a focus on animals and society, environmental studies, and social movements. She can be contacted at corey.wrenn AT gmail.com

La desafección al sistema agroalimentario: ciudadanía y redes sociales

Ángel Calle Collado, Marta Soler Montiel, Isabel Vara Sánchez y David Gallar Hernández

Abstract

Como consecuencia de las recurrentes crisis alimentarias, perceptibles en el Norte y en el Sur, está creciendo a escala mundial respuestas frente al sistema agroalimentario globalizado. Se trata de agenciamientos colectivos, que a veces tiene el perfil de protesta y otras, invisibilizadas por los medios académicos y de comunicación de masas, pone en pie sistemas alternativos de producción y consumo. Tomando como referencia el caso español, ilustramos el despegue de estas redes críticas en torno a nuevos movimientos globales, sectores del sindicalismo agrario crítico con el mercado globalizado y redes de autogestión de necesidades básicas.

1.　Introducción al descontento agroalimentario: apuntes teóricos y metodológicos

Desde los 90, distintos sectores de la ciudadanía, tanto en el Norte como en el Sur, vienen manifestando un descontento frente al sistema agroalimentario globalizado, tanto en el terreno de iniciativas productivas como en el de las protestas frente a crisis alimentarias (Holt-Gimenez y otros 2009, Ploeg 2010, Pérez-Vitoria 2010). En los países más ricos, son más conocidas aquellas manifestaciones del consumidor que expresa una desconfianza general hacia instituciones y productos concretos. Un ejemplo son las llamadas "alarmas alimentarias", intoxicaciones derivadas de un sistema industrializado globalizado y frágil (mal de las vacas locas, gripe porcina, bacteria e.coli), que desatan en el consumidor un "miedo a comer" (Guidonet 2010).

En ocasiones, sin embargo, estos "miedos" se canalizan a través de iniciativas que ofrecen "comer de otra forma", basándose en respuestas colectivas y no individuales. Ambas comparten una serie de causas: mercados globales, oligopolios de producción y distribución intensiva en los que agricultores y formas tradicionales de manejo de los recursos quedan excluidos del sistema alimentario. Pero se agregan otros descontentos, de índole material, expresiva o de relaciones con la naturaleza: aparición de crisis especulativas o competitivas en el mercado de materias primas (caso de los agrocombustibles); crítica del modelo de desarrollo urbanístico, de las ciudades dispersas y de sus consecuencias medioambientales; o las biotecnologías que refuerzan el control de las transnacionales alimentarias sobre la producción alimentaria. Todo ello conforma una triple crisis que se retroalimenta a sí misma: i) crisis social: el sistema agroalimentario global no impide el aumento del número de personas

que mueren de hambre, expulsa de sus territorios y de sus manejos tradicionales a productores en el Norte y el Sur, no produce una alimentación de calidad, sana; ii) crisis económica: el sistema es inviable para la producción y el consumo que no se someta al imperio alimentario (Ploeg 2010), lo que va en detrimento de las economías locales, no monetarizadas, ecológicas, etc.; y iii) el sistema agroalimentario es responsable, al introducir el transporte de miles de kilómetros de insumos y productos transformados, de la mitad de las emisiones de CO_2, contribuyendo además al deterioro de suelos, biodiversidad, aire, etc. Ambas crisis se ven incrementadas tanto por el despegue de una economía capitalista a escala mundial, como por la concentración de personas en grandes ciudades, espacios cuya huella ecológica (importaciones materiales, enegéticas) multiplica por cien sus necesidades de espacio con respecto a espacios rurales tradicionales (Naredo 2006).

La triple crisis genera descontentos, pero también respuestas en clave de transformación del sistema agroalimentario, aunando propuestas y protestas. Así, al margen de estrategias individuales que generan nuevos nichos de consumo, algunos ligados a estilos de vida "alternativos" (el mercado de productos orgánicos es una expresión de ello), existen también estrategias de acción colectiva que proponen, no sólo otro consumo, también otro cambio de paradigma de producción, alcanzando el cuestionamiento a la totalidad del sistema agroalimentario, y también a las instituciones políticas que lo respaldan.

Vamos a utilizar el caso del Estado español como ilustración de todo ello. Muy esquemáticamente, podemos reconocer tres grandes tipologías, a la vez fuertemente imbricadas (organizativamente, discursivamente) entre sí:

▪   *Nuevos estilos agroalimentarios* (de enfoque agroecológico): una agricultura diferente que opera e incide en el sistema agroalimentario en su totalidad; desarrollada desde el mundo rural, encuentra en la comercialización local y en propuestas de "soberanía alimentaria" su discurso y sus prácticas

▪   *Nuevos cultivos sociales*: consumidores y productores se organizan en cooperativas o asociaciones, generalmente incluyendo al mundo urbano; suponen una politización del consumo a través, no de manifestaciones, sino de formas de economía solidaria y ecológica como criterio para la satisfacción alimentaria

▪   *Nuevos movimientos globales*: en el marco de las protestas "antiglobalización", y desde narrativas de democracia radical (construcción horizontal, cooperativa, deliberativa; desde abajo), vemos que surgen iniciativas (espacios de reflexión, protestas, redes de comercialización) dentro del ecologismo político o de las redes de consumo que, situadas en esa óptica más pública y movimentista, reaccionan al proceso de mundialización económica a través de la crítica y la puesta en marcha de alternativas al sistema agroalimentario "globalizado".

Es fácil imaginar que, dado que el descontento se focaliza sobre un sistema agroalimentario compartido, sean también similares los diagnósticos y las responsabilidades que se reparten entre instituciones públicas y transnacionales, principalmente. También se observará que este tridente de redes críticas comparte, en muchos casos, base social e iniciativas de protesta. Así, veremos como las diferentes plataformas y convocatorias de manifestaciones anti-transgénicos o las redes de recuperación de semillas son espacios en los que encontraremos integrantes de todos estos sectores, compartiendo discursos sobre temáticas y conceptos como: soberanía alimentaria, agroecología, consumo consciente, democratización del sistema agroalimentario, crítica de la globalización, entre otras.

En este trabajo queremos profundizar no sólo en las características e imbricaciones de las propuestas o resistencias a la globalización agroalimentaria, sino también en qué bases epistemológicas, al margen de políticas, pueden estar construyendo. Como veremos, la *agroecología* será un referente como herramienta de acción y de reflexión, de forma explícita en buena parte de los casos documentados. Por agroecología podemos entender una aproximación a la producción agrícola, y al sistema agroalimentario en general, basándose en un enfoque participativo, de desarrollo endógeno en aras de lograr una sustentabilidad ecológica (Sevilla 2006). El enfoque agroecológico interrelaciona tres dimensiones de análisis y de filosofía de acción (Guzmán y otros 2000): ecológica (manejo sostenible y ecológico de las fincas, minimizando la artificialización del ecosistema agrario), socioeconómica (procesos participativos, generación de autonomía en la gestión, circuitos de proximidad, economía solidaria, rescate del conocimiento local en el uso de los recursos naturales) y sociopolítica (crítica a la lógica neoliberal y a la globalización económica, estrategias y métodos de horizontalidad en la toma de decisiones, re-apropiación de espacios rurales – tierras yermas- y urbanos - redes sociales-). Se habla, pues, de democratizar "desde abajo" la conformación y el acceso a nuestro sistema agroalimentario; de generar dinámicas que permitan un empoderamiento en el acceso a alimentos dentro de un contexto, como veremos, de creciente insostenibilidad ambiental, social y económica. En este sentido, la agroecología, antes que una ciencia interdisciplinar, se rescata por diversos autores como una filosofía de acción colectiva, cercana a las redes de movimientos sociales (Sevilla 2006; Wezel y otros 2009). Filosofía, que en tanto que democratizadora, facilita una interrelación entre la crítica de la modernización (agraria), la apuesta por movimientos democratizadores a escala global y la politización creciente del consumo (Calle, Soler y Rivera 2011).

1.1. La necesidad de otras miradas sobre la acción colectiva

Antes de concluir, realizamos unos breves apuntes metodológicos y conceptuales. Nuevos fenómenos exigen nuevas formas de mirar. Y viceversa, al situarnos en nuevos ángulos y en unas miradas transdisciplinares contribuimos a realizar una Sociología de las Emergencias, como sugiere Sousa Santos (2004, 2009): se des-invisibiliza lo que el poder académico, mediático y político ha

situado fuera de nuestras experiencias para repensar la realizar; y, posteriormente, podemos evaluar cómo están operando dichas prácticas para entender posibles escenarios y apuestas de futuro.

Sobre conceptualizaciones, este trabajo hará uso extenso de la palabra "resistencia". Nuestro interés es resaltar que, sobre todo bajo la globalización neoliberal, están emergiendo respuestas colectivas críticas que se mueven a caballo de la construcción autoegestionada de alternativas para la satisfacción de necesidades básicas (lo que llamaríamos *cultivos sociales*, ver Calle y Gallar 2011), formas de rebeldía en lo cotidiano y de no reconocimiento de los sistemas de mercantilización de parcelas de la vida (*infrapolítica*, en especial en el consumo, siguiendo a Scott 2000), y, por último, respuestas más visibles en clave de conquista y protesta de espacios públicos (*movimientos alimentarios*, para Holt-Gimenez y otros, 2009)[1]. Las iniciativas ofrecidas se moverán entre los tres campos. En el último apartado antes de las conclusiones analizaremos el caso de las redes de semillas, ejemplo de esta hibridación entre protesta y prácticas (cotidianas) de sustentabilidad que se da en los nuevos movimientos globales.

Sobre miradas, tal y como refleja el espíritu de la revista Interface, no hay posibilidad (ética, analítica, vivencial) de situarse "fuera" de los sujetos y procesos que abordamos. Tanto la "novedad" de estos fenómenos, como el partir de una ciencia "con la gente" (Funtowicz y Ravetz 2000) o una ciencia que trasciende la normalidad académica para emerger desde problemas sociales (Jiménez-Buedo y Ramos, 2009), nos obliga a promover dinámicas de observación participante y de investigación participativa.

Así, este trabajo se desarrolla por parte de personas que forman parte del mundo académico, investigan sobre cuestiones de agroecología y del sistema agroalimentario global, y al mismo tiempo, forman parte de los procesos que se describirán e ilustrarán a continuación. Proyectos previos de los que hemos formado parte nos han permitido elaborar un marco teórico, así como tener acceso a fuentes primarias de información (entrevistas principalmente) relacionadas con esos temas. Es el caso del proyecto DEMOS (demos.iue.it), financiado por la Unión Europea y dirigido por Donatella della Porta (de. 2007 y 2009) sobre nuevas formas de acción colectiva, los *nuevos movimientos globales* (Calle 2005 y 2009). Particularmente relevante es el proyecto "Canales cortos de comercialización alimentaria en Andalucía" financiado por — la *Fundación Centro de Estudios Andaluces*, que promueven Marta Soler, Isabel Vara y David Gallar[2]; sus trabajos previos pueden dar cuenta a su vez de los

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[1]En América Latina o en África son patentes estas resistencias, sobre todo en el contexto de nuevos sujetos que buscan crear sinergias entre actores antes más alejados y ahora más afectados por problemas derivados de la mundialización capitalista: redes de protesta, movimientos comunitarios, sindicalismo urbano y agrario, redes asentadas en pueblos originarios, etc. Aquí los trabajos de Raúl Zibechi (2006), disponibles en internet, son un buen ejemplo.

[2]Todos ellos y ellas ligados /as al Instituto de Sociología y Estudios Campesinos (ISEC, Universidad de Córdoba).

antecedentes de este proyecto (Soler y Calle 2010, Gallar y Vara 2010, Vara 2009).

De forma paralela, la observación participante es una herramienta fundamental para poder seguir el rastro de estas iniciativas, muy dispersas en general, y para aventurarnos a identificar el marco de la agroecología como sustrato de su filosofía de acción. La participación en estos colectivos nos facilita un entendimiento de lo que ocurre, al poder escudriñar y aprehender detalles que no pueden provenir de una "ciencia de laboratorio" (Latour 1979). Lo que aquí desarrollamos es una perspectiva teórica y unas conceptualizaciones emergentes provenientes de una observación partipante, siguiendo las visiones metodológicas de los antropólogos Hammersley y Atkinson (2001). Esta teoría emergente cruzará, como iremos viendo, elementos teóricos de la sociología crítica del consumo (siguiendo a Baudrillard, Alonso y otros) que parten de la jerarquización y la atribución de roles e identidades sociales que se reproducen vía consumo de masas; así como con las bases constructivo-conflictivistas de la sociología de los movimientos sociales: las resistencias agroalimentarias serán formas de agenciamiento colectivo que, de forma cohesionada y disruptiva, pasan a politizar la esfera del consumo y el sistema agroalimentario globalizado. Al mismo tiempo, la academia nos impulsa y nos facilita la comprensión de estos fenómenos como resistencias a la globalización a través del acceso a recursos de investigación que le son propios (intercambios de información, recursos económicos, publicaciones, elaboraciones metodológicas) y que están más alejadas de las posibilidades, y en algunos casos del interés, de las iniciativas productivas o de protesta.

En resumen, los trabajos previos y nuestra propia experiencia nos han permitido, para el caso español que se presenta, delimitar las tipologías antes reseñadas desde la perspectiva del análisis de formas de acción colectiva opuestas a la dinámica impuesta por la globalización alimentaria. Este artículo nos sirve específicamente para adentrarnos en los pilares de la crítica y de la práctica de estos espacios, y de cómo estos espacios se interrelacionan entre sí. En concreto, veremos como la perspectiva agroecológica y su conexión con propuestas de soberanía alimentaria (Calle y otras 2011, Cuéllar y Sevilla 2010) se asienta como *marco maestro*[3], es decir como representación común, que permite engarzar y hacer complementarios los diferentes actores. Las intersecciones entre los mismos se apoyan, por otro lado, en la multimilitancia y en los foros compartidos que tienen estos tres grandes tipos de prácticas agroalimentarias alternativas.

Comenzaremos este trabajo estudiando las razones que generan el descontento agroalimentario. Examinaremos la dinámica que ha posibilitado el desarrollo de un mercado agroalimentario global. Mercado que cuenta con fuertes dosis de legitimidad en la sociedad del consumo pero que, crecientemente, tal y como reflejamos en este artículo, viene siendo un ámbito de politización e

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[3]Lo que en la sociología constructivista de movimientos sociales estiman como elemento central de un nuevo ciclo de movilizaciones (ver Calle 2005).

intervención por parte de diferentes redes sociales: rurales y urbanas, movilizadoras y destinadas a la autogestión de recursos naturales, desde organizaciones sindicales agrarias clásicas (más verticales y temáticas) hasta redes críticas enmarcadas en los nuevos movimientos globales (más horizontales y orientadas a una interrelación de problemáticas).

En el siguiente apartado (número 3) justificaremos cómo las inquietudes de la ciudadanía en general con respecto al sistema agroalimentario han generado respuestas de diverso tipo, algunas críticas y desafectas, otras pidiendo su reforzamiento; algunas individuales, otras colectivas. Las resistencias agroalimentarias pertenecerán a la categoría de respuestas colectivas y críticas que se están dando.

Por último, en el capítulo 4 del texto construimos un mapa de iniciativas que atienden a las características antes señaladas, caracterizando e identificando los tres sectores y estableciendo sus sinergias (discursos, espacios en común). Estas iniciativas se han seleccionado atendiendo a tres factores: conocimiento empírico que teníamos o podíamos tener de la misma, fuese por nuestra implicación o fruto de investigaciones previas; su importancia como motores de los espacios definidos, teniendo en cuenta la gran dispersión de este tejido agroecológico; y por último, la capacidad para ejemplificar la validez de los tres tipos ideales propuestos.

2.   El análisis del mercado agroalimentario global

La mayor parte de la población vive hoy en ciudades; y las ciudades vienen siendo motor de formas de crecimiento y desarrollo que, a su vez, están siendo contestadas desde redes críticas. Es en el ámbito urbano en el que se concentran los actos de consumo y en concreto el consumo alimentario. Por tanto, los procesos de cambio urbano, y dentro de ellos los vinculados al consumo, así como la relación entre el campo y la ciudad en la globalización es un ámbito de análisis central para comprender el contexto que impulsa las resistencias agroalimentarias en la globalización. Comenzaremos por el estudio de esta dinámica para estudiar posteriormente cómo se ha producido una legitimación a través de la importancia del consumo como identificador y regulador social en las sociedades más industrializadas. Ofreceremos algunos ejemplos muy sucintos de debates o iniciativas que nos ayudan a comprender las formas y el papel de las resistencias agroalimentarias, desde el campo de la producción (sindicatos agrarios principalmente) o de la protesta (movimientos sociales y su visión del consumo en los países del centro).

2.1. La relación campo-ciudad ¿la ciudad contra el campo?

La oposición campo-ciudad es el resultado del tránsito de un modelo de ciudad "blando" a un modelo de ciudad "duro" a raíz de la difusión de la revolución industrial y dominio de los procesos económicos de mercado (Mumford, 1957). Hasta la difusión de la industrialización, las ciudades seguían un modelo

territorial más organicista donde no existía una ruptura u oposición tan fuerte como en la actualidad si no un continum o integración entre las actividades productivas en torno a los espacios donde se concentraba, siguiendo un modelo de ocupación territorial fundamentalmente disperso y autónomo (Fernández Durán, 1993, Cano y Márquez, 2001). Los mecanismos de mercado hacen que a medida que aumenta la necesidad y, por tanto, la dependencia de los flujos de energía, materiales y alimentos de la ciudad se consolide el poder de lo urbano, quedando lo rural y agrario subordinado.

A partir de la segunda guerra mundial, la industrialización, la modernización agraria y el éxodo rural, unido a la necesidad de mano de obra en las ciudades impulsarán la reestructuración agroalimentaria. En la agricultura se pasa a un modo de manejo industrial basado en la mecanización, el uso de agroquímicos y de semillas comerciales orientado a producir alimentos en masa a precios bajos: es la llamada "revolución verde".

La industrialización agroalimentaria implicó un "proceso de sustitución" de los productos agrarios por productos industriales que se traduce en el desarrollo de "alimentos fabricados" que complementa al "proceso de apropiación" industrial en la agricultura por el que los insumos antes controlados y reproducidos por el agricultor (Goodman y Redclift 1991, Friedman, 1991).

Con la llamada "globalización" el principal cambio en el sistema agroalimentario ha sido el nuevo poder estratégico de la distribución comercial. La producción flexible implica "pensar al revés" (Coriat, 1992) produciendo tan sólo lo que está vendido, planificando la producción sobre la base de un conocimiento perfecto de los cambios en la demanda. Este papel estratégico de la distribución comercial se refuerza ya que son los distribuidores y, sobre todo las grandes superficies comerciales, las que deciden qué productos llegan al consumidor.

Pero las dinámicas asociadas a la globalización capitalista planteará severas restricciones, hasta el punto de que se habla, como apuntábamos al comienzo, de una triple crisis (social, medioambiental, de desarrollo económico), que podemos ligar al sistema agroalimentario que demandan las conurbaciones "globales" (ver Naredo 2006). En el terreno medioambiental, conviene recordar la dependencia de combustibles fósiles que tiene la agricultura (transportes, insumos químicos, explotaciones industriales); un modelo que impulsa el cambio climático, a la vez que se encuentra condenado a su extinción. Por otra parte, redes de sindicatos agrarios culpan a la PAC (Política Agrícola Común) y a la Unión Europea de la actual situación del campo. La Vía Campesina estima que cada tres minutos desaparece una pequeña explotación agrícola. Por último, las sucesivas crisis (o alarmas) alimentarias harán que la ciudadanía perciba como la sociedad del riesgo llama a su puerta bajo las redes agroalimentarias globales. Todas estas luchas y resistencias políticas actuales entroncarán con conflictos en los campos económicos, ecológicos y culturales que plantea el capitalismo. Pero como queremos mostrar en este artículo, el sistema agroalimentario globalizado las intensifica, proveyendo de razones y estrategias que vinculan campo y ciudad, productores y consumidores, crítica material y expresiva, demandas económicas y protestas ambientales, e incluso campesinos

del Norte y del Sur, fenómenos poco corrientes anteriormente, y bajo formas de resistencia/protesta/autogestión como ilustraremos seguidamente.

2.2. La legitimidad de un modelo de consumo: el papel de los movimientos sociales

Los procesos históricos de divorcio entre la ciudad y el campo, entre la producción y el consumo, entre la sostenibilidad y el surgimiento de un mercado global agroalimentario no han sido puestos en marcha de espaldas a la ciudadanía, antes al contrario. La noción de progreso asociada a una aplicación intensiva de la tecnología o la conquista de un bienestar vía acumulación material contaron con el respaldo de buena parte de la población. Sobre todo a partir de los años 60, donde la ciudad se revela como destino de una emigración que busca trabajo en los cinturones industriales, modernidad en sus pautas de consumo. La ciudad se representa como el lugar de las luces.

En este contexto, la reclamación de mejores condiciones materiales de vida (salarios, alimentación, salud, educación, acceso a vivienda) hizo que el movimiento vecinal y el movimiento obrero vieran con buenos ojos esta producción intensiva de bienes. El problema, o las demandas, estarían en su distribución. Pero no en su producción y en las consecuencias de los nuevos estilos de vida a que obligaban o que auspiciaban las nuevas pautas de consumo (Alonso 2005: 48 y siguientes).

La entrada de la crítica al consumo no se produciría abiertamente hasta los 80, de la mano, fundamentalmente, de movimientos sociales de crítica a los patrones de crecimiento económico y de jerarquía social implícitos en él: ecologistas y feministas junto a pacifistas y culturas urbanas como la *ocupación*. Como complemento, y hasta como inspiración de estas prácticas, llegan también los argumentos de quienes realizan una arqueología del poder desde el análisis de las prácticas de consumo de masas como herramienta muy útil para sostener determinadas jerarquías económicas y culturales tal y como reflejarían los textos: *El hombre unidimensional* de Marcuse (1964) y *La sociedad del consumo* de Baudrillard (1970).[4]

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[4]La sociología crítica de la Escuela de Frankfurt en Alemania, y la sociología crítica surgida en Francia frente a la sociedad del consumo y del espectáculo entroncan (no impulsan) con la crítica práctica de los nuevos movimientos sociales. Ambas críticas son, desde nuestra perspectiva, parte de los imaginarios actualizados sobre la crítica del consumo globalizado.

	Movimiento Obrero	Nuevos Movimientos Sociales	Nuevos Movimientos Globales
Visión del consumo	Necesidad de garantizar un acceso, de redistribuir riqueza	Consumo como código, cumple a la par funciones de inserción social como de control	Aparece el Sistema Agroalimentario Global como esfera básica para de colonización social y devastación medioambiental
Justificación y motivaciones	Consumo de masas, necesidades materiales, despauperizar al obrero	No es un problema de objetos sino de relaciones entre sujetos desiguales	Es un problema no sólo de desigualdad social, sino de democracia y de insostenibilidad en general
Respuestas sociales y técnicas	Construcción del Estado de bienestar	Generación de alternativas ecológicas	Agroecología y democracia radical

Tabla 1. Movimientos sociales y crítica del consumo (perspectiva en Occidente). Fuente: Elaboración propia sobre textos de Calle (2005, 2009)

La hipersensibilidad frente al poder será una constante a partir de los nuevos movimientos sociales (años 70) como ejemplifican los movimientos feministas, el ecologismo o la autonomía. Desde es hilo, los años 90 ven surgir nuevas redes que convergen en la crítica de la globalización, merced a internet y también al ascenso de una nueva cultura política más abierta[5]: los nuevos movimientos globales (Calle 2005, 2009). En paralelo, la reclamación de una agricultura participativa tendrá en nuevas aproximaciones a los modos de producción agrícola (los estilos de agricultura de Jan Douwe V. der Ploeg o la escuela del Farming System Research) las primeras piedras que abrirán a la agroecología las puertas de una mirada más horizontal, en clave de desarrollo endógeno a una agricultura de matriz ecológica (Sevilla Guzmán 2006). Y siendo la agroecología una filosofía no sólo de interpretación interdisciplinar sino de acción para el manejo sustentable de recursos naturales, no hemos de olvidar las resistencias de agricultores y campesinos al avance de este modelo, base de la actual conformación de La Vía Campesina como referente internacional de propuestas de soberanía alimentaria.

A medida que la "globalización" se convierte en un hecho referencial a escala planetaria (debilitamiento del estado, auge de multinacionales y de mercados mundiales, adopción de políticas neoliberales, etc.), este modelo de crecimiento, sometido progresivamente a los vaivenes de un capitalismo financiero y transnacionalizado, comenzará a ser contestado. Y con ello, el consumo y el

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[5]Ejemplificada en los lemas que, a partir de 1994, aporta el zapatismo: "los rebeldes se buscan", "caminamos preguntando".

sistema agroalimentario pasarán a situarse en la mirada de los excluidos de este proceso (campesinos, por ejemplo) o de los insatisfechos por razones materiales, expresivas o afectivas (nuevos movimientos en Occidente).

3. Desafecciones agroalimentarias: de las estrategias de consumo a las resistencias sociales

Con desafección alimentaria, nos referimos a la generalización de una percepción social negativa (en los países industrializados) del sistema agroalimentario más globalizado y de las instituciones públicas encargadas de controlar, reproducir o intervenir en él. Dicha desafección implica una desconfianza hacia dicho entramado por motivos de salud, éticos o medioambientales fundamentalmente. Por ejemplo, en 1999, la detección de un alto grado de dioxinas en granjas avícolas de Bélgica generó una crisis alimentaria. Tras esta crisis, una encuesta del CIS[6] confirmaba que un 82% de personas entrevistadas entre la ciudadanía española opinaban que este fenómeno se repetiría "con toda seguridad" o "probablemente".

Esta desafección alimentaria comparte rasgos con una desafección política más general. Desde los 90, el término desafección política (distanciamiento de la ciudadanía con respecto a las democracias representativas) cobra relevancia académica a partir de los trabajos de Putnam (2003). Autores como Sousa Santos y Avritzer (2004), Crouch (2004), Hermet (2008) van más allá, y llegan a hablar del "declive de la democracia" tal y como la conocemos actualmente. Nos encontraríamos en una bifurcación, donde democracias de carácter autoritario (basadas en el modelo de "gobernanza"), pugnan con deseos, al menos retóricos, de explorar una democracia participativa (apertura de instituciones liberales, participación representativa y más vertical), mientras que los nuevos movimientos globales tratan de sostener una democracia radical (instituciones recreadas desde la ciudadanía, horizontalidad, deliberación, proximidad o participación directa), que reorganice sistemas sociales "desde abajo" (Calle 2005, 2007 y 2011).

¿Cómo se entrelazan desafección política y alimentaria en los países del centro? Varias características hermanan y retroalimentan ambas desafecciones. En primer lugar, los considerados responsables para velar por la seguridad alimentaria son situados en el ojo del huracán mediático. El manejo de las crisis alimentarias está sujeto a la agenda política del gobierno de turno, desarrollando estrategias de minimización de riesgos para quien está en el poder y de petición de responsabilidades para los partidos de la oposición (Martínez Solana 2004).

En segundo lugar, la ciudadanía se plantea reformular sus estrategias. En el caso agroalimentario, pasando a mantener una desconfianza alta sobre estos productos. En el caso político, manifestando su distancia al voto, como se

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[6]Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, www.cis.es

expresa en la participación en elecciones que atañen a la Unión Europea, y en particular, en la instalación de un sector juvenil abiertamente partidario de la abstención o el voto nulo. Ello no implica una deslegitimación generalizada del sistema político y agroalimentario globalizado. Pero sí, la existencia de un descontento extenso entre la población y el desarrollo de estrategias por parte de ciertos sectores a la búsqueda de otras reglas de juego.

3.1. Estrategias de consumo individuales y colectivas

El consumo en general, y la satisfacción de necesidades básicas como la alimentación en particular, es un fenómeno relacional (Callejo 1994, Alonso 2005, Gómez de Benito 2008). La alimentación, e incluso el código culinario, ha sido vista por los antropólogos como un lenguaje donde la sociedad "revela inconscientemente su estructura, o quizás nos expone sus contradicciones" como afirmara Levi-Strauss (citado en Garine 1995: 137). Si bien, existen estructuras institucionales y simbólicas que condicionan nuestra alimentación, como cualquier otra interacción social (Bourdieu), también hay una apropiación contextualizada e individual desde la que las personas despliegan una voluntad, una elección, un agenciamiento desde sus propios y múltiples códigos culturales, afectivos, instrumentales o de percepción de la naturaleza. Así, podemos afirmar que en el campo del consumo no somos ni esclavos, ni soberanos (Cortina 2002: 235), ni absolutamente libres, ni robotizados (Alonso 2005: 30, 80).

Este movimiento de agenciamiento es, a su vez, doble. Es colectivo, en la medida en que atiende a las relaciones sociales que condicionan y que intentamos condicionar. Desde el gusto hasta la educación en la apariencia o en dietas "aconsejadas" no dejamos de negociar constantemente, a veces con escaso margen como consecuencia de la oligopolización que generan las grandes distribuidoras, qué se considera una alimentación "aceptable" o "rica". Es más, las resistencias agroalimentarias de las que hablamos en este trabajo son estrategias conscientes de introducir modificaciones en los habitus, en las gramáticas sociales de lo que es considerado como "bueno" en la alimentación, apelando para ello a razones sociales, morales, medioambientales, culturales o afectivas.

Esta apropiación grupal o elaboración colectiva del sentido que concedemos a la alimentación dará paso a un abanico de estrategias individuales, las cuales a su vez estarán mediatizadas por las estructuras materiales y simbólicas que nos influyan. Con respecto al sistema agroalimentario, los consumidores se moverán entre la *integración* según las pautas que dicta el gran mercado (integración que puede ser a su vez festiva y aclamada o simplemente interesada por razones económicas); la *adaptación* por no tener otras referencias (en muchos casos buscando un ahorro, un llegar a fin de mes a través de la reducción de costes en la cesta de la compra); o lo que denominaremos *resistencias* o expresiones alternativas (que serán individuales y colectivas).

Esto nos da pie a sugerir una tipología de estrategias de consumidores dispuestos a cambiar de pautas de compra, a veces de estilos de vida, bien por voluntad propia, bien por influencia del consumismo y que obedece a diferentes motivaciones:

▪   Consumo *a la moda*: identidad cambiante, tener es ser, tribus sociales. Caracterizado por una *integración festiva*.

▪   Consumo *defensivo*: reacción frente a alarmas alimentarias, estrategias coyunturales; podría considerarse dentro de un *acatamiento forzoso*: se activan otras estrategias individuales de compra por razones de salud o económicas (el 22% de los españoles se considera dentro del perfil de consumidor ahorrador o "low cost")

▪   Consumo "*alternativo*": los llamados *Bohemios Burgueses* (Bobos), nuevos nichos de mercado por motivos de salud y en algunos casos medioambientales.

▪   Consumo *reflexivo*: activación ética, pero individual, dentro del mercado sobre la base integral de criterios sociales, medioambientales, de salud, como pueden ser el comercio justo, los productos ecológicos o la compra en mercados locales. Aparece ligado al consumo de Bobos y a las estrategias colectivas que plantean alternativas al mercado agroalimentario.

▪   Consumo *constructivo*: desarrollo de un acción colectiva que genera una *resistencia agroalimentaria* como las que analizamos en este trabajo.

Un mapa tentativo de este tipo de consumos se ofrece a continuación, para mostrar también que se trata de estrategias difusas y que en algunos casos pueden solaparse.
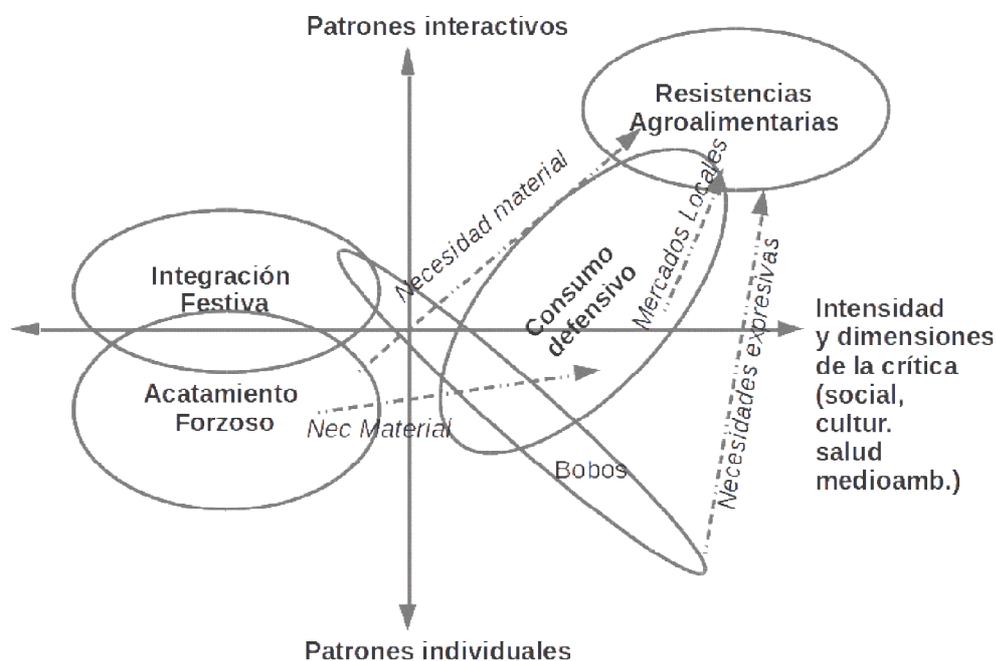
Figura 1. Estrategias de consumidores. Fuente: Elaboración propia

Las resistencias agroalimentarias no son fenómenos aislados con respecto a otras estrategias individuales. Existen caminos que entrelazan las estrategias, a su vez entrelazadas con estilos de vida (hábitos, gramáticas y espacios que sirven de referencias de socialización e interacción social), cuyo análisis está aún pendiente de realizar.

Una de las principales diferencias entre estas estrategias, desde el punto de vista de la apropiación de cada agente, es la existencia o no de lo que expertos en psicología social definen como una *disonancia* cognitiva[7], es decir: ¿sigue siendo "coherente" seguir moviéndose dentro del actual sistema agroalimentario? ¿concuerda con mi estilo de vida, con mis valores? ¿tienen credibilidad otras referencias? Para quienes participan en las resistencias agroalimentarias, la disonancia cognitiva es alta y la búsqueda de otras estrategias pone en juego no sólo un agenciamiento político, o meramente productivo, sino cultural, social e incluso emocional y afectivo (auto-estima, reconocimiento en un grupo social, eliminación de ciertos desasosiegos). De

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[7]Teoría inaugurada por Festinger (1957) sobre medios de comunicación de masas: rechazo de informaciones (como la idea de "control" o "seguridad") porque el individuo percibe como una situación de riesgo (material) o de posible desequilibrio (emocional, creencias) conceder credibilidad a la información y las fuentes que la producen.

esta manera, desde el ecologismo social se planteará como urgente y necesario un replanteamiento de las bases políticas e industriales del sistema agroalimentario como base de una sustentabilidad fuerte: autoritarismo y crecientes impactos ambientales irían de la mano (Klink 2009). Para la ciudadanía que ha experimentado una realidad rural (gente más mayor por ejemplo o con vínculos con los pueblos pequeños), la pérdida de sabores y texturas en los alimentos frecuentemente empaquetados de la gran superficie les lleva a unir su deseo de un "alimento nostálgico" (necesidad más expresiva o afectiva) con el de un "alimento saludable" (necesidad más material), como revela el estudio de Guidonet (2010: 201 y ss.) realizado en España. Así, se va generando un "miedo a comer" (Guidonet 2010), que es a su vez fuente para un "rechazo a comer" en el sistema agroalimentario globalizado. Desde aquí se propician "otras formas de comer", que constituyen resistencias agroalimentarias cuando éstas se realizan de forma colectiva y explícita.

3.2. Resistencias agroalimentarias: desde la agroecología a la soberanía alimentaria

Las tres tipologías de resistencias agroalimentarias, que vamos a recorrer a través de experiencias concretas en el mapa de iniciativas que sigue a este apartado, pertenecen a esa apuesta de "otras formas de comer" organizadas colectivamente. Como veremos en sus discursos y sus prácticas, la perspectiva agroecológica (sustentabilidad social y medioambiental) formará parte de su razón de ser, si bien en algunas iniciativas está más desarrollada el enfoque medioambiental y en otras el desarrollo de sistemas agroalimentarios caracterizados por la equidad y la proximidad en las relaciones entre productores, consumidores e intermediarios. Además, siendo la agroecología la filosofía de acción, en gran parte de ellas se establecerá como horizonte la propuesta de "soberanía alimentaria" como programa cultural, económico y político que prima el derecho a decidir cómo producir y consumir según el contexto sobre las exigencias de las transnacionales agroalimentarias.

Como ejemplo dentro de los movimientos sociales, tomaremos redes de crítica alimentaria y del ecologismo social como exponentes del ciclo que inauguran los nuevos movimientos globales a finales de los 90. Aquí, la democratización del mundo se concreta en la necesidad de democratizar el sistema agroalimentario, creando redes y espacios de protesta que visibilizan formas agroecológicas de producción. Desde aquí, y como resultado de la implantación internacional de movimientos como La Vía Campesina, el término "soberanía alimentaria" ha acabado convirtiéndose en un referente de las propuestas que pueden encontrarse en los manifestos de las llamadas "redes anti-globalización" (Calle 2005: 94 y ss.).

Por su parte, los *nuevos cultivos sociales*, la búsqueda de procesos de autogestión en torno a la alimentación, estarán aquí representados en la forma de cooperativas de consumidores convertidos en sus propios productores (verduras y hortalizas, fundamentalmente). Estos cultivos sociales son,

principalmente, espacios de socialización para la satisfacción directa de necesidades básicas, frente a un capitalismo y unas formas de dominación autoritarias (patriarcales) que se considera obstaculizan el desarrollo de economías solidarias Calle y Gallar (2011). La comida se convierte entonces en un espacio de recuperación y des-mercantilización de vínculos sociales (López y Badal 2006). En el caso de las cooperativas, la orientación agroecológica estará definida como un referente nítido de su acción colectiva[8].

Y por último, campesinos y pequeños agricultores apuestan por *nuevos estilos agroalimentarios* (desde un enfoque agroecológico) que recuperan y recrean manejos de los agroetnoecosistemas sobre la base de la cercanía y el saber local, esta vez para hacer frente a una mundialización que los excluye (Ploeg 2003, 2010). El concepto de *estilo agroalimentario* bebe de dos conceptos analíticos interrelacionados pero provenientes de debates teóricos y metodológicos diferenciados dentro de la sociología rural: el concepto de "sistema agroalimentario" definido por los autores que en la década de 1990 se agrupan en la denominada "Nueva Economía Política de la Agricultura" y el concepto de "estilo de agricultura" o "estilo de manejo agroganadero"[9] propuesto por van der Ploeg (1990, 2003). Un *estilo agroalimentario* es un modo específico de articular una práctica de producción, transformación, distribución y consumo alimentario, resultando central, por una parte, la interrelación sistémica entre todos los agentes que participan en la función alimentaria y, por otra, la coherencia entre los valores culturales y la praxis de la función alimentaria. El concepto de "estilo agroalimentario" implica centrar el análisis de la homogeneidad-heterogeneidad de la producción agraria en el ámbito del sistema agroalimentario poniendo de manifiesto la diversidad de interrelaciones entre agentes y actividades en torno a la alimentación y la necesidad de prestar atención analítica a la misma si se desea comprender tanto el funcionamiento del sistema agroalimentario como la actual sociología de la alimentación con una cierta honestidad académica.

4. Mapas de iniciativas

A continuación procedemos a examinar con mayor profundidad los actores concretos que dan lugar, con sus discursos y sus prácticas, a la conformación de las tres grandes familias de resistencias agroalimentarias que uno puede encontrar en Europa[10], y en particular, en el Estado español: redes propias de nuevos movimientos globales; cooperativas alimentarias como ejemplo de cultivos sociales; y nuevos estilos agroalimentarios con enfoque agroecológico propiciados por el sindicalismo agrario crítico con la globalización.

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[8]Ver a título ilustrativo bah.ourproject.org

[9] Traducción del inglés de "Farming styles" o "styles of farming".

[10]Postulamos que las tipologías aquí construidas tendrían su validez en el contexto europeo. Consultar referencias en www.eurovia.org, www.bah.ourporject. Holt-Gimenez, Patel y Shattuck (2009) muestran estas propuestas en ámbitos globales.

4.1. La agroecología en los nuevos movimientos globales

Comencemos analizando la crítica del consumo más explícita surgida a partir de mediados de los 90 en lo se ha venido en llamar "movimiento antiglobalización", y que nosotros consideramos como la cara pública o de protesta del ciclo de los nuevos movimientos globales asentado en la demanda de democratizaciones "desde abajo" (Calle 2005). Redes alternativas de consumo (Xarxa de Consum Solidari, Ideas, etc.) y del movimiento ecologista (Ecologistas en Acción, Greenpeace, plataformas ecologistas locales, etc.), principalmente, nos propondrán iniciativas que tienen como objetivo la promoción de estrategias individuales y colectivas hacia un consumo guiado por criterios medioambientales, sociales y de reducción del propio consumo.

A escala estatal, Ecologistas en Acción cuenta con un área de trabajo que específicamente aborda la cuestión del *consumo*, y desde la que se promueven iniciativas como: día sin compras, semana sin televisión, criterios de consumo, navidades ecológicas y se da apoyo a iniciativas frente a las grandes superficies. Existen otras áreas implicadas, como *antiglobalización*, y que servirán de puente hacia otras iniciativas en el marco de los nuevos movimientos globales, como veremos después. Por último, la reciente creación del área de *agroecología* es exponente del papel de esta filosofía de acción como aglutinador de las tres tipologías de resistencias agroalimentarias que describimos en este artículo. Greenpeace, por su parte, asegura que "el futuro del planeta depende mucho más de nuestro consumo que de las urnas", apostando por una agricultura y ganadería ecológicas.

En el plano de redes de comercialización alternativas, la Xarxa de Consum Solidari viene trabajando desde 1996 en temas de comercio justo, consumo crítico y soberanía alimentaria. De iniciativas de sensibilización se pasa a reivindicar una estrategia de circuitos cortos en desafío del actual sistema agroalimentario: "No importamos productos que ya se producen aquí, con unos componentes sociales y ecológicos equivalentes, y nos basamos en unos criterios de total transparencia en el conjunto de la cadena comercial".

Por su carácter más sectorial, en lo que se refiere a discursos y organizaciones involucradas, estas iniciativas sobre consumo tienen más que ver con la tradición de los nuevos movimientos sociales (ecologismo al frente) que desde los 60 y 70 vienen problematizando el consumo como alienante y eje signficativo del actual modelo de reproducción social.

En un paso más abierto hacia los nuevos movimientos globales (perfil más global, en lo que a la pluralidad de organizaciones y el carácter más holístico del discurso se refiere), situaríamos las manifestaciones frente a los transgénicos, que cuenta con diversas plataformas locales en el Estado español, siendo algunas de ellas: Transgènics Fora!, Plataforma Galega Antitransxénicos, Plataforma Andalucíaa Libre de Transgénicos. La entrada de transgénicos significa, para estos actores, riesgos para la salud, daños al medio ambiente y una amenaza para la agricultura sostenible y para la propia subsistencia de millones de familias campesinas (en tríptico *No quiero transgénicos*,

distribuido por Ecologistas en Acción y Plataforma Rural). Dentro de la crítica a la globalización, los transgénicos serían una herramienta para "proteger los intereses de las grandes transnacionales biotecnológicas [antes] que la salud de las personas [...] que ponen en peligro el futuro de la alimentación mundial". El 18 de abril de 2009 se celebraba en Zaragoza la primera manifestación estatal contra los transgénicos. Se darían cita 5.000 personas, productores y consumidores, a título individual o integrantes de colectivos sociales (sindicatos agrarios, organizaciones de consumo y ecologistas, principalmente) para dirigir una fuerte crítica al papel que ejerce el gobierno español como garante e impulsor de una política europea pro-transgénicos, respaldando ensayos y cultivos de transnacionales como Monsanto, en contra del criterio de países como Francia o Alemania.

En una línea similar, situaríamos las declaraciones de Zonas Libres de Transgénicos, realizadas en Asturias, País Vasco, Canarias, Baleares y más de 50 municipios[11]. El carácter local-global, multisectorial y de crítica a la mundialización alimentaria está presente en Declaraciones como la de Canarias, cuya plataforma de presión aglutinaría a organizaciones como Red Canaria de Semillas, Asociación de Mercadillos de Tenerife, Ecologistas en Acción (Ben-Magec), Agate, Amigos de la Tierra o el sindicato agrario COAG (Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Agricultores y Ganaderos); la hipersensibilidad frente al poder o la crítica a la "gobernanza democrática" está presente en la fuerte denuncia que se hace a la falta de transparencia de la actuación y el seguimiento de las experimentaciones y comercialización con materiales transgénicos.

Estos espacios de movilización más novedosos construyen a su vez espacios de interrelación con sectores de agricultores críticos con la globalización alimentaria. Un caso ilustrativo de estas articulaciones desde la diversidad es Plataforma Rural que, de alguna manera, semeja a uno de tantos y tantos foros sociales que abrieron sus puertas a comienzos de 2001 en el Estado español, sólo que éste enfocado de manera temática hacia la alimentación. Plataforma Rural está compuesta por 20 organizaciones: sindicatos de agricultores como COAG y SOC (Sindicato de Obreros del Campo); organizaciones rurales como el Movimiento Rural cristiano; ONGs y redes sociales como Veterinarios Sin Fronteras, Ecologistas en Acción, Sodepaz, Red África Europa, Entrepueblos, Caritas española, Amigos de la Tierra, CERAI; y organizaciones de consumidores y de distribución alternativa como CECU (Confederación de consumidores y usuarios) y la Xarxa de Consum Solidari. Celebra bianualmente encuentros, bajo el lema "Por un mundo Rural Vivo", donde se debate y se intercambian experiencias, buena parte de ellas con idearios dentro de la soberanía alimentaria y la agroecología. Para esta plataforma es necesario reclamar una agricultura pública, para todos, para el mundo rural y "para el conjunto de la sociedad". Para ello, entre otras medidas, se debería proceder a una "extensión de las experiencias de mercado directo como alternativa a la mundialización y la industrialización de la agricultura". Vemos aquí, el concepto

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[11]Consultar listado en www.tierra.org; sobre manifiestos ver páginas de Ecologistas en Acción.

de ciudadanía como destinatario y sujeto del cambio social (y no sólo una demanda sectorial para agricultores), que se habría de reforzar sobre el desafío del sistema agroalimentario global por medio de circuitos cortos, de menos intermediarios, si no de venta directa.

Desde esta plataforma han surgido muchas iniciativas, pero en particular dos son interesante traer aquí para ilustrar nuestro análisis. La primera, *Supermercado, No gracias*, es una clara problematización del sistema agroalimentario desde el consumidor "atrapado" en las grandes superficies que, como veíamos anteriormente, paulatinamente controla más fases y más parte del mercado. En palabras que se recogen en su manifiesto, la globalización alimentaria está dando paso "a una producción y comercialización de alimentos insostenibles y a un control corporativo sobre la alimentación sin precedentes". Es una campaña que, además, ha contado con la participación de redes sociales del ámbito "antiglobalización" en su desarrollo en poblaciones urbanas como en Barcelona. Allí nos encontramos, al margen de Sodepau, Veterinaris sense Fronteres y la Xarxa de Consum Solidari, con ONGs como Enginyeria sense fronteres, Observatori del Deute en la Globalització (ligado a la campaña ¿Quién debe a Quién? (embarcada en temas de deuda ecológica y deuda externa) y SETEM-Catalunya (que coordina la campaña Ropa Limpia frente a las transnacionales del textil).

Una segunda propuesta sería la Alianza por la Soberanía Alimentaria de los Pueblos (ASAP), surgida del 6° foro de Plataforma Rural "Por un mundo rural vivo" (3, 4 y 5 de octubre de 2008 en Andorra, Teruel). ASAP pretende ser un paraguas para construir articulaciones entre productores y consumidores locales que aporten experiencias y realidad a la construcción de una soberanía alimentaria. En sus palabras, se precisa "recampesinizar la sociedad", esto es, darle una visión social al mundo rural por parte de quienes, directa o indirectamente, hacemos uso de sus recursos naturales y participamos en el sostenimiento de un sistema agroalimentario global que se nos impone "fuera del control democrático" a través de políticas de la Unión Europea o de la OMC, como reza en su manifiesto. Si bien, como parte de las premisas de este trabajo, se comprueba el avance del paquete biotecnológico y de las políticas favorables a la desaparición del pequeño productor, lo cierto es que los niveles de contestación y de organización comienzan a ser mayores, como evidencian las resistencias analizadas en este artículo. En ese sentido "recampesinizar" adquiere el valor de aportar a una cultura de la sustentabilidad desde tradiciones rurales y también dar cuenta de las iniciativas agroalimentarias campo-ciudad, basadas en circuitos cortos y en manejos ecológicos en muchos casos, que suponen propuestas y protestas crecientes frente a la globalización agroalimentaria[12].

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[12] Una recampesinización que promueve dinámicas de desarrollo rural sobre producciones locales sustentables para una sociedad rural y un territorio habitable en la línea de lo apuntado por Sevilla Guzmán (2006), Ploeg (2010) y Pérez Vitoria (2005, 2010). Dinámicas que suponen un contrapunto a las políticas agrarias comunitarias pero que son una salida cada vez más practicada por quienes se ven expulsados profesionalmente de la agricultura y del medio rural.

Por último, la globalización del sistema agroalimenario tiene también una mirada crítica desde referentes más novedosos relacionados con propuestas de *decrecimiento* o *deglobalización* (VV. AA. 2006). Ante el previsible declive de la era fósil y el estallido de la burbuja especulativa mundialmente en septiembre de 2008, cobran fuerza estas líneas de trabajo entre los nuevos movimientos globales, bien directamente; bien de la mano de campañas frente a los agrocombustibles; bien frente la relación que se establece entre burbuja especulativa y crisis alimentaria. No es de extrañar por tanto, que una larga lista de organizaciones campesinas, ecologistas, de consumidores y ONGs de desarrollo reaccionaban críticamente frente a la reunión de Alto Nivel de Seguridad Alimentaria celebrada en Madrid, el 26 y 27 de enero de 2009. El título de la declaración es bastante ilustrativo: "Abocados a la catástrofe; cuando los bancos gestionan la crisis alimentaria"[13]. Dentro de esta perspectiva de politización radical del consumo situamos las propuestas comunitarias de "ciudades en transición"[14].

4.2. Nuevos estilos agroalimentarios desde el enfoque agroecológico: el sindicalismo agrario alternativo

Los intereses de agricultores y consumidores en el sistema agroalimentario globalizado quedan subordinados, desatendidos, y es desde estos dos colectivos desde donde están surgiendo iniciativas colectivas orientadas a generar estilos agroalimentarios alternativos. Estos estilos agroalimentarios alternativos están guiados por valores y fines distintos a los imperantes en el modelo globalizado e implican formas de manejo agrario, estructuras de comercialización, así como relaciones entre los distintos agentes y actividades alternativas como ponen de manifiesto tanto la experiencia de la FACPE y la Iniciativa ARCo (Agricultura de Responsabilidad Compartida) de COAG (Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Agricultores y Ganaderos).

La Federación Andaluza de Cooperativas de Consumidores y Productores Ecológicos (FACPE) tiene su origen a principio de la década de 1990 en Andalucía como una iniciativa conjunta de consumidores y agricultores ecológicos andaluces. La participación activa de los agricultores que se integran como socios en las primeras cooperativas es un rasgo diferencial de esta iniciativa. Actualmente la FACPE es una red de diez asociaciones cooperativas en las que se integran como socio cerca de 1.000 familias. La mayor parte de las asociaciones gestionan tiendas abiertas al público con precios diferenciados para socios y no socios. La FACPE basa su funcionamiento en las asambleas de base y la participación de los socios (consumidores y productores). Entre sus objetivos está el "fomentar los valores participativos y solidarios basados en la democracia social y económica a través del movimiento asambleario de base". Se trata pues de una iniciativa de democracia radical que podemos identificar

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[13]Consultar www.eurovia.org

[14]Ver http://www.transitionnetwork.org/

como cultivo social orientada a conseguir una transformación en el sistema agroalimentario desde la vida cotidiana del consumo alimentario. La valorización y visibilización de los y las agricultores es central en esta organización, así como la redefinición de las relaciones de poder entre la producción agraria y el consumo. Así afirman como objetivo un "nuevo modelo de consumo y de producción de alimentos más respetuosa con el medio ambiente, la salud de las personas y en el que volvieran a tomar protagonismo los/las agricultores/as, ganaderos/as y elaboradores/as". El objetivo es doble. Por una parte se trata de tener acceso a alimentos ecológicos locales por parte de los consumidores urbanos. Por otra, se persigue crear posibilidades de vida en el mercado local a las y los productores ecológicos familiares Así afirman, "queríamos consumir y producir frutas y verduras frescas y naturales, libres de pesticidas y plaguicidas, sin química alguna que provinieses de nuestras huertas y campos andaluces. Además lo queríamos hacer a unos precios razonables para las familias consumidoras que simultáneamente permitiesen a los campesinos y artesano vivir dignamente, al margen de los movimientos especulativos de mercado agrícola, evitando al máximo los intermediario"[15]. Consecuentemente, la redefinición de las relaciones de poder dentro del sistema agroalimentario es el objetivo central de la praxis de la FACPE. Agricultores y consumidores son los agentes centrales y activos colocados al mismo nivel de interlocución y participación en la articulación de un nuevo sistema agroalimentario que se orienta a un objetivo común de atender necesidades básicas: alimentación de los consumidores y modo de vida de los agricultores[16]. Se trata, pues, de construir canales cortos de comercialización donde se reequilibren las relaciones de poder entre producción y consumo en el sistema agroalimentario como alternativa al modelo globalizado. Así lo expresan en su página web: "estamos transformando las condiciones de producción, suministro, pago y comercialización que predominan en una economía de mercado globalizada y estamos creando un mecanismo colectivo de selección y discriminación positiva, de seguimiento y verificación, así como de redistribución y solidaridad"[17].

Otras iniciativas de estilos agroalimentarios alternativos han nacido impulsadas por los propios agricultores y ganaderos. En el estado español, ha sido el sindicato COAG (Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Agricultores y Ganaderos) el que ha desarrollado discursos más críticos con el sistema agroalimentario globalizado, ha participado en alianzas con los nuevos movimientos sociales globales e impulsado iniciativas activas tendentes a la construcción de nuevos estilos agroalimentarios como la iniciativa ARCo. La construcción de un discurso crítico sobre el sistema agroalimentario en el seno de la COAG ha

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[15] Consultar presentación en www.facpe.org

[16] Ello implica, al igual que en el caso de ARCo, el desarrollo de Sistemas Participativos de Garantía basados en la confianza y la cooperación entre productores y consumidores. Ver Cuéllar Padilla, Mamen y Calle Collado, Ángel (2009): "Sistemas Participativos de Garantía. Poder, Democracia y Agroecología", *I Congreso Español de Sociología de la Alimentación, Gijón,* 28 – 29 de mayo de 2009

[17] Consultar presentación en www.facpe.org

respondido a la participación de esta organización en la Vía Campesina y en su propuesta de Soberanía Alimentaria. La Vía Campesina es una organización internacional presente en 56 países que aglutina a campesinos, pequeños y medianos productores y trabajadores agrícolas sin tierra que surge en 1993 y se consolida en torno a las luchas contra el acuerdo agrario de la Organización Mundial de Comercio (OMC) y sus consecuencias negativas sobre la agricultura campesina.

El discurso de la soberanía alimentaria nace como crítica a los procesos de liberalización comercial alimentaria impulsados por la OMC y se define inicialmente como el "derecho de los pueblos, los países y las uniones de Estados, a definir sus políticas agropecuarias y de producción de alimentos sin imponer el dumping a terceros países". Sin embargo, este discurso crítico se ha ido dotando de cada vez más de propuestas para la construcción de un sistema agroalimentario alternativo hasta definir la soberanía alimentaria como el "organizar la producción y el consumo de alimentos de acuerdo a las necesidades de las comunidades locales otorgando prioridad a las producción y consumo locales domésticos". Así los objetivos de la La Vía Campesina, junto a la soberanía alimentaria, se centran en la defensa del modelo campesino de producción de alimentos sanos basada en el manejo de la biodiversidad, la sostenibilidad y el conocimiento campesino, en la línea de la agroecología, así como en la defensa de la descentralización de la producción de alimentos y las cadenas de distribución.

La praxis de construir estilos agroalimentarios alternativos coherentes con la soberanía alimentaria en el seno de COAG se concreta en la Iniciativa ARCo-Agricultura de responsabilidad Compartida. Esta red tiene como objetivo promover relaciones directas y estables entre agricultores y ganaderos y los consumidores a través de canales cortos de comercialización siguiendo los principios de la Soberanía Alimentaria y la agroecología. Actualmente la Iniciativa ARCo está en proceso de creación a través de los Grupos ARCo que son grupos locales de productores que se comprometen con un grupo de consumidores para realizar una venta directa a través de cestas semanales de frutas y hortalizas de producción campesina y ecológica. La iniciativa no se restringe a productores ecológicos como el caso de la FACPE si no que amplía al colectivo de agricultores y ganaderos tradicionales y campesinos. La iniciativa ARCo implica una redefinición del sistema agroalimentario a iniciativa de los agricultores y ganaderos que buscan un contacto directo con los consumidores. Es una iniciativa similar a la FACPE pero con la particularidad de partir de los productores, estar basada en cestas, venir los precios fijados por el lado de la producción y no restringirse a los productos ecológicos. Se trata de un ámbito, el del sindicalismo rural, donde las dimensiones de equidad y economías endógenas sobresalen sobre aspectos de sustentabilidad.

No obstante, dentro de este mundo rural sí existen sindicatos agrarios minoritarios que sí tienen una clara vocación agroecológica. Tal sería el caso de EHNE (Federación de Sindicatos Agrariors de Euskal Herria), sindicato vasco dentro de la plataforma sindical de COAG, vinculado a Vía Campesina, que

propone "un modelo de producción enmarcado en la *agroecología*, produciendo de manera cada vez más natural teniendo presente las técnicas que nos hacen *independientes de la agroindustria, cuidando* las relaciones con nuestro *entorno y las personas*" (énfasis nuestro, en tríptico *Nekasarea*, www.ehne.org).

4.3. Cooperativas de consumo: cultivos sociales y necesidades básicas

En el conjunto plural de iniciativas alternativas al sistema agroalimentario, se incorporan las cooperativas agroecológicas de producción, distribución y consumo de alimentos. Estas experiencias colectivas hablan desde una crítica al actual sistema agroalimentario expresada en el poco margen de decisión y control sobre la alimentación que tienen las personas y en los desequilibrios que provocan la lógica de la producción industrial y los procesos de *mercantilización*. Proponen construir relaciones sociales y económicas desde la proximidad, la cotidianeidad y la autogestión en clave de realización de necesidades básicas definidas colectivamente (Vázquez y Pérez 2009, López y Badal coord. 2006, López y López 2003). Cuadran, por tanto, con las nuevas culturas de movilización que tienen en la democracia radical una filosofía de acción frente a la globalización percibida como insostenible y autoritaria (Vara 2009, Calle 2008).

Su actividad principal se centra en armar otro tipo de modelo de gestión de la alimentación basado en la cooperación social, la participación, la democracia "desde abajo" y en flujos no mercantiles. Practican un manejo agroecológico de los recursos naturales para obtener una producción de, principalmente, verduras y hortalizas, que son distribuidas y consumidas por la colectividad que conforma las cooperativas. El sistema de distribución es conocido como "cestas básicas", que en este caso, son lotes -de diversos productos de temporada- resultantes de la división de la cosecha semanal en partes iguales para sus integrantes. Toda la producción semanal es repartida, evitando así la obtención de excedentes.

El valor monetario de la cesta se decide colectivamente y no depende de la cantidad de verdura recibida sino que es una aportación, en forma de cuota, para posibilitar el sostenimiento del proyecto. Es un intento de integrar y de generar intereses comunes y no contrapuestos entre la producción y el consumo; una forma de economía solidaria. En la mayoría de las cooperativas, el trabajo agrícola es asumido por un grupo específico el cual es retribuido por su labor -independientemente de la producción-, y los consumidores de integran en *grupos de consumo* dentro de una red de distribución local, de proximidad.

Como iniciativas sociales, proponen una práctica de la democracia apostando por la horizontalidad en la toma de decisiones (asambleas, decisiones por consenso), por un funcionamiento en pequeños grupos (comisiones, grupos de consumo, grupos de producción) y por una comunicación cotidiana y

retroalimentación cíclica "grupos-asamblea-grupos", con efecto multiplicador y participante. El sistema se basa en un compromiso adquirido por todos los cooperativistas: una gestión conjunta y una *corresponsabilidad*, tanto en la producción como en el consumo.

Desde estas redes críticas se entiende que el sistema agroalimentario compete a toda la sociedad, ya que el conjunto de producción, distribución y consumo es considerado como un bien social (López y López, 2003: 101), un bien de todos y por tanto, del que todo el mundo debe responsabilizarse. Es una propuesta abierta a la participación por parte de la ciudadanía en general, para generar redes de satisfacción de necesidades básicas.

El enfoque agroecológico está presente, de manera explícita, en todas sus dimensiones[18.] En lo ambiental estas redes plantean cerrar circuitos (de comercialización, de insumos) y recuperar la biodiversidad como eje de actuación: producción de temporada, llevar los ciclos naturales a la mesa de los consumidores modificando sus hábitos de consumo, construcción de semilleros, etc. En lo socioeconómico y sociopolítico, se trata de involucrar a los consumidores en la producción desde el manejo colectivo de la huerta hasta la planificación agrícola, posibilitando el consumo de productos ecológicos a personas con menos recursos, y promoviendo la participación política y la reflexión crítica en torno a la alimentación.

La propuesta de transformación social pasa por alejarse de la "linealidad" del sistema agroalimentario y sumergirse en una complejidad basada en la cooperación social y un proceso continuo de aprendizaje. En algunos casos, las ramificaciones de estos cultivos sociales se extienden, o surgen desde experiencias comunitarias rurales, como las ecoaldeas (Ruiz 2008).

Experiencia a experiencia, los procesos transformadores se van difundiendo y se cuenta, en la actualidad, con más de una docena de cooperativas que practican el modelo propuesto de producción, distribución y consumo unitario, en un marco agroecológico y con enfoque autogestionario y horizontal como La Acequia y La Rehuerta (Córdoba), Hortigas (Granada), Terratrèmol (Alicante), Uztaro Kooperativa (Guipúzcoa), Surco a Surco (Toledo, Madrid), Tomate Gorriak (Pamplona) o Bajo el Asfalto está la Huerta (Madrid, Guadalajara, Valladolid), entre otras.

4.4 Entre la propuesta y la protesta: resistencias en torno a las semillas

Entre las resistencias agroalimentarias podemos destacar las de los movimientos que luchan por recuperar la *semilla*. Aquí se entremezcla ese concepto amplio de resistencia al que nos venimos refiriendo: dinámicas de autogestión de este bien común frente a los oligopolios de la globalización

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[18]La Agroecología comprende tres dimensiones: (i) la ecológica y técnico agronómica, (ii) la socioeconómica y cultura y (iii) la sociopolítica. (Sevilla Guzmán, 2006)

alimentaria, protestas sobre la situación y prácticas ligadas la construcción de sistemas agroalimentarios locales.

 La semilla ocupa un lugar singular en dicha cadena alimentaria ya que representa, biológica y simbólicamente, la reproducción del sistema agrícola. La intervención de la industria en este proceso implica un desplazamiento de dicha función reproductora hacia la industria dejando a los agricultores en una posición de alta dependencia (Kloppenburg, 1988). Este transvase hacia la industria se apoya no solo en mecanismos tecnológicos, como las hibridaciones o la transgenia, sino también en mecanismos sociales que pasan desde la imposición de normativas y legislaciones de claro sesgo industrial19 que impiden el establecimiento de una agricultura sustentable, la desagrarización cultural y el desmantelamiento del medio rural formentada a través de las políticas agrarias comunitarias, y una investigación científica dedicada y centrada en la mejora de variedades con rentabilidad industrial y desatención a las variedades locales y/o nativas, entre otros. Estos mecanimos conllevan una grave erosión genética y una desarticulación de los sistemas culturales que conservaban dichos recursos genéticos destinados a la alimentación y la agricultura. Merman los fondos de reemplazo (Acosta, 2007) y se desarticulan los sistemas de semillas de los agricultores quedando la demanda cubierta por los sistemas formales de semillas insertados en el sistema agroalimentario globalizado que designa criterios cerrados de comercialización.

Es claro el obatáculo que supone todo este entramado para la autonomía y el desarrollo endógeno de las y los agricultores por la privación, la falta de gestión o control en el uso de los recursos naturales a la que se ven sometidos. No se trata de la semilla solo como medio de producción, se trata de aunar de nuevo todo el entramado agroalimentario local asegurando la reproducción ecológica y social con garantía de autonomía e interdependencia en las diferentes esferas que envuelven la producción de alimentos: productiva, biológica, tecnológica, cultural, económica, social, política y jurídica.   La semilla así se ha convertido en icono de la lucha contra el proyeto neoliberal en la agricultura (Kloppenburg, 2008) para muchas organizaciones. Ejemplos representativos de estas luchas los encontramos tanto en la fuerte oposición a los transgénicos (organismos genéticamente modificados -OGM-), como en las campañas por la defensa de las semillas locales, tradicionales, criollas o nativas (sirvan de ilustración las realizadas por las redes de semillas20). Estas experiencias ofrecen resistencias creativas (Shiva, 2001) que van más allá de una protesta o crítica ya que los procesos de producción de diversidad agrícola manejan una funcionalidad y

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[19]En cuestión de semillas, nos referimos aquí, principalmente, al marco normativo de la producción industrial de semilla derivado de los acuerdos de la Unión Internacional para la Protección de la Obtenciones Vegetales (UPOV) reflejado en las legislaciones nacionales, los derechos de propiedad intelectual y las patentes.

[20]Réseau Semences Payssannes http://www.semencespaysannes.org en Francia; Red de Semillas Resembrando e Intercambiando http://www.redsemillas.info/ en el Estado español; CONAMURI http://www.conamuri.org.py/semillaroga.html en Paraguay o la defensa del maíz en México http://www.sinmaiznohaypais.org/.

estructura sistémicas así como tiempos cíclicos de la naturaleza. El camino de estas resistencias crativas es la *re-transformación* de una mercancía en un bien común.

5. Conclusiones

En este trabajo hemos puesto de relieve la existencia de tres perfiles de acción colectiva encaminados a proponer alternativas al actual sistema agroalimentario global. Se nutren de la desafección alimentaria, ligada a la desafección política que acompaña actualmente a las democracias representativas, en particular en Occidente. Estos tres tipos de resistencia agroalimentaria se movilizan desde unas orientaciones y unas bases sociales específicas. Los nuevos estilos agroalimentarios se nutren de la protesta de agricultores y agricultoras que denuncian la creciente exclusión de la que son objeto en el actual mercado. Los nuevos cultivos sociales, como las cooperativas de producción y consumo, arraigan en formas de economía solidaria y de autogestión de necesidades básicas, en la mayor parte de los casos, ligadas a entornos urbanos. Por último, en el marco de la actual ola de protestas frente a la llamada globalización, los nuevos movimientos globales entran en el terreno agroalimentario para contestar los mercados globales y aliarse con los sectores anteriores.

Lejos de ser tres fenómenos aislados, se retroalimentan mutuamente. Así, las cooperativas agroecológicas, que situamos dentro de los cultivos sociales de reciente aparición (economía solidaria, nuevas relaciones campo-ciudad, formas no mercantilizadas de relación), tienen lazos estrechos con las redes "antiglobalización", y en general, con formas de hacer que se inspiran en una democracia radical. Y viceversa, situados en estos cultivos sociales, las ecoaldeas y okupaciones rurales plantean una crítica a los estilos de vida tradicionales, y abogan por una construcción de satisfactores "desde abajo", entre ellas la promoción de circuitos próximos y comunitarios de consumo.

En términos similares de reciprocidad puede leerse el afianzamiento de nuevos estilos agroalimentarios. Éstos se proponen desde una agricultura de responsabilidad (iniciativa ARCO de COAG, que tiene un pasado propio (la agricultura tradicional adaptada a su medio y a sus posibilidades), pero también un presente de alianzas con sectores urbanos que, en la demanda de "otros mundos posibles", sirven de base social para plantear iniciativas de consumo. En la misma dirección encontramos consumidores organizados mediante redes en alianza con agricultores locales ecológicos como la FACPE (Andalucía).

Como exponente último de estas hibridaciones y alianzas sobre la base de este tridente, contamos con las campañas y plataformas de reciente creación entre colectivos de los tres sectores. Plataforma Rural es una alianza entre sindicatos agrarios como COAG, el ecologismo más político, ONGs de reciente creación (más confrontativas y con discursos de soberanía alimentaria) y redes de consumo. Y desde esta hibridación entre el ecologismo y el sector agrícola o consumidor más crítico con el sistema agroalimentario global, se han venido gestando campañas como *Supermercados, No gracias*.

¿Qué papel conceden a la agroecología estas iniciativas de resistencia agroalimentaria? La presencia de la agroecología como un hilo conductor aparece enunciada cada vez más recurrentemente por estas resistencias agroalimentarias. Aquí los nuevos movimientos globales, con su discurso de re-localización y democratización frente a las propuestas verticalistas y globalizadoras de instituciones internacionales como la OMC, juegan un papel muy importante en el entrelazamiento de estos espacios. A su vez, desde sindicatos de agricultores o desde el ecologismo político se critica crecientemente la sociedad del consumo como garante de la destrucción social, cultural y ambiental del mundo rural. No obstante, percibimos cómo en el sindicalismo agrario son más relevantes las cuestiones de equidad y desarrollo endógeno. Por su parte, actores que trabajan más dentro del ciclo de los nuevos movimientos globales (en foros, cumbres alternativas) está más presente el discurso de la soberanía alimentaria y la crítica del consumo. Quizás sea el espacio de las cooperativas de producción y consumo donde la perspectiva agroecológica se encuentre más presente y más explícita. En gran parte, estas diferencias vienen dadas por la cultura política que hay detrás de las organizaciones. Colectivos de mayor recorrido, tienen menos inclinación a temas como la sustentabilidad. Y parece lógico pensar que el sindicalismo agrario destaque las condiciones de desigualdad de los pequeños productores por ser una amenaza directa a la viabilidad económica de los proyectos de sus integrantes.

En última instancia destacamos como común denominador el hecho de que las resistencias agroalimentarias son más que un "comer de otra forma". La crítica de la inviabilidad social y medioambiental del paradigma de crecimiento industrial con desigualdad que ampara la modernización primero, y la globalizacion después, alcanza a las instituciones políticas. La desafección alimentaria y la desafección política que padecen los países más ricos del planeta van unidas.

¿Cuáles son las potencialidades y las limitaciones de estas resistencias agroalimentarias para el contexto que nos ocupan? El contexto político y económico actúa a la vez como cierre de oportunidades y como insumo de credibilidad para este espacio. Legislaciones y acuerdos supraestatales (OMC, Tratados de Libre Comercio, UE, etc.) impulsan el desarrollo del sistema oligopólico de los mercados globalizados. Al mismo tiempo, la crítica a este cierre político (legislación desfavorable, ausencia de ayudas, directrices que apoyan a la gran distribución, etc.) se conjuga con otras críticas para dar asiento rural-urbano a estas resistencias: crítica de la sociedad del consumo, preocupaciones por temas de salud y ambiente, despegue de los nuevos movimientos globales. Ello genera que, a pesar del cierre a establecer sistemas agroalimentarios locales o endógenos y apostar por la diversidad y la sustentabilidad a gran escala, las nuevas resistencias están creciendo exponencialmente, sobre todo entre el sector más joven y entre la población femenina. Se multiplican los grupos de consumo de matrices urbanas a la par que aparecen fenómenos como La Via Campesina que elaboran un discurso de soberanía alimentaria desde tradiciones rurales. Este discurso de soberanía

engancha con las dinámicas de radicalización de la democracia, presente en los nuevos movimientos globales, y de los cuales el 15-M en este país es un referente en el plano de la protesta.

Entre los problemas que se están resolviendo de forma práctica estaría, en la dimensión interna de este conjunto de resistencias, la de generar sinergias y articulaciones entre culturas y necesidades tan diversas: campo y ciudad, jóvenes urbanos movimentistas y mundo rural más tradicional, procesos que huyen de una etiquetación ideológica con otras matrices más clásicas de protesta, etc.

Lo que sí es cierto es que dichas exploraciones son un hecho y aunque su perfil difiere entre zonas del centro y la periferia comparten formas de organización "desde abajo" y de fuerte crítica a la globalización capitalista. En este momento, la búsqueda de innovaciones para una necesaria transición socioambiental está más en el ámbito práctico, de promover nuevas redes y situaciones, que en la de determinar una narrativa. De ahí la importancia de des-invisibilizar y estudiar la potencia de estas experiencias.

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Sobre los autores

Ángel Calle Collado. Instituto de Sociología y Estudios Campesinos (ISEC), Departamento de CC. Sociales y Humanidades. Universidad de Córdoba
angel.calle AT uco.es

Marta Soler Montiel. Dpto. Economía Aplicada II. Universidad de Sevilla.
msoler AT us.es

Isabel Vara Sánchez. Instituto de Sociología y Estudios Campesinos (ISEC), Departamento de CC. Sociales y Humanidades. Universidad de Córdoba.
fs2vasai AT uco.es

David Gallar Hernández. Instituto de Sociología y Estudios Campesinos (ISEC), Departamento de CC. Sociales y Humanidades. Universidad de Córdoba
david.gallar AT uco.es

Power imbalances and claiming credit in coalition campaigns: Greenpeace and Bhopal[1]

Tomás Mac Sheoin

Abstract

While the growth of transnational alliances and campaigns was originally welcomed enthusiastically, issues of power and resource imbalance between members in core and peripheral countries have been emphasised by more critical accounts. This article looks at these issues in the context of a transnational campaign involving one of the largest and most well-known environmental international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), Greenpeace, and a local movement in India, the movement for justice in Bhopal, examining claiming of credit for campaign activities and arguing that local movements are not powerless in alliances with core country partners.

Introduction

On 15 February 2003, coordinated political protests against the invasion of Iraq took place across the globe in more than 300 cities in 60 countries. (Walgrave and Rucht 2010). Prior to this the anti-globalisation movement (AGM) had mobilised around meetings of international financial institutions (IFIs), with demonstrations in 41 cities globally in May 1998 rising to demonstrations in 97 cities in November 1999 and 152 cities in November 2001. (Mac Sheoin and Yeates 2006: 363). These were the highpoints of innovatory political action which was seen as beginning in the 1990s and characterised the following decade —the growth of transnational political action by a variety of non-state actors which some scholars saw as the coming of 'global civil society' and others as counter-hegemonic globalisation (Chin and Mittelman 1997) or 'globalisation from below' (Falk 1997). Underneath these spectacular mass demonstrations lay a labyrinth of local, national and regional activity, as well as a large number of single-issue groups and networks. Within this new sphere of political action, alliances were formed between groups with significant differences in resources, cadre, policies and position in the world system. These differences invariably raised questions as to the division of power and labour within such alliances. This article

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examines one such encounter between a rich and powerful NGO, Greenpeace, and a local movement in India, the movement for justice in Bhopal (MJB), in the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB). It begins by looking at the literature on the growth in transnational alliances, in particular the market approach and the literature on coalitions. It then turns to describe the NGO and the peripheral movement before examining the record of their alliance as an example of transnational coalition campaigning. It concludes by examining one contentious area for coalitions, the reflection of power differences between coalition groups in the representation or claiming of joint actions.

Growth of transnational political activity

The last two decades have seen a huge growth in international and transnational political mobilisation by non-state actors variously described as global civil society (GCS) (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor 2001), transnational social movements (TSMs) (Smith and Johnson 2002), transnational activism or transnational contention (della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Tarrow 2005), transnational advocacy networks (TANs) (Kekk and Sikkink 1998) or global social movements (GSMs) (Cohen and Rai 2000). This has prompted the appearance of a large social sciences literature, not just by scholars of social movements, but also of international politics and international relations (Wapner 1996), international political economy (Gills 2000), social policy (Yeates 2002), organisational studies and management. This growth in transnational political activity was associated with the spread of globalisation, both in the recognition that authority over various areas had moved from nation states to international institutions such as IFIs and regional formations such as the EU, and that regulation of commercial activity has increasingly moved away from state actors, leading to realistic presentations of the growth of private governance and to optimistic presentations of responses to such activity as global civil society or counter-hegemonic globalisation or globalisation from below.

While the initial response to this activity was positive and often close to uncritical, later work has problematised it, in particular questioning whether existing global inequality was reproduced in the new global networks: more realist analysts cast a colder eye on these movements, with the nature of relationships within transnational networks problematised (Jordan and Van Tuijl 2000) and voices were raised querying the virtualisation of struggles (Hellman 2000) and the lack of representativeness and accountability on the part of NGOs (Baur and Palazzo n.d.; Gray, Babbington and Collison 2006). Analysts focussed on imbalances in power and resources between core and peripheral members of these alliances, coalitions and networks, whether these coalitions involve prioritising core country over peripheral country goals, whether the search for transnational allies led peripheral movements to neglect local interests and whether within these coalitions and networks core country organisations exploited peripheral country organisations and

movements. These criticisms were mainly articulated in relation to NGOs, but were also raised in relation to other transnational alliances, such as People's Global Action (PGA), for example. Criticism of NGOs over accountability, representation and transparency came from both the left and the right, with some on the left seeing NGOs as 'agents of imperialism' (Bennett 2005:215; see also Petras 1999).

One aspect of this phenomenon was the growth of alliances between groups from core and peripheral countries. NGOs such as Oxfam, Amnesty and Greenpeace formed alliances with indigenous or peasant groups or mass people's movements in the periphery. Such alliances became ways for the peripheral movements to bring their concerns to fora outside the national arena in an attempt to bring transnational forces into the local equation on their side, in what has been described as 'forum shopping' or the 'boomerang effect' (Kekk and Sikkink 1998). These alliances have often involved dissension, disagreements and struggles over hegemony between the groups involved: as Jordan and Van Tiuijl (2000:2061) note 'relationships that emerge among NGOs engaged in global campaigns are highly problematic'.

Much of the literature consists of case studies, though broader and more inclusive reviews have begun to appear, including work attempting to integrate the perspectives of more than one subject area. [2] Bob (2005), for example, is mainly illustrated by two detailed case studies. Other case studies in the literature report a variety of arrangements and power relationships at variance with Bob's presentation of dominant core NGOs and subservient peripheral movements. There are examples in the literature of NGOs competing to be the main transnational representative for indigenous movements: for instance, in the case of opposition to mining in the Napali mountain range in India Kraemer, Whiteman and Banerjee (2010) report competition between Action Aid and Survival International to represent local indigenous interests. In other cases differing local social movements had different levels of power and influence in transnational coalitions. In the case of the biofuels/palm oil campaign, Pye (2010:863) reports 'the key role of WALHI [Indonesian environmental group] transnational activists in the campaign is not matched by similar influence by transnational activists from the peasant movement (i.e. SPI or La Via Campesina), the indigenous movement (i.e. AMAN) or the workers movement (i.e. FSPM or the IUF).'

The majority of contributions to the literature has concentrated on campaigns and coalitions whose aims were to influence policies of states, inter-state organisations or international financial institutions (Yanacopulos 2005). Less documented are struggles against corporations and business firms, though attention to this area of contention has grown: as Soule (2009:29) notes cautiously 'If scholarship on this topic is accurate, in the past few decades there has been an increase in activism directly targeting firms'. The area

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[2] For example Soule 2009 attempts to integrate literature from both social movements and organisational studies, though primarily in the national context of the USA.

which has received most attention has been apparel, footwear and textiles: these are areas where attacks on products allow the threat of consumer actions such as boycotts, and impacts may be created by effects on share price and corporate reputation (Bartley and Child n.d.). Less work has been done on non-consumer product corporations: here the major target has been resource extraction corporations, particularly in forestry (Gritten and Mola-Yodego 2010), mining and oil (McAteer and Pulver 2009, Widener 2007).

One approach to this issue has been to examine relations between core country INGOs and peripheral country movements in market terms (Bob 2005). While this approach has the benefit of of granting agency to peripheral movements (who are able to shop around for a suitable NGO) it may be limited by the emphasis it places on the more powerful structural position of core NGOs which are able to pick and choose from a large number of peripheral movements, only a small number of which can expect their causes to be taken up for campaigning purposes. A less harsh view of these relations is shown by the developing literature on coalitions which examines the formation and operation of coalitions, with the – at least partial - intention of recommending ways in which coalitions may function more efficiently and guard against the exploitation of weaker coalition members (Bandy and Smith 2005a).

Alliances with NGOs: the market approach

The growth of NGOs was crucial to the development of transnational activism. The early presentation of NGOs as principled international organisations involved in international norm-making and norm-enforcing activities was later balanced by a more critical view of them as interest-driven groups operating in a competitive environment. Lecy, Mitchell and Schmitz (2010: 229) note the change in one field of study: 'The majority of early studies in the academic field of international relations viewed advocacy organisations as altruistic actors seeking to advance universally accepted principles. More recent scholarship responding to the principled advocacy literature has argued that transnational non-governmental organisations (TNGOs) are better understood as interest-driven actors motivated primarily by the imperative of organizational survival in a competitive environment.' Lecy, Mitchell and Schmitz (n.d.: 6) critique the current literature as tending 'to reduce TNGO behaviour to either principled or instrumentalist motives, providing little insight into the complex decisions TNGOs continuously confront'.

A useful contribution was made by Bob (2005), characterising the search for NGO support in market terms, arguing that alliances between NGOs and local movements were characterised by power relations, with local struggles adapting themselves to fit the NGO agenda. The relationship between NGOs and local struggles appeared to reproduce core-periphery power relations on a micro scale, with NGOs utilising local struggles to advance their own agendas and local struggles competing with each other for NGO patronage. Bob argues

there are a multitude of local groups engaged in struggles around the world which are searching for overseas support and only a limited number of NGOs and solidarity groups providing this support. In this situation where the power balance between local groups and NGOs is skewed towards the international, power inequalities are inevitable. To put it bluntly, NGOs can pick and choose which local groups to support. Even with the best will in the world, NGOs are limited (due to resources) in the number of campaigns they can run and groups they can support. They will choose to support whichever local group(s) best fit their current requirements or priorities. Bob also emphasises the specific interests NGOs have. While he persistently reiterates that NGO decision-making takes place in an ethical context and NGO cadre care about and are motivated by their causes, he notes that NGOs are not the same as social movements:

> NGOs at their roots are organizations – with all the anxieties about maintenance, survival, and growth that beset every organisation. In the formation of transnational relationships, these realities create frictions. No matter how cohesive their networks, local movements and transnational NGOs have distinct objectives, constituencies, and approaches, operate in disparate political settings, and are motivated by divergent needs (Bob 2005:14).

A further strand of the literature proposing a market approach to NGOs suggested that they be analysed as analogous to commercial firms. (Smillie 1995) Lecy, Mitchell and Schmitz (2010: 231) suggest that this analogy may be more appropriate to service NGOs than to advocacy NGOs. We are lucky to have an analysis of the NGO which is our subject, Greenpeace, (Ledgerwood and Broadhurst 2000) which treats Greenpeace as a transnational corporation (TNC), a franchising operation whose product line is environmental and which responded to over-expansion in the 1980s by following normal TNC restructuring practices: it cut costs, dropped unprofitable product lines and retrenched staff, while closing uneconomic national branch offices. While this analysis is useful, it cannot account for certain decisions which Greenpeace made: here the obvious example would be Greenpeace opposition to the first Gulf War, taken on ethical grounds, despite the organisation knowing that it would affect support in the USA.

We suggest that the intermediate position advanced by Lecy Mitchell and Schmitz is more useful: this sees resource issues and decisions as constraints on NGO operations, rather than as determining: 'advocacy organizations are driven by both a principled regard for mission accomplishment and a highly salient concern for organizational growth and survival... financial concerns represent a significant constraint, rather than a competing goal... Most scholarship subscribing to purely principled or self-interested views fails to take into account the long-term behaviour of organizations continuously balancing both concerns.' (Lecy Mitchell and Schmitz 2010:231). This chimes with Bob's position which allows for ethical decision-making.

A look at coalitions

Bob mainly looks at the relationship between one NGO and one local movement: the issues become more complicated when a coalition is involved. Here further perspectives are available in the literature on NGO coalitions, which have been studied nationally (Barasko 2010, Bystydzienski and Schacht 2001), bi-nationally (|Brooks and Fox 2002, Fox 2002) and transnationally (Bandy and Smith 2005, Fox 2009, Kekk and Sikkink 1998, Tarrow 2005). While coalitions represent a threat to the 'brand image' of individual NGOs, a large number of NGOs nevertheless take part in coalitions for a variety of reasons, including increased effectiveness: 'allying with the like-minded may dramatically extend an advocacy organisation's reach and resources in addition to maximising opportunities for policy success.' (Barasko 2010:162). Coalition building is a popular and growing practice among NGOs. For the environmental field, there is evidence of strong coalition activity, both nationally and transnationally. Barakso (2010:170) reported 69% of surveyed environmental organisations in the USA participated in coalitions, an increase on Shaffer (2000:166) who reported 64% of surveyed environmental organisations in the USA often engaged in coalition activity. A survey of 248 environmental groups across 56 nations found 'a majority of NGOs say they are fairly active in exchanging information and in coordinating their activities with groups or agencies from other nations' (Rohrschneider and Dalton 2002: 519). However these authors also noted that 'these patterns of international action among environmental groups appear to follow many of the same asymmetries that are present in the international system. This is not a network of equals, with identical norms and goals as is often implied by the global civil society literature.' (Rohrschneider and Dalton 2002: 529).   O'Neill and Van Deever (n.d.: 287) concur on this point: 'The large Northern groups, as compared to smaller and/or poorer groups in the South and the North, retain many of the instruments of hegemonic power within the arenas of transnational environmentalism: more funding, more voice, more access to state power, etc. To state the obvious, environmental NGOs can practice their own kinds of hegemonic domination of agendas and discourses.'

As the quote from Rohrschneider and Dalton shows, the literature on coalitions is alert to the problems implicit in the different levels of power and resources available to different coalition members. Here we may cite, as one issue, Doherty and Doyle's warning that 'we need to be aware of the financial dependence on transnational funding of most environmental organisations outside the wealthiest countries' (Doherty and Doyle 2006:699). Even in the case of transnational alliances that explicitly acknowledge and work towards removal of the power imbalances between core and peripheral groups, such as People's Global Action, core country activists still dominate the network (Wood 2005). Among other difficulties coalitions face 'it is often a challenge to develop mechanisms for mutual accountability and transparency' (Fox 2009:489).

The NGO — Greenpeace

Initially a social movement which grew out of the North American peace and environmental movements, Greenpeace grew in a haphazard fashion with the opening of independent offices in North America and Europe leading to conflict over control and direction of the organisation. This conflict was resolved in 1979 by the establishment of Greenpeace International in Amsterdam in 1979, after which Greenpeace developed into the centralised, hierarchical and professional organisation it is known as today. Currently Greenpeace reports that it is present in 40 countries across the world while, as of January 2009, 2.9 million people had taken out or renewed their financial membership in the previous 18 months[3].

Greenpeace's international prominence is due to its successful interaction with the mass media through the production of highly visual and spectacular images of confrontation with environmental villains, first in the form of photo opportunities for the print media and later the production of high-quality video for television (Pearce 1996). Summarised in the phrase 'mindbombing the media', the importance of image production to Greenpeace's strategies can be seen in the heavy investment Greenpeace made to develop its own means of production. This enables Greenpeace to provide 'its own photographs to picture editors and has facilities to distribute, scripted and narrated video news spots to television stations in eighty-three countries within hours.' (Wapner 1996: 52)

Greenpeace membership peaked at just under five million in 1991 and then began to decline. (Eden 2004, Ledgerwood and Broadhurst 2000:91). Greenpeace over-expanded in the 1980s, leading to restructuring as markets contracted in the 1990s. (Ledgerwood and Broadhurst 2000:84-85). Greenpeace responded to this crisis as other TNCs did: by restructuring and outsourcing its operations in core countries while expanding into new and promising markets in peripheral countries: by closing down offices and cutting staff numbers; insisting that national offices in OECD countries become self-sufficient; adopting new fund-raising techniques pioneered by Greenpeace Austria, adopting solutions campaigning with a new approach to business and industry, expanding into new markets and abandoning some campaign areas. The crisis was not a unitary one and different national offices restructured at different times.

While Ledgerwood and Broadhurst emphasise business reasons, a more generous interpretation, emphasising the ethical context of Greenpeace decision-making, would see Greenpeace's expansion as an attempt to continue its struggle against pollution in new areas where pollution was increasing. In an interview in 2000, Greenpeace executive director Gerd Leopold explained that Asia and Latin America were priority areas for Greenpeace 'not only because environmental problems in Latin America and Asia are so prominent, but because economic development is becoming much stronger in these

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[3] http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/about/faq/ accessed 2/2/12.

regions. If we want to have an impact, that is where we have to work.' (Lasso 2005) Greenpeace was responding to the globalisation of toxic industry by globalising itself. Whether one accepts the more cynical or more charitable explanation, it is within this context that Greenpeace's embrace of the Bhopal struggle may be situated. Bhopal initially presented Greenpeace with one of its entry points to India, while also illustrating the dangers of persistent organic pollutants (POPs), against which Greenpeace was campaigning. However, when Greenpeace's involvement went global, other policy reasons were added. Greenpeace was able to use Bhopal as a prime example of the need for corporate accountability. Similarly Dow's involvement gave Greenpeace an additional motive for involvement, given the long history of conflict between Greenpeace and Dow. (Greenpeace 2011)

Greenpeace and coalitions

Greenpeace is generally seen as resistant to joining coalitions due to its desire to maintain its brand identity: for example, Rucht and Roose (2000:16) report Greenpeace Germany has a 'policy of keeping its brand name distinct and separate. As a rule, Greenpeace prefers to act on its own rather than to join alliances.' Yet Greenpeace increasingly engaged in coalition work during the late 1980s and early 1990s, especially in its engagements with regulatory and policy-making bodies such as the International Whaling Commission and the London Dumping Convention, and in campaigns against the ocean incineration of toxic waste (Bunin 1997), the dumping of toxic waste at sea (Parmentier 1999) the international trade in toxic waste (Smith 1999) and GMOs, where in the 1990s Greenpeace was a core group in major anti-GMO coalitions in Europe. (Ancell, Maxwell and Sicurelli, n.d.) What is interesting about Greenpeace's coalition work is that it was not confined to allying with other NGOs or local movements, but also extended to allying with governments of peripheral nations (Bunin 1997:80) and also with fractions of capital, both on policy issues (climate change, Hohnen 1999) and new product development (refrigerants, Hartman and Stafford 2006). We should note however that in most of these coalitions Greenpeace appears to have operated as the dominant group: it undertook actions and published reports in its own name and not in the name of the coalitions.

Coalition formation and other alliances were important in the expansion of Greenpeace globally. Eden (2004: 599) reported Greenpeace's expansion outside core North American and European areas was more successful when, as in Brazil and Argentina, it involved coalition with local environmental movements and organisations. Similarly Greenpeace India is reported as considering itself skilled in bringing together a variety of different interests in temporary coalitions (Bownas 2008: 11,12), while Thilo Bode Greenpeace executive director, opening the Bhopal campaign, said "We are happy to send our ship, the Rainbow Warrior, as Greenpeace's ambassador of peace to Gandhi's country. She will join hands with the gas victims of Bhopal in their demand for justice" (AFP 1999).

The local movement:
the movement for justice in Bhopal (MJB)

The MJB arose in response to the toxic gas leak from a pesticides factory operated by an Indian subsidiary of the American TNC Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), which led to 7000-10,000 deaths immediately and a further 15,000 deaths over the following 20 years, while many of the half million exposed to the toxic gases suffered lingering illnesses. A settlement was reached between UCC and the government of India in 1989. Dissatisfaction with the settlement, with the disbursement of compensation and with the inadequate medical and rehabilitation programmes were the main motivations behind the continuation of protest among the *gas peedit* (gas affected) of Bhopal. In 1999 a report by Greenpeace on toxic waste abandoned at the factory and resulting water contamination gave further impetus to the movement while the targeted TNC changed when Dow took over UCC (Amnesty International 2004).

The MJB has operated on three scales: locally in the city of Bhopal itself and in relation to the state government of Madhya Pradesh; nationally within India; and transnationally in a varied series of alliances targeting the responsible TNC, first UCC, then Dow Chemical. The movement developed in three stages (Sarangi 1996): the first stage of spontaneous protest was quickly followed by the formation of a broad front group, the Morcha. Following intense repression the Morcha demobilised and the movement became based on organisations of survivors with local leadership, in particular organisations of women working in worksheds set up as part of the government rehabilitation programme, a large organisation (BGPMUS) and a small trade union (BGPMSKS) supplemented by a local claimants' union which extended its reach to include the gas-affected (Gas Peedit Nirashit Pension Bhogi Sangharsh Morcha -GPNPBSM) and later by youth organisations (Bhopal Ki Awaaz). Initially organised to deal with threats to rehabilitation programmes, the organisations extended their concerns to other issues involving gas victims, while they also operated in a clientelist manner, assisting survivors in their interactions with the state and the various bureaucracies. Groups intervened in legal cases, opposed the collusive settlement between the government and UCC, organised medical surveys and undertook a wide variety of protests using the full action repertoire of traditional Indian protests, including hunger strikes and long marches.

These groups were supported by the Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA) which was a crucial initiator and supporter of national and transnational networks, while it also set up a health and documentation clinic, Sambhavna, with transnational financial support. The movement also received support from other Indian groups, such as the National Coordination Committee and student group We for Bhopal, as well as from the Indian radical health and science movements. None of the local Bhopal groups was dependant on transnational funding sources, with membership subscriptions providing the main funding source. While BGPMSKS eventually received

transnational funds when two of its leaders won the Goldman Prize, the prize money went not to BGPMSKS, but to set up a new organisation, The Chingari Trust. While Sambhavna was dependant on funds raised in England, Scotland and Wales, Sambhavna did not engage in political activity but confined itself to health work. Thus the grassroots nature of the Bhopal group and their integration with the local gas-affected population, ensured their survival without the need for transnational funding.

Coalitions and the MJB

As Zavestowski (2009:386) notes the MJB is one 'in which transnational activism is not simply a tool, but rather necessitated by the origins of a movement's grievance.' The Bhopal movement had to act transnationally because of the location of the culprit corporation in the USA. This need was reinforced when UCC pulled out of the Indian market and absconded from the Indian courts. The MJB was initially suspicious of foreign involvement: the first international efforts were organised in isolation from the movement in Bhopal, with NGOs in Asia and the US undertaking actions and setting up coalitions. Later a section of the MJB engaged in continuing transnational activity, mainly through the brokerage of the BGIA: this included the formation of Asian victim group networks, cooperation with US-based groups such as Communities Concerned About Carbide, formation of the International Medical Commission on Bhopal and mobilisation of the Permanent People's Tribunal to address environmental and industrial hazards. Thus by the time Greenpeace became involved, the MJB had extensive international coalition and network experience.

The campaign

Greenpeace's initial involvement with Bhopal was as a national aspect of its global POP campaign and as one of the issues taken up during the setting up of Greenpeace India. The campaign was initiated with the arrival of the *Rainbow Warrior* in Mumbai, the launching of the report on continuing toxic contamination of land and water in Bhopal and the Indian leg of the Asian Toxics Tour which took place from November 1999 to January 2000 coinciding with the 15th anniversary of the gas disaster and pinpointing three toxic hotspots in Ankleswar, Nandesari and Vapi. Thus Bhopal, while one of the main foci of the campaign, was not its exclusive focus: Greenpeace also produced less extensive reports on other toxic locations in India. Initially this led to the formation in India of a national coalition AaCcTt (Alliance Against Corporate Crime and Toxic Terrorism).[4]

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[4] This is described in footnotes to GP press releases as an international coalition including BGPMSKS, BGPNM, and BGIA (all Bhopal), Corpwatch, NCJB (Mumbai), TOM (New Delhi) and GP.

Greenpeace's involvement in Bhopal escalated from the national to the global level 'when Dow Chemicals took over UCIL, Greenpeace decided to ramp up the international campaign in 2001 with some global objectives on corporate campaigning and decided to make Bhopal part of its priority work on toxics.' [5]. According to Greenpeace during preparatory planning meetings in 2001, the ICJB was formed, with '5 local groups and over 35 international groups' involved.[6] For Greenpeace, '[i]n the run-up to the Earth summit of 2002 in Johannesburg, the Bhopal campaign was the face of a global Greenpeace campaign calling for a global mechanism on corporate accountability'. Greenpeace's policy aim was the development of global and national legislation on corporate liability for hazardous chemicals: Bhopal represented an ideal example of the failure to impose liability on TNCs. Bhopal became the top focus of the international Greenpeace toxics campaign from 2000 to 2002, with a moderate estimate of resources devoted to the campaign by Greenpeace being half a million dollars. Similarly a cyberaction in Bhopal in August 2000 signalled the launching of the Greenpeace India website. As can be seen from these examples, in each case Greenpeace utilised Bhopal in the service of a broader Greenpeace campaign (just as later Bhopal was mobilised as an issue in the chemical plant safety and security campaign in the USA (Greenpeace 2004), where both Greenpeace and ICJB joined hands with other organisations in the No More Bhopals Alliance (NMBA 2004).

From the point of view of the development of the MJB, Greenpeace's involvement coincided with and contributed towards the mobilization of a new group of activists through the formation of the identity of *pani peedit* (water affected), joining the existing base of those identified as *gas peedit* (gas affected). (Scandrett and Mukherjee 2011:199-200). While the issue of water contamination had previously been raised both the year after the gas leak and later in April 1990 when the National Toxics Fund, Boston, issued a report prior to UCC's annual shareholders' meeting, with the Greenpeace report it became a new strategic focus of the movement, raising new issues of contention (such as site cleanup), as well as providing a new claim on the responsible TNC which was not addressed by the Government of India/UCC settlement, which Dow was using to claim the Bhopal issue had been resolved.

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[5] This quote, and all following quotes from Greenpeace, not otherwise referenced, comes from the response to a questionnaire on Greenpeace involvement in the Bhopal campaign provided by Zeina Ahmed, Toxics Organiser with Greenpeace.

[6] There does not appear to be a full listing of ICJB members that give details of these 35 groups. In notes to Greenpeace press releases the following organisations are listed as ICJB members: Association for India's Development (Austin, Ann Arbor and Bay Area) (USA), BARC (USA), BGPMSKS (India), BGIA (India) Bhopal Information Network (Japan), Calhoun County Resource Watch, Seadrift (USA),Center for Health and Environment (USA), Corpwatch India (India), Essential Action (USA) Ecology Center of Michigan (USA), Environmental Health Fund (USA), Environmental Health Watch (USA), Justice for Bhopal, Ann Arbor (USA), NCJB (India), PAN (USA), TOM (India) CJB (England). It may be noted that none of these organisations are in any way comparable to Greenpeace in resources.

Figure 1: Greenpeace participation in the Bhopal campaign to January 2005

Date	India	Outside India
Pre-November 1999	Testing of soil, groundwater and wells in Bhopal by Greenpeace	
November 1999-January 2000	Greenpeace toxics tour in India	
	Greenpeace *Bhopal toxic legacy* report published	
August 2000	Greenpeace cyber action launched in Bhopal	
May 2002		Delegation from Bhopal tours USA
May 2002		Greenpeace launch Bhopal Principles of Corporate Accountability
August 2002		Bhopal raised at World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), action at Dow factory in South Africa by Greenpeace
October 2002		Survivors tour Europe with Greenpeace
November 2002	Greenpeace India 'No More Bhopals' Jatha[7]	
18 November 2002	Containment action at solar evaporation ponds	
25 November 2002	Attempt to contain toxic waste leads to arrests	
January 2003		Protests at Dow facilities in Brazil, Honk Kong, Netherlands and Switzerland (R2S (Return to sender) of Bhopal toxic waste)
March 2003		Greenpeace deliver contaminated water to Dow, Houston
April/May 2003		Delegation from Bhopal tours the USA
November 2004		Greenpeace issues recommendations on site clean-up
January 2005		Greenpeace protest against Dow at WEF Davos

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[7] A jatha is a long march, usually aimed at spreading a message.

Greenpeace actions during the campaign showed the organisation's global reach. Previously Greenpeace had coordinated action on a European scale when, for example, in the 1980s 'to protest against acid rain, a Greenpeace team climbed the chimneys of power stations in Belgium, West Germany, Austria, Britain, Netherlands, Denmark, France and Czechoslovakia.' (Susanto 2007:11) Now Greenpeace's actions could claim to be global: contaminated material from Bhopal – ranging in size from bottles of water to barrels of toxic waste - were delivered to Dow in Australia, Brazil, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Thailand and the USA. Similarly Greenpeace's cleanup guidelines were presented to Dow in India, Europe and the USA on the same day in October 2002, while an exhibition of Raghu Rai's photographs debuted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa, before moving on to Italy and Switzerland with further stops planned for Argentina, China, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines and the USA. Greenpeace also undertook actions on Bhopal at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland (2005) and the World Social Forum in Brazil (2003). Thus Greenpeace's involvement extended the scale of the campaign from the transnational to the global.

There are different versions of how Greenpeace's involvement in the coalition ended. Zavestowski (2009: 400) reported 'the movement's relationship with Greenpeace was terminated after a number of incidences in which Greenpeace activists failed to respect the ICJB's request for Greenpeace's actions to be promoted under the banner of the ICJB.' According to Greenpeace 'Greenpeace never withdrew or stopped being a member of ICJB. But like other members of the ICJB, Greenpeace eventually stopped being proactive, due to other organisational priorities.' According to an ICJB source, Greenpeace's involvement was suddenly curtailed when funding for the campaign was switched to another campaign. [8]

In its avowed aim, to force Dow to take responsibility for the legacy of toxic waste and the resulting contamination at Bhopal, including cleaning up the site, the campaign failed. Greenpeace says 'the objective wasn't so much to change Dow's behaviour as it was to expose the company and highlight its irresponsibility...We wanted governments to take action to improve environmental regulations and to protect communities.' The first of these aims was successful but the second was less so, as the Global Compact agreed at the Earth Summit 2002 resulting from Greenpeace's campaigning was voluntary. Here we may see the differences between aims of the local movement and the NGO, which has larger fish to fry. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the local movement, the campaign succeeded in placing the issue on the agenda of UCC's new owners, Dow. Greenpeace's involvement and mobilisation of resources magnified the effectiveness of the local

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[8] Tim Enright, personal communication.

movement and gave it new weapons to pursue the TNC and the Indian government, in the shape of the Greenpeace contamination report.

Thus both sides used each other: the MJB used Greenpeace to obtain increased media attention for its cause, while Greenpeace used Bhopal to draw attention to policy issues such as POPs, toxic waste and corporate accountability. The MJB came out of the alliance with authoritative and legitimacy-enhancing reports on toxic contamination which they continued to use years after the alliance ended. This was another example of what is reported to be a key tactic of the MJB, forming a symbiotic relationship with the global anti-toxics movement: 'the global antitoxics movement could use the idea of Bhopal to push for regulation of industrial hazards and the rights of the victims of industrial disasters...While the global anti-toxics movement was using the Bhopal disaster to lobby for international standards, the Bhopal movement used the network of the global anti-toxics movement to ensure that the rest of the world would not forget the Bhopal disaster.' (Zavestoski 2009:391)

Problems within the coalition

Given that the MJBG is fragmented and fractious, with difficult relations between leaders of various groups (BSMS 2009), it is interesting that leaders of the two main groups have criticised Greenpeace, with BGIA's Sarangi reporting the relationship 'was ever fraught with tensions because Greenpeace's corporate structure offered no space to the needs and opinions of local organisations' (BSMS 2009:121), while the BGPMUS's Jabbar had the following to say: 'We have refused to work with Greenpeace in Bhopal for various reasons. We would have been quite happy if they had limited their involvement to technical and scientific expertise, and let the grassroots movement take the lead. But Greenpeace started to make statements on behalf of the movement with the intention of taking a lead. In a way Greenpeace used Bhopal to keep itself in the limelight.' (BSMS 2009:81). In response to such criticism Greenpeace accepts that 'some incidents...seem to have created tensions between Greenpeace and the ICJB representatives in Bhopal': however, it attributes these problems to individual personalities 'rather than any genuine attempts by any organisation to undermine the goals and/or strategic objectives of ICJB or Greenpeace'.

Claiming credit

The major problem within the coalition related to whether coalition actions were claimed in the name of the coalition or of Greenpeace: this was to be a consistent line of tension during Greenpeace's active involvement in the campaign, with arguments over the use of the Greenpeace or ICJB name and logo at different actions, with the ICJB objecting to Greenpeace's use of terms such as 'Greenpeace and local activists' and 'Greenpeace and Bhopal

survivors'. The issue was first raised during the formation of ICJB during which principles for working together and the varying roles of local, national and international organisations were agreed. The issue was raised again on several occasions and a written agreement was eventually produced in which varying arrangements for naming ICJB or Greenpeace were agreed in September 2002. However ICJB members criticised Greenpeace for not keeping this agreement. One major bone of contention arose in November 2002 when a joint action, in which Greenpeace and ICJB activists entered the factory premises to contain the toxic waste there, was reported as a Greenpeace action (AFP 2002).

These problems eventually led to MJB activists presenting written statements to cooperating Greenpeace groups on the issue in advance of some joint actions:

> 'Radhida Bi presented the Greenpeace activists with the following text before the action in the Netherlands on Jan 7th as a condition of participation. "It has long been decides, and confirmed yet again at the ICJB meeting on September 7, 2002 at Bhopal [in which XX from Greenpeace International and XX, XX[9] from Greenpeace India were present] that ALL events and activities organized on the issues of Bhopal disaster in which Bhopal organization's representatives are participating will have to be organized under the banner of ICJB [not 'Greenpeace and Bhopal activists' nor 'Greenpeace and Bhopal survivors' — none of that please]. ALL press releases, photos, banners, statements to the media for the events in Europe MUST be accordingly made. Please sign these papers so we know you have read and understood the contents. If you disagree with this, please note that down too."

Greenpeace members kept the statement with them but did exactly what the above text forbade during the Netherlands action. The banners in the Netherlands stated "People of Bhopal and Greenpeace" and the press release went so far as to describe Rashida Bi as one of the Greenpeace activists'. (Extract from email from ICJB February 2002)

While undoubtedly Greenpeace are not responsible for exactly what gets reported by the press, Greenpeace strongly influence this by issuing press statements. Therefore, I examined GP press statements to see if coalition complaints regarding branding were justified. Following advice from Zeina Ahmed, current Toxics Organiser with Greenpeace, I used Google to search the Greenpeace international archive on Monday May 2, 2011 under the headings Bhopal and press release producing 207 results. In typical Google fashion as the search was implemented these results were reduced to 168 as Google omitted some entries it described as very similar to the 168 displayed. When Google allowed the chance to access all 207 results, including those which it had omitted, the search again came to a halt at 174. Of these results

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[9] Names of Greenpeace cadre omitted to avoid personalisation of issue.

only press releases were downloaded for analysis, and when press releases which cited Bhopal in other contexts were removed, 60 press releases remained for analysis.

When the main text of these releases, including photo captions but excluding notes, was analysed for mentions of organisations, Greenpeace was mentioned 234 times, Bhopal survivors, survivors' organisations and similar terms were mentioned 93 times, the ICJIB was mentioned 58 times, BGPMSKS 13 times, BGIA 7 times, AaCcTt 5 times, National Coalition for Justice in Bhopal and Bhopal Ki Awaaz 4 times each, Sambhavna and BGPMUS two times each, and We for Bhopal and GPNPBSM once each.

Ms Ahmad gave an example of Greenpeace signing its press releases with a note to editors that Greenpeace is a member of the ICJB. However, while this practice was followed in some of the press releases examined, they were a minority: this occurred in relation to AaCcTt 4 times and ICJB 13 times. Thus less than a third of press releases contained coalition information in their notes. Furthermore, while academics might be expected to pay attention to such footnotes, we may expect busy news editors do not.

Finally I examined the sources of quotes in the press releases, to see whose voice was privileged to speak. Here again Greenpeace predominated with 72 quotes from Greenpeace cadre, followed by 23 quotes from BGPMSKS leaders, 9 from "survivors", 5 from the BGIA, 3 from the ICJB and one each from BGPMUS, Bhopal Ki Awaaz, Sambhavna, National Campaign for Justice in Bhopal and GPNPBSM. The predominance of quotes from BGPMSKS sources may be attributed to the higher international standing of that organisation after its leaders won the Goldman Prize.

Figure 2: Analysis of Greenpeace press releases

	Mention of organisations	Quotes from organisations
Greenpeace	234	72
Generic terms	93	9
ICJB	58	3
BGPMSKS	13	23
BGIA	7	5
AaCcTt	5	
NCJB	4	1
Bh Ki Awaaz	4	1
BGPMUS	2	1
Sambhavna	2	1
We for Bhopal	1	
GPNPBSM	1	1

Our analysis of Greenpeace press releases confirms there is a basis for ICJB complaints regarding Greenpeace attempts to claim for itself credit for coalition actions as well as for complaints regarding the elision of the coalition identity and identity of local Bhopal groups behind generic descriptions (Bhopal survivors etc.) which reduce local activists to auxiliaries of Greenpeace. Mentions of Greenpeace (234) outnumber mentions of others components in the campaign (190): when the latter are disaggregated, we find the number of generic descriptors (93) is almost the same as the number of specific mentions of organisation or of the coalition (97). It is obviously less possible to follow similar strategies in describing sources for quotes in generic terms but even here – where local sources for quotes would expect to be in demand for describing the disaster's effects - there was almost double the number of quotes by local organisation leaders attributed to Greenpeace cadre, with 72 quotes from Greenpeace cadre, 36 from specifically identified organisations and 9 from generic descriptions.

Discussion

We can look at what was in contention here from either Bob's perspective of the interaction between powerful NGOs and local movements or from the perspective of the literature on coalitions. Whichever perspective we embrace, it is obvious that there is a major imbalance of resources within the coalition, with Greenpeace's estimated half a million dollar investment of a much higher order than the resources any of the other coalition partners could mobilise. In the first case what is at issue is hegemony over the campaign: to a certain extent the issue of Bhopal was being annexed by Greenpeace from the local movement. We can see the demands of the local ICJB groups for identification as the owners of the campaign as a desire to avoid a situation where local groups lose their name, their identity and autonomy and simply become auxiliaries of Greenpeace.

In the context of coalition politics, what we are seeing is a tussle over the agreed rules of the coalition. In this case the local movement has set up basic conditions for all groups participating in the coalition and, in response to what it sees as repeated violations of this agreement, has attempted to enforce these rules by sanctioning a powerful transnational ally. Our example also shows the difficulty in enforcing sanctions in coalitions voluntarily entered into. The February 2002 email quoted above was signed by all other ICJB groups: while an apology was received from Greenpeace, the organisation again broke the agreement. The question arises how sanctions (or agreements) can be enforced if one member of a coalition continues to break the agreed rules? In our case the coalition continued without successfully resolving the problem What is interesting from both these perspectives is that despite the asymmetries of power between the NGO and the local movement and between the different groups in the coalition (whether AaCcTt or ICJB) the less powerful group was happy to sanction the more powerful NGO.

We suggest two reasons for this behaviour on the part of the local movement. The first would be the long history of transnational coalition-building the MJB has, compared with other movements relatively unexposed to and inexperienced in working with such coalitions. The local movement was not dependent on Greenpeace as a transnational partner, as it also had other transnational partners with whom it could work. Thus, even during Greenpeace's most strenuous period of involvement, the ICJB also formed temporary action coalitions with other NGOs, such as the Barrage Dow Day organised for 10 May 2010 by the ICJB and INFACT, while the following day's protest at Union Carbide's annual general meeting involved INFACT and other groups. At the same time the movement was searching for alliances within the anti-globalisation movement, with speakers at Social Fora in Prague (2000), Naples (2002), Hyderabad (2003) and Mumbai (2004). Similarly when Greenpeace's changed priorities led to its withdrawal from active involvement in the ICJB the coalition moved on to involvement with another major TNGO, Amnesty International. In another example, Soule (2009: 122) reports 'In 2003 students from the University of Michigan travelled to the homes of Dow executives (for instance, then CEO William Stavropoulos) and presented them with contaminated water from Bhopal in the hope of encouraging Dow to clean up the site.'

Secondly we may note in relation to the resources available to the NGO and the local movement, the latter has major symbolic capital through the unique nature of the injustice it is attempting to remedy. While Greenpeace had the advantages of a major INGO, ICJB had control over local resources, which were essential both for legitimacy purposes and for access to toxic material from the contaminated site for the campaign. (Access to toxic waste in Bhopal for return to Dow was dependant on cooperation from local organisations.) The involvement of Bhopal survivors granted Greenpeace's actions legitimacy, while also supporting Greenpeace's policy positions. Here the unique nature of Bhopal as the world's largest industrial disaster favoured the power of local groups in the transnational network: Greenpeace were unable to replace Bhopal as the world's number one industrial disaster in the way one indigenous community opposing oil exploration could be substituted for another.

This case study functions to qualify Bob's suggestion that hegemony in NGO/local movement alliances rests largely with the NGO: indeed, local struggles may be increasingly of importance to NGOs for legitimacy and expansion purposes. From the point of view of coalitions, the story of the ICJB confirms that one of the major areas of contention within transnational coalitions is over branding, i.e. in whose name actions are taken. It suggests that, as well as varying resources (cadre, funds, research capabilities) groups in transnational coalitions also possess something equivalent to cultural or social capital which we may call 'struggle capital' or 'legitimation capital': this gives otherwise weaker coalition partners in peripheral countries greater bargaining power with core country partners in transnational alliance and coalition formation and operation.

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About the author

Tomás MacSheoin is an independent scholar who writes on the chemical industry and popular movements. He has written *Asphyxiating Asia* (Goa Press, 2003) about the chemical industry in India. He can be contacted at tmacsheoin AT gmail.com

Book reviews: *Interface* volume 4(2)

Reviews editor: Mandisi Majavu
Assistance with sub-editing: Jessica Dreistadt

Books reviewed this issue:

Selwyn, Ben. 2012. *Workers, state and development in Brazil: Powers of labour, chains of value.* Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press (paper) £65.00

Reviewed by Ana Margarida Esteves

Sen, Jai (Ed). (2012). *Interrogating Empires.* New Delhi, India: OpenWord and Daanish Books. (352 pp)

Sen, Jai (Ed). (2012). *Imagining Alternatives.* New Delhi, India: OpenWord and Daanish Books. (233 pp)

Reviewed by Guy Lancaster

Conway, Janet (July 2012). *Edges of Global Justice: The World Social Forum and its 'others'.* Routledge: London. 224 pages , Hardback (£80.00).

Reviewed by Mandisi Majavu

Bourke, Alan, Dafnos, Tia, and Kip, Markus (Eds). (2011). *Lumpencity: Discourses of Marginality | Marginalizing Discourses.* Ottawa: Red Quill Books. (444 pp).

Reviewed by Chris Richardson

Calhoun, Craig (2012). *The roots of radicalism: Tradition, the public sphere, and early nineteenth-century social movements.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (paper, 425 pp).

Reviewed by Mandisi Majavu

Selwyn, Ben. (2012). *Workers, state and development in Brazil: Powers of labour, chains of value.* **Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press (paper). £65.00**

Reviewed by **Ana Margarida Esteves**

Workers, state and development in Brazil is a well-structured, well-researched and theoretically sophisticated book that is thoroughly satisfying for political economists but only marginally engaging for scholars of social movements as well as activists. Selwyn masterfully combines institutional and structural analysis in the explanation of how workers in export grape production in Northeastern Brazil's São Francisco Valley organized around *Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais* (STR), the valley's rural trade union, managed to achieve considerable advances in their working and living conditions. Such gains happened despite the evolving requirements and conditions of export grape production, and at a time when organized labour was suffering significant setbacks in other regions of Brazil.

Selwyn's analysis shows that, to the contrary of what is often implied, labour is not always a passive sufferer or beneficiary of the outcomes of capitalist development and globalization. Successful offensive actions are possible in the framework of dependent development, especially when external demand of a high-quality product is added to the presence of a strong, unifying labour union, supported by favourable state regulations. In these circumstances, labour can exercise significant influence on the accumulation of capital and how it spills into wider developmental processes and outcomes, leading to outcomes that are favourable to the interests of workers.

This frame of analysis has the great advantage of breaking with the entrenched tendency of development scholars of focusing too much on the role of state regulation and structural power relations at the expense of the agency of organized groups. The result of this tendency is that the role of organized labour in development processes is more often than not ignored in academic literature. When such a role is acknowledged, the victories of organized labour tend to be portrayed either as defensive movements or as the result of the "trickle-down effect" of economic growth.

With this analysis, Selwyn aims to shed light on the role of labour in development processes and outcomes in the framework of the insertion of local economies on global commodity chains. The author does that by engaging critically with both the Global Commodity Chains approach and with World Systems Theory. It is in the combination of these two approaches that lays the major success of this book, as it prevented the analysis of the development of export-oriented grape production in the São Francisco valley from becoming disembedded from the social relations and institutional contexts that shaped it. The attention paid to transnational class dynamics shows that globalization can be beneficial to the interests of organized labour if the skills of organized workers are a defining factor in making products correspond to the demands of

consumers. Since the 1980's, increasing demand by northern retailers upon suppliers in Latin America has forced grape exporters in the São Francisco valley to initiate a complex process of technical upgrading which provided labour with an important source of structural power to disrupt production.

Selwyn also shows how capital reacted to the growing power of STR, namely by trying to control labour through the promotion of clientelist social services such as very cheap housing in the farms. However, the author clearly points out that the inability of STR to push for further monetary enhancements to their members' working conditions was mainly the result of a shift from a strategy of confrontation to one of compromise in the early 2000's. Such a shift was to a large extent the result of institutional and organizational ties to the Workers' Party (PT). The ascent of PT to power in that period is to a significant extent the result of a shift towards "third way" politics and class compromise, which reflected itself in the emergence of an increasingly conservative union leadership within the affiliated *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (CUT).

The major limitation of *Workers, state and development in Brazil* comes from the fact that, although the author indicates that the agency of strategically prepared union leaders and rank-and-file members was crucial for such achievements, he does not adequately explain the frames of action and learning processes that contributed to make them possible. Besides, the analysis focuses on gains achieved by a skilled labour force that is formally and permanently employed by medium and large farms, therefore excluding the growing contingent of seasonal and informal workers. A comparative study between the working and living conditions of formal and informal workers would allow a more rigorous assessment of the structural force of labour in the export grape sector, as well as of the adequacy of the strategy of rigid and restrictive cross-class unity promoted by STR.

About the reviewer

Ana Margarida Esteves is a scholar-activist, born and raised in Portugal in 1975, one year after the Carnation Revolution. She has lived and worked in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Brazil and the USA. She has a Ph.D. in Sociology from Brown University. She is a collaborator of the Solidarity Economy movement in Brazil and the anti-austerity movement in Portugal. Her e-mail is anamargarida.esteves AT gmail.com

Sen, Jai (Ed). (2012). *Interrogating Empires*. New Delhi, India: OpenWord and Daanish Books. (352 pp)

Sen, Jai (Ed). (2012). *Imagining Alternatives*. New Delhi, India: OpenWord and Daanish Books. (233 pp)

Reviewed by **Guy Lancaster**

Books two and three of the *Are Other Worlds Possible?* series, *Interrogating Empires* and *Imagining Alternatives*, collect together a group of public seminars and debates organized at the University of Delhi in 2003–2004-the Open Space Seminar Series (the first book of this series, *Talking New Politics*, was published in 2005). The contributions in each volume, produced by an array of educators and activists, are grouped thematically, with an "open forum" at the end of each section presenting the transcript of that seminar's question-and-answer period-a feature which makes these books true dialogues. Though approaching their respective subjects primarily through the contextual lens of the Indian subcontinent, these volumes possess a universal appeal, addressing structures of oppression and the desire for alternatives common across the world; however, to assist readers unfamiliar with some of the culture-specific terms or references used, the editor has included an extensive glossary comprising dozens of pages in each volume.

Interrogating Empires tackles the subject of five overlapping and related empires: patriarchy, nationalism, caste/race, fundamentalism/religious communalism, and globalization. As editor Jai Sen notes in his introduction, "While some of these empires are superstructure in our lives and consciousness, being relatively modern (such as nationalism and communalism), some-like patriarchy, sexuality, and caste-are... now embedded in our subconscious, and held in place by extensive, complex, and robust regimes, and constantly reinforced in daily life" (p. 16). The contributors to this volume aim to subject these various empires to thorough investigation and, by revealing their inner workings and how human beings are conditioned to accept them through education and socialization, begin to de-naturalize them for the reader in order that, once they are delegitimized in the mind, they might be dismantled in the world at large.

Uma Chakravarti opens the section of patriarchy by arguing that "[j]ust because globalisation is occurring at an unprecedented scale, we cannot assume that traditions and structures are decreasing in significance" (p. 39). Patriarchy, for example, remains relevant because it continues to shore up systems of caste and class reinforced by the current regime of globalization. Other contributors emphasize how patriarchy attempts to impose hard-and-fast categories on the individual; as Shaleen Rakesh opines, "The panic around homosexuality in India is because of the widespread notion of gender identity being fixed across time" (p. 59), adding that there is the freedom to "do what you want, even engage in homosexual activity, so long as you don't assume that as an identity" (p. 61). This may seem contradictory, but such categories are imposed less to

constrain personal behaviour than to limit sympathy and solidarity with others who may also desire to assume such an identity. Nationalism functions in much the same way, drawing fictional lines separating self from geographical other in order to make for easier exploitation, or as Achin Vanaik explains, "Neo-liberal economics, in contrast with its own principles, wants complete freedom of movement of capital but does not want free movement of labour; so it needs the state to perform policing and patrolling functions" (p. 85). Similar policing functions within the nation, embedded into millennia-old tradition, help to keep people lower-caste individuals, for example, from being seen as full members of society. In traditional Indian culture, "anything created by the Dalits still bears what-according to caste-is the soil of pollution; whatever Dalits do is polluted. So there is no labour theory of value for Dalits within the kind of system that we have" (p. 162).

The contributors to the book's section on religion call for not just the toppling of idols, but the toppling of all impulse toward idolatry. Purushottam Agrawal relates an anecdote about some leftist university friends who were demonstrating against the harassment of artist M. F. Hussain, who was targeted on account of his depiction of the goddess Saraswati; these friends, in turn, went to protest the Delhi showing of the James Bond film *From Russia with Love* because it depicted a dancer cavorting atop a fallen idol of Lenin (p. 192). In the various writers' views, the problem of faith versus reason is not confined only to ancient creeds but also includes new, even "secular" creeds, such as materialist consumerism, which have their own devoted adherents and, like religions, desire monopolistic dominance of the market. The last section of the book, covering globalization as the new imperialism, explicates exactly how the regime of international trade operates a lot like religions have, perhaps especially the medieval Roman Catholic Church, promising future prosperity in return for a down payment of money and labour now; or, as Jayati Ghosh observes, "It is this obsession with increasing exports that is driving the most peculiar feature of international capitalism today—that the poor and less developed countries are financing the external deficits of the richest and most powerful, the United States—since that is seen as the most important destination for exports"(p. 218).

Certainly, plenty of overlap exists in these empires, as nationalist and fundamentalist movements tend to promote rigid gender identities (patriarchy) or develop intricate racial hierarchies (caste), and in much the same way does the dominant empire of globalization produce its own caste ranking through mechanisms such as the International Monetary Fund, which regularly deny to the "Global South" the benefits available to "higher-caste nations," the public schools and utilities that suddenly must be privatized in order to secure needed infusions of aid and investment. The various authors do yeoman work in pointing out this overlap of empire-acknowledging that these are not "*separate* regimes of control but... a *culture* of empire... a colonisation not just of our minds but of our imaginations and our very being" (p. 17)-but they only tangentially extricate what lies at the bottom of all these empires, which is a project (on the part of elites) to make human beings more exploitable by separating them from the natural world. Both patriarchy and caste/race

regularly claim biological foundation but instead misrepresent biology in order to serve ideology. Nationalism draws pretend boundaries upon the landscape and requires its adherents to attach unnatural significance to them. Fundamentalism requires that followers concern themselves with the next life rather than the present. Likewise, globalization seeks to make human beings dependent upon commodities produced thousands of miles away rather than those produced within the more immediate lived environment, especially those which they might be able to produce themselves.

Understanding this, one possible solution to these various empires becomes clear-concentrating economic and cultural efforts at the local and regional level. In one of the "open forum" sections, Swami Agnivesh touches upon the need to turn to the lived local existence, remarking, "Industrialisation has been glorified to such an extent that development has been made synonymous with industrialisation, and agriculture is now considered backward. But the fact is that it is the agrarian life style that is most in harmony with nature and fellow humans" (p. 209). Indeed, a connection with one's fellow beings within a locality can undermine larger empires. As novelist and historian Vilhelm Moberg relates in the second volume of his *A History of the Swedish People*, residents of southern Sweden frequently resisted the call to war against their Danish neighbours because they relied upon them for trade. All empires depend upon translocal bases of power. Even the empire of patriarchy-which is regularly imagined as provincial, contrary to transnational cultural movements-depends, to some extent, upon broader, international networks. Perhaps this is best exemplified again by the Roman Catholic Church, the leadership of which has been able to resist calls to opening up the priesthood to women or undertaking other reforms by filling empty pulpits worldwide, especially in progressive countries, with priests from more conservative nations.

Imagining Alternatives provides a thematic sequel to *Interrogating Empires*, tackling the hard question of what sort of world or worlds should be summoned forth to replace the empires that have proven so toxic to human freedom-alternatives that go beyond the present political system. As Dipankar Bhattacharya proclaims, "When people say that politics is the art of the possible, actually they are warning you to prepare for the worst. All kinds of things have been perpetrated in the name of the art of the possible. So, for me, politics is not merely the art of the possible; it is the science of the desirable, and of necessity" (p. 46).

The three alternative means of co-existing advanced by the contributors in this volume are: socialism, cyberspace, and the university. In the first section, Dunu Roy and Bhattacharya outline a compelling case against the current capitalist regime, while Kumkum Sangari explicates how the demise of socialism in the twentieth century has negatively impacted the lives of women specifically, with an ongoing regression toward un-freedom disguising "itself in the notion of a new individual subjectivity, which in reality lacks freedom and posits freedom as merely a choice between commodities" (pp. 56–57). Recalling the socialist vision of international solidarity, and seeing modern computer networks as the

latest iteration of communications technology, Shuddhabrata Sengupta asserts that "it is the boundaries of nation-states that keep people from creating networks and solidarity," and therefore cyberspace offers a forum for finally transcending artificial borders (p. 82).

The contributors to the section on the university extol more the potential than the present reality of the university system as an open space. Anita Ghai confronts the culture of ableism, while Nandita Narain argues that "the university is becoming progressively more restricted... [and] if the different identities and categories in the university do not understand that what is happening affects all of us and do not unite soon to fight for these spaces, we will lose them" (p. 117). Likewise, Oishik Sircar presents a lengthy essay emerging from her experience as a human rights education activist and trainer who has conducted workshops at universities, places where students exist in a liminal state even as they are disciplined, sometimes unknowingly, into becoming respectable citizens; the necessity for creating true open spaces, she asserts, is that such "will make us challenge our own mental hierarchies that prefer certain kinds of ways-of-life, be it sexual or otherwise, and that in doing so completely invisibilise the myriad, plural lifestyles that all of us live within and outside our functional and performative spaces" (p. 172).

How do these three "other worlds" fare as true alternatives to the existing structure? As engaging as the various contributors are, this volume falls somewhat short on imagination. For example, socialism may indeed be the only humane way of organizing an economy, but what does it mean to have the people share ownership of the means of production when, at present, it is scientific fact that our practices of production threaten the habitability of this planet? Swami Agnivesh's call for a restored agrarian economy is not explored in this particular volume, and any analysis of the present crisis from only one perspective (such as that of class) will only perpetuate antagonisms between those who should be allies, as regular conflicts between labour and environmental activists across the world demonstrate. Likewise, the contributors to the sections on cyberspace and the university give short shrift to the class divide that limits access to both, as well as how such institutions have been-and are still-used by empires to pull individuals outside the realm of the local lived experience.

But this is the conundrum of how best to respond to the empires of world and mind. After all, older, more localized models of community could prove fairly repressive of their members, especially those expressing "non-standard" sexualities and those of different ethnic and religious backgrounds-one should not idealize an agrarian past as perfect in all respects. Therefore have human rights activists mimicked, in part, the very empires they seek to dismantle by building a broad-based critical mass of support in order to challenge structures of oppression? Likewise, though nationalism has produced horrors nigh unimaginable, nations remain the only means by which people have legal rights, and nationalism can produce a sense of genuine care for other people who are otherwise complete strangers. Negotiating some of these perpetual

contradictions requires the critical development of open space, of liminality, advanced by these volumes. As C. K. Raju writes, a classic clockwork cosmos has "no hope of ever producing order, because there is a 'law' against it-the second law of thermodynamics, or the entropy law-which prohibits the production of order in this entirely mechanical world, unless... accompanied by the production of more disorder elsewhere.... The genuine production of order-in the sense of negentropy-requires a different kind of mathematical model, which permits *spontaneity*...." (87). Or as Razib Khan argues in the October/November 2012 issue of *Free Inquiry*, what might be needed is less a new rationalist system-that is, one designed from *a priori* principles and based upon broad goals-but more an empirically informed system which might produce several answers to a single question, depending upon the unique conditions on the ground and the variety of personalities composing any particular group.

Despite any shortcomings, these two books provide critical models for the sort of open space necessary to combat empire and build a world with justice and love at its core, for the conversations within their pages will continue after the books are closed. If humanity ever gets to witness the advent of such a world, it will be due, in large part, to the hard work of people like the contributors to the *Are Other Worlds Possible?* series for their devotion to the cause of human freedom.

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About the reviewer

Guy Lancaster is the editor of the online Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture (www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net), a project of the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies at the Central Arkansas Library System. He holds a Ph.D. in Heritage Studies from Arkansas State University and has published articles on American racial violence in such journals as *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, *Arkansas Review: A Journal of Delta Studies*, and *Canadian Journal of History* (forthcoming), as well as a variety of book reviews in journals across the globe. His e-mail is glancaster AT cals.org.

Conway, Janet M. (July 2012). Edges of Global Justice: The World Social Forum and its 'others'. Routledge: London. 224 pages , Hardback (£80.00).

Reviewed by **Mandisi Majavu**

Much has been written about the top-down leadership structure of the World Social Forum (WSF). In 2003, Michael Albert argued that those who brought the idea of the WSF into reality made a courageous political leap and inspired effective work, but, overtime, they became "a leadership in a tighter, more determinative, and less exemplary manner."

In her feminist critique of the WSF, Sonia Corrêa (2002) characterises this leadership as 'Porto Alegre Men'. In *Edges of Global Justice*, Janet Conway echoes Sonia Corrêa's argument pointing out that the leaders of the WSF are cosmopolitan males who are multi-lingual in European colonial languages. According to Conway, the marginalisation of women and feminism in the WSF leadership is a serious problem that "appears deeply rooted and resistant to change" (p. 120). Feminists have responded by exploring whether the best way to engage the WSF is to create their own autonomous spaces outside or within the WSF, "and whether and how to intervene in and over the WSF itself as a whole..." (p. 46).

Addressing race issues is also not the strength of the WSF. Conway is of the view that there is a "generalised and enduring silence about 'race' in the WSF" (p. 60). Conway argues that this inability to talk about race in the WSF amounts to a refusal to recognise the whiteness of the WSF project.

However, Conway notes that the WSF which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2007 differed in this regard. According to Conway, the Nairobi WSF was strongly pan-Africanist in orientation. Be that as it may, grassroots activists pointed to the middle-class character of the event and felt that the Nairobi WSF was an NGO-dominated affair. What partly gave rise to this situation is the fact that many African delegates who participated in the Nairobi WSF and who have participated in all WSF events before and after are dependent on sponsorship from European NGOs and aid organisations (Conway 2012). Furthermore, "participation by Africans in the WSF's International Council and the functioning of the African Social Forum are also dependent on such funding..." (p. 54).

Conway's discussion of the class dynamics that have shaped WSF processes is insightful. However, I feel that what is missing in her argument is the explicit acknowledgement that one of the challenges facing left movements worldwide is the ineffective strategies that movements use to explain and counter the tendencies of the professional class within the left. In my own work I refer to this professional class as the 'coordinator class'. The coordinator class is a class made up of professionals; it is a class that exists between labour and capital. This class relates to the capitalists as intellectual workers, and, therefore, has

greater bargaining power and status than working class people. The members of the coordinator class tend to be highly educated; they derive their power from monopolising knowledge.

In my view, it is this class that Conway identifies in her book. Thus, she repeats Peter Waterman's argument that the WSF and with it global civil society represents not a globalisation from below, "'but a globalisation from the middle'" (p. 156). Interestingly, even though "autonomist impulses are at the heart of the WSF" as Conway puts it, the WSF remains a coordinator class led forum. According to Conway, autonomism's values include anti-authoritarianism, horizontalism and self-management. Within the WSF, the proponents of autonomism tend to be white anarchists from the global North. In Conway's words, the autonomist discourses in the WSF remain the 'unself-consciously' privileged white youth.

It should be noted, however, that young people do not have power to influence decision-making in the WSF. Conway points out that "despite the valorization of the youth anti-globalisation demonstrators from the North in the global spaces of the movement, and the generalised diffusion of many of their values, they remain marginal to a political culture of organising that remains dominated by a much older generation of men of the Latin American and European old and new lefts" (p. 92). This leads Conway to argue that autonomism is therefore simultaneously at the leading edges and outer margins of global justice at the WSF, "and uncritically relying upon and reproducing global patterns of power and privilege" (93).

It is the recognition of these contradictory political forces within the WSF that compels Conway to argue that the WSF is a conflictual and contradictory work in progress. Further, she explains that her aim in writing this book is not to assign a single and authoritative meaning to the WSF.

Activists will find Conway's book useful because, unlike other books that discuss the WSF, it interrogates the WSF from a post-colonial, anti-racist feminist lens. And, Conway makes it clear that she wrote this book with the aim to produce critical, committed and useful knowledge to support activist practice.

Activist scholars will appreciate the intellectual rigour that Conway displays in engaging with the scholarly literature on this topic. Conway attempts to disrupt the current wave of scholarship in which white male anarchists from the global North are often the privileged subject. She seeks to undermine the current knowledge production of the WSF which reflects the global coloniality of power and knowledge. Indeed, Conway's book enriches the debate around the WSF.

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About the reviewer

Mandisi Majavu is the book reviews editor of Interface. He recently co-
authored a book with Michael Albert, which is entitled *Fanfare for the future:
Occupy theory Vol 1*. His e-mail is majavums AT gmail.com

Bourke, Alan, Dafnos, Tia, and Kip, Markus (Eds). (2011). *Lumpencity: Discourses of Marginality | Marginalizing Discourses*. Ottawa: Red Quill Books. (444 pp).

Reviewed by **Chris Richardson**

One of the most understudied yet overused words in the humanities and social sciences these days is marginality. On a fundamental level, the term refers to groups of people who are outside or on the edges of society. This inequality can stem from differences of class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or any other significant distinction. While fighting such inequalities is a noble act, the danger, as the authors of *Lumpencity: Discourses of Marginality | Marginalizing Discourses* point out, is relying too heavily on static conceptions or simplistic binaries when pursuing critical, thoughtful, and potentially liberating work aimed at understanding and challenging this problem.

For the last few decades, it has become *de rigueur* in academic discourses to take up such causes, calling for equality and understanding from those in more powerful social positions. Of course, it is difficult to be on the side of the "marginalizers" within this framework, so it seems that everyone in academe is fighting for the underdog. But the authors of *Lumpencity* suggest that too often liberatory rhetoric can "satisfy a voyeuristic urge to participate in the 'real world'" (p. 23). Thus, Alan Bourke, Tia Dafnos, and Markus Kip have put together this collection in order to prevent such work from "the reification or even aestheticization of conditions of marginality" (p. 23) and becoming "lip-service to the semantics of equality, social justice, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and so on" (p. 412).

Part One of the edited collection, "Contesting Discourses of Marginality," examines such issues as: 1) Obama's rhetoric about urban poverty, which Wilson and Anderson argue "both challenges and maintains this poverty" (p. 69); 2) discourses regarding the urban poor of Turkey, where Gönen and Yonucu argue the media create "fears of the criminal threat supposedly posed by an animalized and racialized class of 'criminals'" (p. 76); 3) neoliberal conceptions of homelessness, which Willson argues can undermine social justice when pursued uncritically; and 4) representations of marginality by science fiction writer Samuel R. Delany, which Estreich argues represents a valuable mapping of low-income worlds, foregrounded by gender and sexuality.

Early in the book, the editors introduce the term "activist-scholarship" to encompass a diverse range of political practices that include challenging oppressive discourses, the scholarly ways of knowing that sustain them, and the analysis and clarification of goals, strategies, and tactics for collective action. Bourke, Dafnos, and Kip argue that activist-scholars cannot—and should not—maintain an objective, distanced, relation to marginality. Instead, they call for a committed and critical reading of the representations and real-world conditions that affect marginalized groups.

The second part of the text, "Contested Representations," consists of: 1) Tomiak's exploration of Indigenous histories within urban spaces—or the lack thereof; 2) Pasquetti's ethnographic observations of the daily struggles of Palestinian collectives both within West Bank refugee camps and urban Israeli settlements; 3) O'Connor's insightful accounts of the tensions between police and sex workers in Machala, Ecuador; and 4) Kip's analysis of Frankfurt trade unions' failure to mobilize against neoliberal reforms. The most powerful aspect of this section is its inclusiveness both theoretically and geographically, supporting the editors' assertions that lumpencity is a potent, comprehensive term that applies to wide arrays of marginalized spaces and conceptual schemas.

The term "lumpen" is inspired by Karl Marx's concept of the lumpenproletariat, which he describes in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* as a political category for the "scum, offal, the refuse of all classes" (p. 16). For Marx, lumpen described the lowest of the low. Such groups tended to live in the most decrepit parts of cities, scavenging, begging, spreading disease and social decay. As the editors write, "the prefix 'lumpen' should not necessarily be held as synonymous with poverty and marginality," rather, they suggest, the term's openness is the sources of "both its danger and appeal" (pp. 17-18). As many authors within the collection note, the numbers of those included within such a category continues to rise with the alienating practices of late capitalism. And, before adequate responses can be formed to these global issues, activist-scholars must think critically, reflexively, and perhaps subversively when facing cemented views of marginalized people.

The final third of the book, "Methodological Reflexivities," explores issues of 1) community-based research (CBR), 2) institutional ethnography (IE), 3) the challenges of researching institutions of power such as the police; and 4) one author's experiences with the Ottawa Panhandlers' Union. While this section is primarily focused on methodological questions of positionality, ethnographic relationships, and self-reflection, it provides a number of useful examples that help readers-even those unfamiliar with academic debates-understand how such methodological concerns apply to contemporary activist projects. The book concludes with a call to activist-scholarship in order to "expose the normative disguised in the descriptive, the subjective judgement veiled as impartiality, and the value judgements concealed in expressions of methodological rigour and researcher objectivity" (p. 414).

The editors acknowledge that many activist-scholars stand accused of poor research practices, usually because they question the traditional methods for seeking and arriving at truth. However, they assert that it is possible to develop critical and nuanced accounts of socially complex situations not by becoming objective observers, but by critically and meaningfully participating in social struggles. They argue that "the contradictions of engaging in radical praxis while situated with/in the academy can be productively exploited" (412). So how do you fight marginalization without contributing to it, without fetishizing it, without making it sound like an intellectual experiment that must be explained

by a degree-holding professional? *Lumpencity* raises these issues and provides examples of projects that attempt such work. But, ultimately, the collection does not fully answer such questions.

This problem may be due to the very subject of the book. While the editors are conscious of and reflexive about the problems encompassing marginality, they nevertheless remain trapped within them. They argue that "the diversity of activist-scholarship assembled here assists in combatting the tendencies of specialization and narcissism systematically encouraged in academic culture" (p. 35). But the sheer fact that many contributors spend the bulk of their chapters reflecting on their own academic work and their own specialized fields of knowledge makes it difficult to avoid appearing as exercises in navel-gazing. One sees this most clearly in the last chapter. McLennan, a graduate student in philosophy at The University of Ottawa, joins a group of panhandlers, then goes to a conference at York University as their representative to tell other scholars about his comrades through theoretical discourses of liberation and solidarity. The fact that the author recognises this strange relationship-he writes "I nonetheless benefited, as a researcher and a career academic, from the critical insights and methodological comments of other conference participants" (p 390)-does not remove his privileged position within this relationship. And it is this sense of academic voyeurism that, although frequently acknowledged, does not dissipate after being recognised as such.

Ultimately, *Lumpencity: Discourses of Marginality | Marginalizing Discourses* argues that "activist-research can only be sustained through the maintenance of an ongoing dialectic of praxis, critique, and reflexivity" (pp. 29-30). What this actually looks like remains open to interpretation.

About the reviewer

 Chris Richardson is Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Young Harris College. He graduated from The University of Western Ontario's PhD in Media Studies Program in 2012. He is the co-editor of *Habitus of the Hood*. His e-mail is cjrichardson AT yhc.edu

Calhoun, Craig (2012). The roots of radicalism: Tradition, the public sphere, and early nineteenth-century social movements (paper). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (425 pp).

Reviewed by **Mandisi Majavu**

In *The roots of radicalism*, Craig Calhoun traces the themes in popular radicalism that have been obscured by dominant theories. Calhoun points out that political positions that seek systematic and fundamental societal changes are normally referred to as radical. However, a movement need not aim to achieve this sort of thoroughgoing transformation to be dubbed radical, according to Calhoun. He explains that some movements are radical in their own way by challenging the existing power structures through demanding proposals that are deeply at odds with the dominant directions of social change.

Central to Calhoun's book are five themes which he critically teases out from an historically informed perspective. Theme one explains that the notion of progress, "informs a misunderstanding of the relationship of tradition and resistance to social change" (p. 8). Calhoun points out that although the relationship of tradition and resistance to social change may be "conservative" under most circumstances, these may, nevertheless, also serve as bases for social movements that are radical in their challenge to the status quo and directions of social change.

Calhoun bases this claims on his research which shows that:

> "Much radicalism is based on tradition and local communities-including sometimes intentionally created communities of religious or political converts-yet when successful, it both disrupts tradition and displaces power toward the center of society and its large-scale system of control" (p. 285).

According to Calhoun, we understand radicalism poorly if we seek to perceive it only through its contributions to dominant trends in history; however, "we understand it better by grasping its paradoxes, its multiple and contradictory potentials, and its lack of guarantees" (p. 284).

Theme two basically argues that much radicalism has been shaped by the attempts to maintain local levels of organisation that make it possible to perpetuate local cultures and social networks. This claim leads straight to theme three, which argues that there is no necessary correlation between the degree to which ideologies are philosophically radical and the extent to which social movements put forward materially radical challenges to social order. Calhoun explains that 'material radicalism' depends on social actors who can maintain large-scale solidarity in the face of risk and pressure. One of the factors that help sustain such a large-scale solidarity is the commitment of social actors to ways

of life that are threatened by social change, thus leaving social actors with no choice but radical resistance.

It is against this backdrop that Calhoun points out that the growth of labour or class consciousness was only one of at least four major orientations to popular radicalism. Other radical orientations include utopian socialism, the craft communities which were deeply rooted in ways of life that capitalism was destroying, and the Republican citizenship which, although it centred on the virtue of citizens, was conceived in a variety of ways. What these radical orientations reveal is that radical challenges to power often come about because of the combination of two factors-attempts to defend threatened ways of life, as well as populist outrage at corrupt government.

In discussing theme four, Calhoun basically explains that the process of social change is driven by many factors, ideas, programmes, and movements which all attempt to influence the trajectory of social change. He explores theme five by investigating the emergence of a public sphere. He argues that the modern public sphere has always been shaped by struggles over inclusion and exclusion. "The idea that the workings of government must be transparent so that citizens can debate them was not intrinsic to elite politics but pressed on it by popular mobilisation" (p. 10).

It is worth pointing out that Calhoun's research also shows that the modern social movement was pioneered in late 18th and early 19th century Europe and America. Hence, the roots of the modern social movement can be traced back to the religious mobilisations during the Protestant Reformation in Europe, as well as the Great Awakening in the American colonies. Calhoun points out that by the early 19th century the social movement was a form of collective organisation transposable across issues that was utilised by ordinary people "to express a variety of claims, grievances, and aspirations and to do so often with little stimulus or guidance from above" (p. 43).

Although I am of the view that Calhoun's book is a useful contribution to the study of radicalism, I feel that Calhoun's attempt at resituating radicalism is Eurocentric in its scope. For instance, although Calhoun assesses ways in which different European thinkers such as Karl Marx and Robert Owen contributed to the development of popular radicalism, he does not explore the contribution made by black radical thinkers to the tradition of radicalism. Consequently, the contribution of radical thinkers and activists such as Frederick Douglass, Toussaint L'Ouverture and Sojourner Truth is not discussed in this book.

Even when Calhoun mentions the Jacobins, he does not talk about the 'Black Jacobins'-one of the major orientations to popular radicalism to have developed in the Western world. The Black Jacobins showed that the 18th century social democratic theory was not only classist and sexist, but was fundamentally a white supremacist project. Black radicals pointed out that "white supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world..." (Mills 1997: 1). This was a radically new insight into how liberal democratic societies function.

To be fair to Calhoun, he does explain in the beginning of the book that he started this project as an historical research on early 19th century England, although his scope eventually expanded to include 19th century France and the United States. He writes that, "…though this book offers historical sociology informed by each of these cases-mainly England-it is not a full-fledged history of any of them, let alone an adequate comparison of the three" (p. vii).

Looked at from this angle, it is reasonable to argue that what Calhoun's study lacks in breadth, is compensated for in depth of what it actually covers. I reckon the book will be of interest to both radical academics and radical activists. Although this is an academic text, it is presented in a fairly accessible language.

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About the reviewer

Mandisi Majavu is the book reviews editor of Interface. He recently co-authored a book with Michael Albert, which is entitled *Fanfare for the future: Occupy theory Vol 1*. His e-mail is majavums AT gmail.com

Call for papers vol 5 issue 2 (November 2013)

Open issue

The November 2013 issue of the open-access, online, copyleft academic/activist journal *Interface: a Journal for and about Social Movements* (http://www.interfacejournal.net/) will be an open issue with no themed section. We hope to receive submissions on any aspect of social movement research and practice that fit within the journal's mission statement (http://www.interfacejournal.net/who-we-are/mission-statement/). Submissions should contribute to the journal's mission as a tool to help our movements learn from each other's struggles, by developing analyses from specific movement processes and experiences that can be translated into a form useful for other movements.

In this context, 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 thus seek work in a range of different formats, such as conventional (refereed) 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.

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