

**This is What Democracy Looks Like:  
The Genesis, Culture and Possibilities of  
Anti-Corporate Activism**

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award of Doctor of Philosophy



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This is what democracy looks  
like : the genesis, culture  
and possibilities of

## Declaration

This thesis is my own work containing, to the best of my knowledge and belief, no material published or written by another person except as referred to in the text.

Signed:



Date:

4/4/05

## Acknowledgements

'*Ekla cholo re*' (Walk alone-even if no one else walks with you) is the name of a song composed by the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. Although there were times during the writing of this dissertation and completion of my formal education – a process that has been both a personal and political 'long march' for me – when I felt I was walking alone I always knew it to be otherwise. Many of those who walked with me did not understand the journey; others had problems with the terrain, ideologically speaking. Yet they all stood solidly in support of this rather long peregrination.

Along the way this thesis has changed direction more than once although the intention has always remained the same. It is based on a journey of the heart and the mind, and there were times, when, as on all journeys, I wasn't sure what I was looking for until I actually found it. Often I stumbled, but gradually the journey took shape. Compiling a list of those who have helped induces in me a profound sense of thankfulness and humility. I had the benefit of having the finest intellectual mentors and friends and would like to thank them here.

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completing my undergraduate studies simply wouldn't have happened without Julie and I owe her a debt of deepest gratitude for her unflinching support at times when I made even myself flinch. She can frame a research question and an appropriate method at twenty paces in five seconds flat. I hope one day I can juggle a mind-boggling array of responsibilities with the brilliance and grace that Julie does.

I am also deeply indebted to my parents, who let me fly from the nest so early and who funded my gypsy wanderings as a teenager that would later inspire more political travels. Now as a mother, I understand the great sacrifices they made for me. They served as a bedrock of support whilst modeling the virtues of generosity and steadfastness that I aspire to emulate in my own life and work. My father died close to the end of this thesis not knowing what a Ph.D., sociology or a thesis was; yet he was proud of me always. I especially want to thank and dedicate this work to my mother whose life continues to provide me with a model of dignity and tenacity in the face of much adversity.

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To all my coworkers, friends and students who at various times in the past years pushed me with variations of 'are you done yet?' my answer is, 'yes, yes, yes.....I am finally done'.

## Synopsis

This thesis is an exploration of the anti-globalisation, or as it is more accurately called by participants, the global justice movement. It explores the relationship between activists in the North and South. The project uses extensive interviews and participant observation techniques as a method of exploring the lived experiences of global justice activists and how they have interpreted and resisted neoliberal forms of globalisation.

The thesis is organised around and argues against the following dominant representations of the global justice movement: that it purportedly lacks a theoretical base; that it is devoid of vision and strategy; that the movement is 'new'; that it is primarily a 'white middle class student constituency'; and finally that the movement collapsed after September 11, 2001.

The thesis begins by exploring the theoretical approaches relevant to the study of the global justice movement. It begins by placing the anti-globalisation movement in the context of Third World activism and development theory, exploring the relationship between development, post-colonialism, and post-structuralism and situating the movement within current theory of new social movements and globalisation from below.

It proceeds to an extended analysis, based on activist interviews of the philosophy of the global justice movement. Mainstream claims are challenged that the movement is without vision, strategy and coherence. The vision and strategy of the movement are examined in detail asserting that the current global justice movement is a new kind of social movement, which provides a challenge for both the left and the right.

Subsequent chapters reveal the subaltern analyses presented by Southern activists resisting neoliberalism and its everyday effects.

The pronouncements that the global justice movement is an extremely new phenomenon is examined and the thesis explores the borrowing of resistance strategies from the South, in particular the Zapatista movement in Mexico. The complex relationship between the Zapatistas, global justice activists and information technology is discussed, asserting that whilst the global justice movement has many elements of past social movements, it is the borrowing of Zapatismo philosophy that gives it a 'new' and global focus.

The assumption that the global justice movement is a Northern-based movement comprising young middle class students is challenged in chapter four. This chapter argues that, like the Zapatistas, the critiques and counter narratives of development and neoliberalism are embodied in the strategies of local communities and movements in the South. The chapter explores the Narmada Bachao Andolan movement in India and asserts that it is part of a history of Southern based global movements and one of the precursors of the current global justice movement.

The final section of the thesis explores perhaps the most damaging criticism of the global justice movement: that it somehow dissolved after the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The experiences of activism from the perspectives of Northern and Southern activists post 9-11 are examined alongside new connections that have emerged between the North and the South after this event. The argument is proposed that far less has changed since September 11 and the subsequent 'war against terrorism' than the critics of the global justice movement would like to believe.

The thesis concludes with an assessment of the ways in which the movement's analysis and interventions offer new alternatives to a neoliberal world order. There is also discussion of the ways in which the movement offers new critiques that expand the oppositional discourse against neoliberalism and its many contradictions. Finally, the new models of coalition-building championed by the global justice movement broaden current definitions of social movement activism, and our understanding of radical democratic processes.

## List of Acronyms Used

CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
EDT	Electronic Disturbance Theatre
EOI	Export Oriented Industrialisation
EPZ	Export Processing Zones
EZLN	Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
G7	Group of 7 Nations
G8	Group of 8 Nations
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISI	Import Substitution Industrialisation
MAI	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NAPM	National Alliance of People's Movements
NBA	Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIC	Newly Industrialised Countries
NIDL	New International Division of Labour
NSM	New Social Movement
NSP	Narmada Sagar Project
NVP	Narmada Valley Project
N30	November 30
PGA	Peoples' Global Action
RTS	Reclaim the Streets
SSP	Sardor Sarovar Project
S11	September 11 (2000)
TNC	Transnational Corporations
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum
WSF	World Social Forum
WTO	World Trade Organisation
U.N.	United Nations

## Dedication

*To Freda Rose Couch  
who envisioned a better world,  
worked passionately for it  
and inspired hope amidst injustice.*

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## Introduction

### Resistance All Stars Vs Global Rotters

**As the globalisation process unfolds, it exposes its bankruptcy at the philosophical, political, ecological and economic levels. The bankruptcy of the dominant world order is leading to social, ecological, political and economic non-sustainability, with societies, ecosystems, and economies disintegrating and breaking down. The philosophical and ethical bankruptcy of globalisation was based on reducing every aspect of our lives to commodities and reducing our identities to merely that of consumers on the global market place. Our capacities as producers, our identity as members of communities, our role as custodians of our natural and cultural heritage were all to disappear or be destroyed. Markets and consumerism expanded. Our capacity to give and share were to shrink. But the human spirit refuses to be subjugated by a worldview based on the dispensability of our humanity.**

(Vandana Shiva cited in Fisher and Ponniah, 2003:1)

**With all due respect to revolutionary theorists, the 'wretched of the earth' want to go to Disney World – not the barricades. They want the Magic Kingdom, not Les Miserables.**

(Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*)

Early December of 1999 marked the emergence into the public consciousness of a new movement, the struggle against corporate globalisation in a Northern setting.<sup>1</sup> The groundswell that occurred at the so-called 'Battle of Seattle' seemed to catch the world off-guard, and the protestors flexed their collective muscles by effectively shutting down the summit of the World Trade Organisation. This action, and many similar actions around the world, where sometimes hundreds of thousands of people gather to contest the global arrangements of power and wealth, are part of the emerging protest strategies of grassroots movements that resist globalisation. The participants of these movements oppose the tightening grip that transnational corporations, neoliberal economic institutions like the World

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<sup>1</sup> I am in agreeance with several authors who note that Seattle was not the beginning of the movement in the North or South (Chesters, 2001:7). Chesters suggests that the Seattle protests were perhaps considered important and gained so much attention because they provided an example of resistance in what had been a barren landscape of activism in 'a country widely held to be the apotheosis of free-market capitalism'.

Trade Organisation (WTO) and wealthy and powerful people have on the multitudes and processes of the world.

As they voice their opposition, they maintain that people must extricate themselves from this grip. These activists passionately condemn the global corporate assault on human, cultural, social and economic rights; environmental destruction; and the erosion of the global commons - the conditions upon which human life depends. They insist upon democracy, global justice and the possibility and viability of alternative futures. They form what has become known as the global justice movement.<sup>2</sup>

This type of action has brought much media attention but little understanding of the goals, structures, processes and meanings of the movement itself. The significance of the protests against the WTO in Seattle has, like the protests that both preceded and followed, been the subject of much controversy. The discussions to explore and make sense of these interactions have not surprisingly been framed in numerous and contradictory ways. The mainstream media coverage was dominated by images of riot police clashing with protestors, injured civilians and the trail of destruction left behind. However, newspapers in particular also picked up on the broad coalitions of activists, the role of the Internet in organising the protests and much of the coverage asked the questions: 'how could this happen?' and 'who is this movement?' Meanwhile, social critics on both 'the left' and 'the right' have produced numerous analyses in an attempt to explain the economic and social forces responsible for the protests that have occurred since Seattle, and the groups and individuals that together form the so-called 'amorphous' and 'anarchic' 'anti-globalisation' movement.

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<sup>2</sup> By this term, I refer to many kinds of resistance to globalisation. I recognise that this movement has many names: globalisation-from-below, anti-corporate resistance, anti-globalisation, the citizens' global economy movement, anti-capitalist and alternative globalisation movements are all used in literature produced both about and by the movement.

Overall, many sympathetic commentators (Klein 2000; Vidal 2001) were arguing that the networks that find themselves pitted against well-financed institutions (Ponniah and Fisher 2003:2) were the harbinger of a new kind of movement and politics, distinguished by creativity, self-organisation, coalition-building and the will to take on global capitalism, and were analogous in many ways to the 'organic, decentralised pathways of the Internet' (Klein 2000:1). In short, the movement has been subjected to a number of different, often contradictory and sometimes hostile interpretations. Referring to these many interpretations one activist wrote: 'there is a second "Battle for Seattle" that is now underway. The first was in Seattle, the second is in the battle of public opinion over what Seattle means.'<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, in recent years social movements have grown increasingly active at a transnational level (Cohen and Rai 2000, Guidry, Kennedy and Zald 2000, Smith, Chatfield and Pagnucco 1997). They have responded to the globalisation of capital and the shifting forms and sites of decision-making in the global political economy, taking advantage of transnational flows of information and communication and developing 'global solidarity'. Since the 1999 demonstrations in Seattle, the global justice movement has emerged as a significant presence in Europe and North America, with activists demonstrating at various summits and strengthening local activist networks. The global justice movement raises theoretical and practical questions for anyone interested in social change. For example, Evans (2000:240) asks:

Is it possible that a ragtag set of activists who have managed to turn fax machines, Internet hook-ups, and some unlikely long distance personal ties into a machinery for harassing transnational corporations and repressive local politicians might foreshadow a political process that could reconfigure the rules of the global political economy so as to foster equity, well-being, and dignity? It may be utopian to contemplate such a possibility, but it is certainly foolish not to take the elements of counter-hegemonic globalisation that are already in place and push them as far as they can go.

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<sup>3</sup> Jeff Crosby. 'The kids are alright...a summation of the WTO goings on by a trade union activist from Boston' email posted to A-INFOS News service. December 10, 1999.

This thesis will examine the global justice movement and interpret some of its many meanings. Given the 'newness' of the movement, at least in public consciousness, there remains much scope for investigation into how global justice activists construct their world, conceptualise globalisation, think about resistance across spatial scales and articulate their ideas about social change. This thesis will explore these points, by describing different modes of resistance in the movement and the relationships between them. Surprisingly, despite the journalistic reports, testimonial volumes and some academic studies of the global justice movement (McDonald 2000: Smith 2000: Starr 2000) none have focused on the movement in the context of Third World activism.<sup>4</sup> This is a surprising omission given that, in my view, Southern global justice activists have provided some of the most evolved and critical strategic contributions to the movement, which are grounded in clear philosophies of political praxis and which demonstrate the necessity for global organising.

Similarly, although recently there has been much theorising about the emergence of new transnational forms of political organisation, mobilisation and practice (Appadurai, 1990, 1993; Hegedus, 1990; Smith, 1994), very little ethnographic work has been done on them. As Micheal Smith suggests 'we have yet to invent the discursive terms appropriate for representing the agencies and practices currently constituting bifocal subjects, transnational social space and globalised political space' (1994:15). Additionally, New Social Movement (NSM) theorists have focussed on developing theoretical postulates about contemporary movements, but all this theorising has come at the expense of empirical studies (Canel 1992:38, Epstein 1990:39). The study of social movements turns into the study of theories of social movements. Of course, some empirical studies related to my research questions exist (for example, see Carroll 1992, Cohen and Rai 2000, Guidry, Kennedy and Zald 2000, Starr 2000). However, in general there is a lack of connection between

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<sup>4</sup> With the exception of the recently published *One No Many Yeses and Notes From Nowhere: the Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism*.

academic theories and contemporary social movements' practice (Epstein 1990:36). Adam (1993) argues that NSM theorists have too often neglected to learn from the analyses that movement participants generate. He notes that many participants 'understand their praxis within a comprehensive worldview which recognises and supports subordinate people wherever they exist' (Adam 1993:330). Edelman (2001) suggests that NSM theorists would benefit from 'a more genuine appreciation of the lived experience of movement participants and non-participants, something that is accessible primarily through ethnography, oral narratives, or documentary history' (309). By contrast, this thesis has an ethnographic component and attempts to capture the lived experiences of activists.

The overarching aim in what follows is to examine the global justice movement and its relationship between activists in the North and South. This thesis will argue that the movement cannot be understood without first acknowledging its origins in Third World<sup>5</sup> activism against neoliberalism. In fact Seattle would not have been possible without previous struggles. Seane and Taddei (2002:101) discuss some of the processes that nourished the Seattle (and later) demonstrations. These include: the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism held in Chiapas, Mexico in 1996, at the initiative of the Zapatistas; the campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) during the 1990s; the coordination of movements of the unemployed in Europe that began in 1997; the economic-financial crisis in Southeast Asia and the political protests in that part of the world in 1997 and following years; as well as the growing demonstrations and

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<sup>5</sup> The term "Third World" is not universally accepted. Some prefer other terms such as - the South, non-industrialized countries, underdeveloped countries, undeveloped countries, mal-developed countries, emerging nations. The term "Third World" is probably the one most widely used in the media today. In this thesis I use both Third World and 'majority world'. No term describes all non-"First World", non-industrialized, non-developed, non-"Western" countries accurately. In comparison, the United States has been categorized as being part of: the West, the First World, the industrialized world, the developed world, the North.

'global days of action' in connection with meetings of the WTO, the G8 and the like, and the summits and conferences that were being held in Africa, Latin America and Asia to promote justice, democracy and sustainable development.

These people's summits or alternative summits are another significant thread of the global justice movement. They usually coincide with other major international meetings. For example, the World Social Forum (WSF) held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, coincided with the World Economic Forum (WEF); the Group of 6 Billion (G6B) Peoples Summit coincided with the G8 summit held in Kananaskis, Canada; the European Social Forum held in Italy was directly inspired by the WSF. Bello (2002:1) writes that these forums constitute spaces for movement participants to meet, network, gather energy and 'elaborate, discuss, and debate the vision, values and institutions of an alternative economic and political order'. By debating political and economic issues with a focus on democracy, sustainability, human rights and a fair redistribution of wealth, participants at these summits challenge the hypocrisy and undemocratic nature of meetings like the WEF and G8 summits.

By challenging the key criticisms that have been made against the movement I will attempt to demonstrate that global justice activists are developing globally a political strategy and concept of democracy that takes into account the dialectical relationship between particularity and universality and the embeddedness of global and local spatial scales within each other. Through their prefigurative politics and understanding of human agency and imagination in creating social change, members of the movement are developing conditions for cultivating alternative forms of social organisation.

Many commentators fail to engage with the complexities of global justice activism, an empirical analysis of which would highlight how individuals see their role as activists and their relationship with other activists globally. Detailed questions need to be asked and stories documented of the many experiences of global justice activism in the North and South, in order to understand more fully the implications of the movement and its impact on changing definitions of democracy, politics and protest. This is also crucial in understanding its multidimensional character.

## **Naming and Defining**

It is necessary to define briefly the terms, which are to be used throughout this thesis. The global justice movement is situated within the larger context of globalisation, an amorphous term used to describe a myriad of different processes, structures claims, assertions, policies and threats. This discourse surrounding globalisation has sought to ensure its ascendance. Bauman (1998:1) writes: 'All vogue words tend to share a similar fate: the more experiences they pretend to make transparent, the more they themselves become opaque. The more numerous are the orthodox truths they elbow out and supplant, the faster they turn into no-questions-asked canons'.

As people apply the term 'globalisation' to more of human experience, it gains authority as a concept, yet any meaning it might have had grows elusive. Indeed, globalisation has become so ubiquitous it 'has achieved a virtual hegemony and so is presented with an air of inevitability that disarms the imagination and prevents thought of and action towards a systematic alternative - towards another, more just social and economic order' (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001:8). Global justice activists make this precise argument, as we will see in the following chapters. However, the hegemony of globalisation is not total and global capitalism is obviously not without its

critics. Hegemony by its nature can never be complete; it is constantly being constructed, reinforced and renewed. 'The Battle of Seattle' clearly has demonstrated the emergence of a counter-hegemony generated within the grassroots in a Northern context. The particular nature of corporate-led globalisation has in fact aided the formation of resistance, by linking coalitions that may never have become allies:

The growing diversity of social movements is due to the constant increase in the number of the systems' collective victims, extending beyond those directly integrated into a capital-labour relation.

(Hardt and Negri 2000:vi)

As Ponniah and Fisher state, transnational alliances of social movements are not new. But they note two striking characteristics about contemporary organising: 'they emerge with increasing speed and with less regard for geographical distance; and they move along networks that are neither fixed or symmetrical' (2003:2). These diverse agents have used the tools of technological change to make linkages between their struggles and the struggle of people globally. Thus actors might be named globalised in nature. Edelman (2001:305) cites Appadurai (2000) who remarked: 'the sociology of these new emergent social forms – part movements, part networks, part organisations – has yet to be developed'. Edelman goes on to note:

It is by now commonplace to indicate how globalisation generates identity politics (Castells 1997), how attacks on welfare-state institution fire resistance movements (Edelman 1999), and how supranational governance institutions (NAFTA, IMF, World Bank, WTO) are part and parcel of each process (Ayers 1998, Ritchie 1996). It is less frequent to find analyses that link these trends to the expanding movement against corporate power and unfettered free trade which burst into public consciousness in 1999 during the Seattle demonstrations and riots against the WTO.

(Edelman 2001:308)

Indeed, theorists studying globalisation or global capital incorporate analyses of resistance movements into their work (Mittleman 2000, Sklair 1995), or at least note these emerging forms and their possibilities (Carroll 2001, Comaroff

and Comaroff 2000, Harvey 2000, Rouse 1995). Moreover, there is a growing feeling among scholars of social movements and otherwise that the global justice movement is important to study because of the counter-hegemonic possibilities it embodies (Carroll and Ratner 2001, Evans 2000, Lynch 1998, Sklair 2000).

While the growing body of literature within the field of social movements which examines the increasingly global or transnational character of social movement activity, will be explored in the following chapter, it is important to note the significant work that explores themes such as transnational public spheres or civil society, cosmopolitan politics, or global solidarity (Cohen and Rai 2000, Guidry, Kennedy and Zald 2000, Smith, Chatfield and Pagnucco 1997, Waterman 1998). Some scholars focus specifically on movements resisting globalisation, although the global justice movement is a relatively recent phenomenon. For example, Langman, Morris and Zalewski (2001) discuss cyber activism and the 'global justice collective identity' as the most distinctive feature of the 'alternative globalisation movement'. They describe the roots and characteristics of movements resisting globalisation that have converged since the 1999 Seattle mobilisation against the WTO, as do Seane and Taddei (2002) and Smith (2001b). These theorists also raise questions about the future of the global justice movement and its challenges to globalisation.

Some theorists discuss concerns about the discursive aspect of these challenges. Starr (2000:156) writes that global justice activists:

...use discourse in the form of truth as part of building the movement and in the process of presenting themselves to outsiders... [they] are wielding discourse in a struggle for hegemony. This means both hegemony of interpretation among allies and also hegemony in the larger social discourse... [they] are fighting for ideological hegemony. They are not fighting to have their truths acknowledged alongside dominant truths.

The effectiveness of this movement in resisting globalisation depends on activists' successful formation and articulation of a meaningful discursive challenge (Lynch 1998, Evans 2000). Panayotakis (2001) and Smith (2001a) discuss their concern that the term 'anti-globalisation' hampers such a discursive challenge. While activists themselves disagree about the name of the movement, the public, the mass media and the state have uncritically (and not un-coincidentally) accepted the anti-globalisation label, even if only as a 'convenient shorthand' (Panayotakis 2001:96). Panayotakis (2001) and Smith (2001a) argue that 'anti-globalisation' – even when activists use it - is problematic and laden with ideological functions; after all, 'naming the movement should not be left to those in power; it is part of the struggle itself' (Smith 2001a: 14).

First, 'anti-globalisation' has become some vague (and thus unintelligible) message of activists. People do not have to think about what 'anti-globalisation' may mean. Besides, the meaning should be obvious since 'globalisation' is supposedly common sense. Second, since globalisation is inevitable, it advocates can characterise 'anti-globalisation' activists as irrational for trying to stop 'inevitable and unambiguously good economic development' (Smith 2001a: 14). Third, the 'anti' gives the movement an oppositional character and people in power discredit the movement for being defensive and reactionary: they do not allow space for a proactive politics – even though they ask, 'we know what the movement is against, but what is it for?' (Smith 2001a: 14).

Finally, Panayotakis (2001:97) writes that the term 'anti-globalisation' makes it possible to cast the movement 'as utopian, parochial and incapable of recognising present day to day realities...[defining] the movement in terms of its opposition to globalisation in general allows its supporters to be dismissed as yearning for a past that is gone forever'. By this characterisation, the

movement could never be effective at bringing about progressive social transformation. Lynch (1998) writes that peace movements have similarly been accused of oversimplifying the international political economy and being utopian, and that the 'anti-globalisation movement faces normative difficulties that are at least as serious, if not more so' (160). For example:

It is one thing to point to the growth of corporate power in generating loss of governmental and individual control in decisions of basic welfare, but quite another to recommend a solution based on a concept of local control that can be criticized as bordering on autarky, despite the protestations of its adherents...an overemphasis on relocalisation can easily be dismissed as an anti-modern throwback.

(Lynch 1998:160)

Thus, the undialectical implications of the 'anti-globalisation' label function ideologically to 'deflect challenges to corporate-capitalist ideology...[and] provides a convenient defense for global capitalist ideologies while it shifts public attention away from the critical message protestors seek to bring to the public agenda' (Smith 2001a: 14). Panayotakis (2001:96) argues that 'the term 'anti-globalisation movement' does not do justice even to the movement's political practice'.

With this in mind, I have chosen to use the term neoliberalism rather than globalisation. The concept of a 'global justice activist' is defined quite broadly within this research. I follow the definition of an activist defined by Pickerill in her study of environmental activists when she writes: 'I have taken the term to represent far more than the limited stereotype, which denotes short-term physical action. Instead I suggest that an 'activist' is one who takes any form of action, ranging from physical action to minute lifestyle adjustments, including those who simply voice their concern or opinions through letter writing or discussion (such as an email discussion group). As Maxey suggests, activism is not something that can be clearly bounded, marked as separate from everyday life' (Pickerill 2000).

## **Capturing What Democracy Looks Like**

The aim of this thesis is to explore the global justice movement and the relationship between Northern and Southern aspects of the movement and to document activists' and participants' perceptions of the movement. The thesis is organised around and argues against the following dominant representations of the global justice movement: that it purportedly lacks a theoretical base; that it is devoid of vision and strategy; that the movement is 'new'; that it is primarily a 'white middle class student constituency; and finally that the movement collapsed after September 11, 2001.

Chapter One explores the theoretical approaches relevant to the study of the global justice movement. The purpose of this chapter is to detail why these approaches are the most appropriate and useful. It begins by placing the global justice movement in the context of Third World activism and development theory. Second, it explores the relationship between development, post-colonialism, and post-structuralism as these authors see the necessity of infusing development theory with critiques of colonialism and the deathly impacts Western modernity has had in the Third World. Third, the chapter situates the movement within current theory of new social movements and globalisation from below. Finally, the chapter examines the methodology of the thesis. This section outlines the process undertaken in data collection and the alternative ways in which interviewees and case studies were contacted and studied. The effect of participation in global justice activism upon the research is examined.

Chapter Two is an extended analysis, based on activist interviews of the philosophy of the global justice movement. It aims to challenge mainstream claims that the movement is without vision, strategy and coherence. Vision and strategy are examined in detail, justifying the importance of the subject

and laying the foundation for future chapters. It concludes with the assertion that the current global justice movement is a new kind of social movement, which provides a challenge for both the left and the right.

Chapter Three examines the pronouncements that the global justice movement is an extremely new phenomenon and explores the borrowing of resistance strategies from the South, in particular the Zapatista movement in Mexico. This chapter also examines the complex relationship between the Zapatistas, global justice activists and information technology. The chapter asserts that whilst the global justice movement has many elements of past social movements, it is the borrowing of Zapatismo philosophy that gives it a 'new' and global focus.

Chapter Four develops this argument about the Third World and the assumption that the global justice movement is a Northern-based movement comprising young middle class students. This chapter argues that, like the Zapatistas, the critiques and counter narratives of development and neoliberalism are embodied in the strategies of local communities and movements in the South. The chapter also explores the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* movement in India and asserts that the NBA is part of a history of Southern based global movements and one of the precursors of the current global justice movement. Through direct commentary by activists and organisers and literature about the movement, this chapter attempts to provide an insight into the lived effects of neoliberalism. Furthermore, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the anti-imperial discourses used by activists to resist neoliberal development. Its purpose is to highlight the subaltern critiques and counter-narratives that are embodied in the strategies of local movements.

Chapter Five develops and explores the final and perhaps the most damaging criticism of the global justice movement: that it has dissolved after the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Although it is claimed by some that the events of September 11 and the subsequent 'war against terrorism' had a profound and disabling effect on the global justice movement, I attempt to demonstrate (following Curtis 2002 and Shifting Ground Collective 2001) that much less has in fact changed. Therefore, the chapter discusses the experiences of activism from the perspectives of Northern and Southern activists post 9-11 and explores the imaginations and connections between the North and the South after this event. As I stated at the outset of this thesis, the study hypothesises that the various social movements that constitute the global justice movement have much to teach us all about the problems of neoliberal development and the radically democratic methods by which transnational coalitions may be forged to resist them. This chapter highlights the coalitions that are in operation and claims that it is due to the peripheralising of Southern movements that the claims of the movement's demise are given any credence. Chapter Five also continues the discussion started in Chapter Four of the subaltern possibilities of resistance.

The thesis concludes with an assessment of the ways in which the movement's analysis and interventions offer new alternatives to a neoliberal world order. There is also discussion of the ways in which the movement offers new critiques that expand the oppositional discourse against neoliberalism and its many contradictions. Finally, there is mention of the many ways the movement broadens the definitions of social movements by suggesting empowering new models of coalition-building and radical democratic process.

The future of the communities explored in this thesis are and will be deeply affected by the transformed relationships of neoliberalism. This thesis will demonstrate that their future survival will depend on this ability to build cooperative connections, alliances and solidarity internationally whilst continuing to articulate their own experiences and aspirations, from a local level and linking these subjective experiences to an analysis of broader, social, economic and political structures. Thus, the wisdom of the oppressed makes an important contribution not only in terms of alternative values and worldviews, but also in terms of the experience of struggle and change (Ife, 1995:96).

## Chapter One

### The Changing Face of Resistance

In 1988, in her book *A Fate Worse Than Debt*, Susan George claims that:

Third World social and political creativity is the big unwritten story of the decade. New kinds of organisation are, of necessity, springing up in all sorts of unlikely spots. Many are unclassifiable and do not even have recognisable leaders. Thus we in the North tend to ignore them because they don't behave like our own political parties, trade unions, civic associations and so on. Allow me to suggest that, compared with the inventiveness now being displayed in the Third World, our own organisations often appear paralysed, congealed and very old hat.

(George 1989: 4)

The resemblance between George's description of Third World social-change activism during the 1980s and that of the global justice movement of the North during the 1990s (most notably, the absence of recognisable leaders and the fact that these organisations operate in a way quite distinct from 'our' own parties and unions) is quite striking. This chapter will use two theoretical approaches in order to acknowledge that, while 'we in the North (have tended) to ignore them', struggles against neoliberalism are not, in and of themselves, anything new.

This chapter explores the theoretical approaches relevant to the study of the global justice movement. The perspectives examined are intended to provide the theoretical framework of the research serving to inform and shape the subsequent empirical analysis. The chapter aims to point out that the 'Battle of Seattle' and those that have preceded it reflect the 'core issues' (Burbach 2001:2) that have been taken up in Third World activism for many years. The 'enormous discontent' against the reign of international capital has its origins in the many rebellions that have taken place in the Third World against neoliberalism, embodied in so-called structural adjustment policies, Third

World debt, the MAI, World Bank projects and NAFTA. Examples include (and are not limited to) the Zapatista uprising in 1994...the strikes and uprisings in Indonesia and South Korea in 1997 (due to the Asian financial crisis) and the more recent revolts in early 2000 of Ecuadorian Indians and Bolivians against neoliberal austerity policies (Burbach 2001: 145). Rather than the starting point, the Battle of Seattle can be viewed as a consolidation of an already existing 'truly diverse movement capable of challenging the most powerful institutions on the planet'. (Burbach 2001:100).

Drawing from schools of development modernisation, dependency, world systems, gender and development, environment and development and post development, this chapter will contextualise the current advent of neoliberalism (and the subsequent rise of the global justice movement) within various historical and theoretical concerns of development thought. Both within the First and the Third World, the rise of neoliberalism has paralleled a transformation of social movement politics, documented in new social movement research and studies of globalisation-from-below. The combination of development theory and social movement approaches provides the framework on which my research question and empirical study is premised. These two predominantly theoretical discussions will ground the research questions and subsequent empirical investigations.

## **Theoretical Beginnings: 'Development' and 'Neoliberalism'**

Shaped largely within modernist traditions of social science and political economy, the significance of development discourse lies not merely in its interpretation of the world, but also in its influence in constructing national and transnational institutions that circumscribe the everyday lives of the world's people. From legacies of colonial expansion through the shifts in global dependencies of the immediate post-war era to the current

reorganisation of the world system, the discourse of development has been the site of various wars of position over the distribution of economic power. In the 'long' nineteenth century which Arrighi dates from 1786-1917 (1994), the modern discipline of political economy was a site of conflict between (neo) classical liberalism that rationalised the consolidation of European capital, and Marxism that contested capitalist crises and imperialist ventures throughout the globe.

The mid-twentieth century saw the continued expansion of capitalist crises to the South, the rise of socialist experiments, and a succession of wars over the distribution of global political and economic power. The latter especially led to European restructuring and the growth of a new hegemony, the United States, which significantly shaped the ideologies and institutions of global economic management and foreign investment during the Cold War. It is within these legacies of economic change and imperial conflict that 'development' came to be a 'god term' denoting modern progress and the global consolidation of capitalism over other alternatives. In the late twentieth century, however, the advent of decolonisation, Western economic crises, a shift towards post-Fordism, newly industrialising countries, mass consumerism, new technologies and thoroughly transnational production have prompted a more or less complete modification of dominant development theories, and the emergence of altogether new forms of inquiry.

Today, development has become a multivocal term, flexibly representing a range of political orientations (from modernisation to anti-imperial feminism), methods (from economistic materialism to discourse analysis), and units of analysis (from local communities to the entirety of the world system). Certainly, it is beyond the scope of this or subsequent chapters to address all the debates and historical legacies of each school of development. It will be more relevant to tease out only those threads that could weave a critical

framework for understanding the rise of neoliberalism and globalisation and the subsequent resistance against it. It is clear that practices such as fiscal austerity, privatisation, denationalisation and export-oriented production constitute the policies of neoliberalism, and these have well-documented effects on the lives of the world's peoples. Thus, the following is an exploration of the various schools of development and their potential contributions to a broad understanding of neoliberalism and its significance for both the resistance movements of the First and Third Worlds.

## **Modernisation**

Possibly no tradition of development thought has had as much direct impact on neoliberalism as the modernisation school. Originally, modernisation emerged as a prominent discourse for U.S. policy in the immediate post-War context when the U.S. was rising as a global superpower, former European colonies were seeking independence, and a worldwide communist movement provided anti-capitalist development alternatives. Due to the birth of many new states, and in the absence of any extensive knowledge about these new societies and their political, economic and social structures, Western researchers and scholars turned to what was familiar - the theoretical and practical experiences of the Western world - to explain the dynamics of these new societies (Tipps 1973; Wiarda 1989; Valenzuela & Valenzuela 1978).

Drawing from evolutionary and functionalist sociological thought, modernisationists such as Smelser, Levy, McLelland, Colemand and Rostow viewed society as a systematic whole that changed along universally progressive and unidirectional paths towards a differentiated modernity (Apter 1987:54; So 1990:21). This perspective depicted Western societies, especially in the U.S., as more fully developed and the exemplars of progress - due to technological advancements, complex divisions of labour,

differentiated markets and ostensibly plural political systems. By contrast, white non-Western nations were depicted as backward and in need of foreign economic intervention to enable their 'take off' into modernity. Arguably, these Eurocentric and imperialist tendencies have found rearticulation in successive waves of liberal economic policy - foreign and domestic - whenever Euro-American states and capital have been threatened (Apter 1987:54).

These precepts have been evident in much of the First World's policy towards the Third World since the 1940s, when there was advocacy of the policies that foreground today's neoliberalism: the opening of foreign economic markets to imports and investments through privatisation, denationalisation and deregulation; the opposition to organised labour; and the conversion of populist states to limited, corporatist democracies (Nef 1995:85; Blomstron and Hettne 1984: 165). In the 1950s and early 1960s, as the reformist strategy of import substitution industrialisation failed<sup>6</sup> it created greater resource extraction and national debt (Nef 1995:85). As this indebtedness increased throughout the recessions of the 1970s and 1980s, a resurgent modernisation legitimated the efforts of U.S. financial interests, especially those in lenders like the World Bank and the IMF, to use national debts as a lever to restructure much of the Third World. This was done largely through monetarism, a combination of fiscal austerity, free trade and export-oriented industrialisation.<sup>7</sup> But far from accelerating a 'take off' into a generalised economic development and political differentiation, these forms of liberalisation have created greater class polarisation, poverty and resource depletion, as well as diminished national sovereignty. Ultimately, it was this general set of contradictions between economic liberalisation and anti-democratic geopolitics that has typified the emergence of neoliberal policy,

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<sup>6</sup> ISI was a policy of limited industrialisation in developing countries for increased national autonomy and fewer import dependencies.

<sup>7</sup> EOI is the result of local and national efforts to attract foreign investment so as to obtain capital and 'spill over' effects that could enhance domestic development.

described above, from the depths of modernisation theory. Many Third World countries have witnessed extensive experimentation with this modernisation orthodoxy (Chile, Argentina and Mexico to name examples), and the late twentieth century social and political crises of these countries are the results of this (Blomstrom and Hettne 1984:166). However, it would be left to dependency theories to articulate what modernisationists had not articulated at all, namely, the contradictions of modernisation and its political effects on the Third World.

## **Dependency**

If modernisation theory has represented the voices of superpowers and transnational capital, dependency theorists drew from nationalisms, (neo) Marxist anti-imperialisms and numerous Third World political-economic crises to represent 'the voices of the periphery' (Kay 1989:188). While modernisationists have explained poverty and underdevelopment as the result of liberalisation, dependency theorists such as Dos Santos (cited in So 1990), Amin (1976), and Cardoso and Faletto (1979) have suggested they are due to lasting 'dependencies' of Third World nations on the import of foreign capital, commodities and foodstuffs – all made possible by the converging structural interests of dominant national and international elites. This creates a form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and can be self-starting, whilst other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion. (Dos Santos cited in So 1990:98). Further, they argue that because there has been a forced underdevelopment via the transfer of resources, capital and labour value from less to over-developed regions, the accumulation and development of dominant nations has occurred at the direct expense of dependent ones, and this occurred despite some limited and technological and industrial modernisation at the periphery. Indeed, the structure of global capitalism

throughout its many phases has been reliant upon this dependency and the international division of wealth and labour it has sustained – which Amin refers to as 'unequal development' (1976:104).

The most sociologically persuasive theorists in this area are Cardoso and Faletto (1979) who have argued in *Dependency and Development in Latin America* that development is not reducible to mere economic phenomena but may also include the state, popular movements and cultural traditions. They have used a structural, historical and dialectical framework to suggest that underdevelopment and dependency always have been mediated by dominant local classes and state actors in an 'associated dependent development' (1979:134). Further, drawing from revolutionary anti-imperialists, they spurred continuing attention to the relationships between popular or revolutionary movements and processes of development throughout Latin America. Thus, from the perspective of dependency theory, the ideologies and policies of neoliberalism are highly contested endeavours to continue the long legacy of uneven development in a late capitalist world system, creating both new global dependencies and resistance efforts. In confirmation of the relevance of dependent development critiques, this thesis will explore activists' understanding of the hegemonic mechanisms of state-corporate alliances and the everyday means by which neoliberalism fails to generate sustainable livelihoods for a majority of the dependent population.

## **World Systems**

For further understanding of this context, it is necessary to take a detour through world-systems analysis. Drawing from Marxist political economy, French *Annales* historicism, and dependency theory, world-systems theorists such as Wallerstein (1976) provide influential contributions to development, the most relevant of which for this study are two. First, world systems theory

has provided a clearer historical interpretation of the global capitalist transformations that have shaped uneven development and imperial relations between core and periphery, including economic cycles that help shape everything from production processes and technologies to war and colonialism. Authors such as Arrighi (1994), Chase-Dunn (1989, 1997), Gereffi (1994) and Dicken (1992) have traced the evolution of new apparatuses or regimes of global development, such as free trade agreements, transnational corporations, and global commodity chains. Each emphasise how this is creating a world system in which political and economic conditions are less stable, global production is increasingly reliant on export enclaves, and the power of transnational corporations vis-à-vis states and working people is extreme. Second, many influenced by world systems theory have theorised that the latest cycle of crisis and reassertion of global capitalism is marked by a new international division of labour (NIDL), in which imperialism seems reborn as peripheral proletariats are relegated predominately to low skilled production and have little room for upward mobility.

Most notably, Froebel, Heinrichs and Kreye in *The New International Division of Labour. Structural Unemployment in Industrial Countries and Industrialisation in Developing Countries* reinvigorated the world systems paradigm with an analysis of global class relations – an absence for which both world systems and dependency theory have been much criticised – by revealing the many lived effects of export-oriented industrialisation (EOI): stagnant wages and rising inflation, increased underdevelopment, poor working conditions, a devastation of domestic capital, rising unemployment and under-employment in core nations and, importantly, the extensive use of women's work in export manufacturing (1980:17). This corresponds with the work of Sivandan who argues that EOI has created export-processing zones (EPZs) – 'new colonies' – that repatriate profits to developed nations, creating an

uneven distribution of wealth accompanied by sectoral imbalances he calls 'distorted development' (1980:26).

Although the NIDL thesis rightly has received criticisms for reinvoking somewhat dichotomous models of global class conflict, its relevance lies in the emphasis on production relations in a field denominated by theories of exchange, and in the analysis of the lived effects of EOI and neoliberalism. Both of these insights from world systems theory have been extremely relevant to understanding neoliberalism in many parts of the Third World.

Clearly, the increasing power of transnational corporations (Starr 2000) and the polarisation of a new international division of labour is evident in a variety of contexts. But within the last twenty years regions like the U.S. - Mexican border have been subject to the development of EPZs which has prompted much research (Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Tiano 1984; Ruiz and Tiano 1987; Kamel 1988; Sklair 1989 and Pena 1997). Mostly writing during the exponential growth of Maquilladoras in the 1980s, each describes an enclave of imported Fordism subsidised by the parallel efforts of the Mexican state to attract foreign investment, and of capital to lower costs, primarily labour. Globally, EPZs employ a minority of the world export workers and account for a fraction of trade, and clearly the informal, service and agricultural sectors are no less problematic. But they have received much attention due to the increasing prominence of EPZs in the neoliberal growth strategies of newly industrialising countries (NICs), their indication of the expanding powers of transnational corporations, and the ways they have changed the gender composition of national workforces (Beneria 1989:246; Fernandez-Kelly and Sassen 1995:100).

Arguably, EOI has contributed to the development of some domestic capital, a small middle class, and relative improvement in employment and wages (Lim 1990:101), but in the Third World these generally have been more than

offset by a generalised underdevelopment that includes decreased real wages, lack of advancement, sexual harassment or abuse, import dependencies, toxic work and living conditions and defunded government services (Ward and Pyle 1995:39). The link between world systems theory and the global justice activism discussed in this thesis is clearly evident since activists' confirm different aspects of world systems analysis in their recognition of a growing international division of labour in which workers in Free Trade and Export Processing Zones occupy a very underprivileged position in global commodity chains, with little hope of improvement.

## **Gender and Development**

One of the principal constitutive features of neoliberalism, is the prevalence of women in the above-mentioned EPZs in low skilled manufacturing such as apparel and electronics (Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Warnock 1995; Tong 1996). Indeed, the majority of maquila workers are unmarried women between seventeen and twenty-five years old, who earn the primary income for their families and perform most of the domestic work as well (Fernandez-Kelly 1983). This has occurred in EPZs largely due to corporate belief that women are more productive due to the dexterity of their nimble fingers, less likely to resist poor wages and conditions through unionisation, and more flexible in accepting temporary contracts (Beneria 1989, Safa 1995). Thus, drawing from Froebel et al., Fernandez-Kelly (1983) and Tiano (1984) argue that although women have often been able to experience some independence from the domestic sphere, the new international division of labour is merely a different form of patriarchy that exploits women through a segmented labour market and the systematic devaluation of women's work and wages. Capitalism benefits from the exceptional. As long as women's role as wage earners may be viewed as an exception rather than the rule... women will continue to be liable to sexist discriminatory policies in wages (Fernandez-Kelly 1983). In her

study of gender relations in Malaysia's EPZs, Aihwa Ong provides evidence for an international gendered division of labour including the proletarianisation of rural populations, the emergence of a small middle class, the preference for docile women workers, the young woman's role as the family bread winner, familial strategies for survival, the migration to the EPZs, and exploitative work conditions (1987).

These phenomena have various effects, many of which go beyond mere local conditions of misery to generate disparities between nations of the core and periphery, revealing the material force of gender in the global political economy (Fernandez-Kelly 1983). But beyond the continued immiseration of women's lives, this patriarchal division of labour places downward pressure on development and living conditions for all citizens of the Third World, not to mention workers throughout the First World, as it highlights the ways in which unequal gender and labour relations have a synergistic and negative impact for all working people (Tiano 1984; Sklair 1989). However, to understand this context further, it is essential to explore the historic ways in which gender relations have been constitutive of development politics – an issue conspicuously absent from the above schools of thought.

Current development theory has reached an 'impasse' (Schuurman 1993) partly due to the global challenges posed by a post-Cold War economic order, but equally a result of how the predominant schools of development have participated in a marked exclusion of ethnicity, neo or post-colonial discourse, social movements, environment, and gender as central issues of inquiry. However, in response to this impasse, many new areas of research have begun, of which one of the most significant for the context of neoliberalism has been the study of gender and development.

Beginning with Boserup's 'women in development' (WID) agenda (1970) and proceeding with authors such as Charlton (1984), Young (1989), Momsen (1991), Kinnaird and Momsen (1993), and Blumberg (1995), many have discussed the ways in which modernisation - and by extension neoliberalism - have excluded women in developing nations from education, jobs, social services, development loans and productive technology, relegating them to more disempowered, labour intensive and domesticated roles (Charlton, 1984; Momsen 1991). For these authors, the solution generally has been greater participation of women in the workforce and women's greater control over wealth and development planning. Although this offers basic remedies, others such as Kabeer (1992) and Gordon (1996) argue that this has reproduced a modernisationist exclusion of the full diversity of Third World feminist voices. Further, it does not sufficiently problematise the ways in which modernisation, new or old, has westernised existent patriarchies of the South to yield greater conditions of profitability in a capitalist world system (Gordon 1996; Kabeer 1992).

By contrast, feminist commentators such as Mies (1986), Kabeer (1992), Bunch and Carrillo (1990), Bose and Acosta-Belen (1995), Ward and Pyle (1995) and Gordon (1996) discuss how the practices of modernisation and development in general are in need of more thoroughgoing feminist critique. Women's movements throughout the developing world have argued that patriarchal development planning has been intimately bound not only to diminishing life chances for women, but also to the construction of environmental exploitation, war, alienating technologies, and the normalisation of Western masculine ideologies of instrumental rationality, the superiority of science, and linear notions of progress (Bunch and Carrillo 1990). Further, they suggest that development institutionalises and rationalises neo-colonial relations of power insofar as its racialised, ethnocentric, patriarchal, and capitalist practices intersect to produce a web of mutually reinforcing economic dependencies

and socio-political marginalisations (Mies 1986:120; Bose and Acosta-Belen 1995:4).

Yet, when these long-standing problems find articulation in the contemporary economy made more flexible by informalisation, home work and subcontracting, it is clear that the wages and working conditions of Third World women are facing an especially tremendous downward pressure (Wards and Pyle 1995: 38). Thus, these authors propose democratic and nationally autonomous development policies focused on meeting sustainable needs globally, as well as a feminist redefinition of labour as non-instrumental, playful and purposeful (Mies 1986:216; Bose and Acosta-Belen 1995:2; Ward and Pyle 1995:46). In sum, during the recent decades of liberalisation, gender and development studies have articulated long overdue critiques of the ways lingering practices of modernisation define and depend on the exploitation of unequal gender relations. As this thesis will show global justice activists recognise the international gendered inequalities that subjugate women to more intensive exploitation than their male counterparts. Thus, they confirm the means by which underdevelopment and gender exploitation are produced through synergistic patriarchal and capitalist institutions.

## **Environment and Development**

If gender and development studies reveal the complex and problematic dimensions of neoliberal modernisation, environmental critique has enabled us to see deeply into its contradictions. Clearly, the revival of modernisation in the politics of neoliberalism parallels a multifaceted global environmental crisis, which has led to multiple endeavours to theorise the relations between the two rooms of our *oikos*:<sup>8</sup> economy and ecology. This includes endeavours of U.N. commissions, governments, NGOs and entire new academic fields

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<sup>8</sup> Greek for 'home' and the root of 'eco'.

(such as sustainable development or political ecology), each commenting on the extent to which the modern project of capitalist development is compatible with environmental health and the sustainability of nature.

First, there are those champions of capital who regard nature, or 'natural capital stock,' (Pearce, Barber and Markandya 1990:2-3) as fully compatible with economic growth, and who have faith in the self-regulating character of capitalism as it offers 'free market' solutions to environmental problems (Turner 1988; Arcibugi and Nijkamp 1989; Pearce, Barbier and Markandya 1990; Jacobs 1990; Rothschild 1990; Costanza 1991; Tisdell 1993). For example, Panayotou (1993) has argued for the privatisation of natural resources, deregulated pollution and pricing, as well as the rationalisation of nature within cost/benefit accounting. These endeavours to incorporate environmental concerns within the structure of a resurgent global capitalism represent the green face of neoliberalism.

Second, there are the market-based eco-Keynesian strategies of political figures such as the American ex-Vice president Albert Gore and his 'Global Marshall Plan,' which proposes some minimal resource regulations, tax incentives for private conservation, and publicly subsidised corporate research and development of new production technologies, all designed and imposed via U.S. leadership (1992:295). Here, governmental clientelism and U.S. models of green development do not veer significantly from eco-modernisation principles insofar as they promote a renewed U.S. imperialism under the guise of green liberalism, and the institutionalisation of capitalist models of development with minimal abilities to safeguard the environment. Third, there have been more sophisticated and much publicised discussions of 'sustainable development' such as those of the UN<sup>9</sup> which have posited that the fundamental cause of global ecological problems and environmental

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<sup>9</sup> Such as the Brundtland Commission report, *Our Common Future* (1987), or the Rio Conference's *Agenda 21* (1992).

health dilemmas is a world system that promotes economic desperation in the peripheral regions and over-consumption in the core areas. Yet, even as these reports advocate radical goals (greater global regulation of consumption and production, firm limits on growth, the eradication of poverty, redistributive capital flows, and a global enforcement system similar to the Bretton Woods organisations),<sup>10</sup> they fail to problematise how these goals which have received little favour in the dominant nations and their financial institutions can be met in a capitalist world system that is in contradiction with sustainability and normalises Western models of modernisation (de la Court 1990:13-15).

Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, opposition to the modern apparatuses of environmental exploitation has found resonance with critiques of capitalist world economy, especially Western Marxism, dependency theory and feminism, yielding a contemporary set of theories which argue that capitalist social relations are historically bound to the domination of nature (Merchant 1980; Brokenshaw et al. 1980; Riddell 1981; Redclift 1984; Smith 1984; Shiva 1988; Ghai and Vivian 1992; Faber 1993; Pepper 1993; Dore 1996). At a time of global capitalist resurgence through neoliberalism, these theories may have more relevance than ever. Martinez-Alier and Guimaraes suggest that the history of capitalist development and the current legacy of Western imperialism have subjected the environments of the developing world to the exploitation of resources and toxic pollution (Martinez-Alier 1987:xi Guimaraes 1991:9). For 'eco-Marxists' (Parsons 1977; Smith 1984; Grundmann 1991; Pepper 1993; Foster 1994), the structure of capitalism itself, with its growth orientation, short-term planning, profit-driven extraction and mass consumerism, is in direct contradiction with environmental health and resource sustainability. Not only does capital contribute to regional contexts of poor environmental health, but it also

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<sup>10</sup> UN 1992:17; WCED 1987:x.

fosters an intensifying economic and environmental crisis globally. Further, echoing anti-imperial Marxism and dependency theory, it may be argued that the general prosperity of the West throughout the last two centuries has been founded on the acquisition, transformation and degradation of non-Western ecosystems (Foster 1994:91). Adams states:

The creation of degraded environments cannot be seen as simply an unfortunate by-product of the development process. It is an inherent part of that process itself and the way in which development projects are planned and executed. Poverty and environmental degradation, driven by the development process, interact to form a perilous and unrelenting world for the poor.

(Adams 1990:113)

Borrowing from Andre Gunder Frank, Smith also asserts that at every spatial level of the capitalist world system, growth is based on uneven development, promoting structurally embedded tendencies towards uneven environmental health (1984:xi). Certainly, state socialist models of development such as China and the former Soviet Union have been no better in their environmental policies or in their tendencies towards regional imperialism. Indeed, state socialist models ironically have represented a mirror image of capitalism insofar as they have prioritised unmitigated industrialisation, non-sustainable resource use, centralised political power, and systematic ecological destruction of their own regional peripheries. Thus, many offer solutions that emphasise the suspension of imperial forms of development - socialist or capitalist - and an invigoration of more radically participatory, democratic development planning that is simultaneously inclusive or transnational cooperation and sustainable local management of resources (Brokenshaw et al. 1980:4; Adams 1990:199; Ghai and Vivian 1992:50). The emphasis on this is reflected in the many environmental activists who are active within the global justice movement and discussed in this research. Among these activists there is a profound understanding that the destruction of the ecological conditions of life is a fundamental contradiction of neoliberal capital, and one over-determined by class, race and gender

differences. Additionally, there is recognition by activists that the modernisation discussed in this section has resurfaced in the form of sustainable development that is commensurate with the most recent waves of global capitalist expansion, to the exclusion of more socially just forms of environmental advocacy.

## **Development: Post-colonialism and the Post-structuralist Turn**

As these and previous authors consider the multiple social and environmental problems that surround neoliberalism, it is no accident that they see the necessity of infusing development theory with critiques of colonialism and the deathly impacts that Western modernity have had in the Third World. Clearly, the post-Cold War economic order that has enabled the resurgence of a global capitalism is somewhat reminiscent of the nineteenth century, but with intensifying environmental crises and the distinctly postmodern features of advanced technology, new diasporas, global media, and mobile capital. Thus, as many argue that the politics of colonialism has all but gone, there have emerged needed inquiries into the discontinuities of Western power and cultural identity in the world system, most notably 'postcolonial' critique and subaltern studies. Rather than discuss the many complex epistemological and political concerns these raise, the following will explore the ways in which they have impacted upon development thought.

Of greatest significance here is the work of Arturo Escobar. Interpolating a variety of influences,<sup>11</sup> Escobar has defined development as more than mere material processes but always and already a discursive apparatus that has constructed the Third World as an object or Other, by 'making statements

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<sup>11</sup> Anti-imperial Marxism, Gramsci, dependency theory, the poststructuralism of Foucault, Fanon's anti-colonial critique, the postcolonialism of Bhabha and Mudimbe, Said's theories of orientalism, Mohanty's Third World feminism, Latin American postmodernism, and regulation theory such as that of Lipietz and Arrighi.

about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it...in short...dominating, restructuring and having authority over [it]' (Said, cited in Escobar 1995:6). That is, development economics is a discourse through which Western cultural codes are inscribed in the practicalities of late twentieth century political economy, ordering our institutions and producing subjects disciplined by custom, law and market. With an epistemology that suspends false dichotomies between materiality and knowledge or economy and culture Escobar has not only influenced a new area of development thought and cultural studies<sup>12</sup> but has offered more expansive critiques of a neoliberal project of development.

For him, the development apparatus posits one universal capitalist model for the global economy while paternalistically producing an archetypal Third World subject – often a feminised person of colour - possessing no history or agency, and endowed with only problems to be solved through modernisation (Escobar 1995:9). To explain the current context, Escobar turns to a genealogy of modernisation that focuses upon the institutionalisation of modernism within a U.S.-influenced politics of liberalisation and market discipline (pioneered in the World Bank's policies of 'structural adjustment'), which ultimately constructed the hegemonic advent of neoliberalism (Escobar 1995:165). Consequently, the 'abnormalities,' 'distortions,' and 'problems' to be remedied in the Third World became objects of a rationalised scientific management and technological expertise (Escobar 1995:45). Similarly, Gill has borrowed from Foucault to argue that American-sponsored 'disciplinary neoliberalism', through its panoptic technologies of capital globalisation and social control, has disciplined its own and other states in the creation of a renewed American hegemony (1995:1-3). Here, the messianic fervour that accompanied or propelled early colonialism has been rekindled in the conviction that development will be the modernist salvation

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<sup>12</sup> See for example, Crush 1996; Cowen and Shelton 1996.

of the Third World from a backward and wretched past. Thus, as a legitimating discursive apparatus, development establishes the neo-colonial conditions for the continued Westernisation and exploitation of Third World cultures, nations, and environments.

'Development' may be considered the logic of late capitalism's global gaze. Sivanandan agrees when he argues that imperialism still exists today, albeit in new forms. He claims it possesses a new liquidity in international production and finance: an automation of many tasks in the global economy, causing unemployment to rise in all but sectors requiring skilled or 'value-added' labour, a centralisation of ownership and a dispersal of production, and an integration of exchange and production circuits so as to cause a conglomeration and 'convergence' of entire industries (1980:32).

By way of summary, Escobar's contributions to development thought and to the wider literature of global justice resistance are present within the term 'post development', which has at least three intertwined meanings: Firstly, it is a method of development critique informed by poststructural epistemology, postmodernist theories of late twentieth century social change, and inquiries into shifting identities in (post)colonial states and diasporas: Secondly, it is a condition of new colonial relations and new post-Fordist regimes of accumulation that older schools of development have been less able to theorise; and thirdly it is a context in which resistance movements against this new colonialism are gradually shaping a new 'hybrid modernity', or a conflicted but empowering combination of subaltern development agendas and modern social forms (Escobar 1995:215-217). It is this hybridity and political miscegenation that Escobar sees as typical of our current global order and, although it is marked by multiple hegemonies, it is potentially liberatory in its transgressions against modernist logics of Western development.

The above perspectives on development paint a general picture of political economic change in the twenty first century and they build a foundation upon which we may begin to examine neoliberal transformations in the global distribution of power. We have found that neoliberalism may be interpreted as a resurgence of modernisation theory through which Western political, economic and cultural hegemony may be re-secured, at least in the Western hemisphere. And despite new, highly differentiated structures of global capital, it is clear that the basic conditions of colonialism, dependent development, and a globally unequal division of labour remain. However, the current period is also distinguished by resistance movements which began in the Third World and in my view shape the contemporary global justice movement.

## **Social Movements**

As Escobar has discussed, for us to understand the changing orders of development, it is imperative to peer into the full range of social conflicts that exist in and around them. Specifically, it is essential to listen to those voices of resistance as they speak of contradictions and alternatives to neoliberal development. Some of these voices have been theorised in contemporary social movement literature.

It has become commonplace within social movement literature that structural contradictions in a society provide opportunity and impetus for social movements to emerge. During a period where neoliberalism combines with the ideals of modernisation to produce the realities of economic inequality, it is no coincidence that movements, left and right, are proliferating. Yet, in globalisation theory structural analyses of political economy are dominant at the expense of discussions of social resistance.

According to Amin, movements are emerging and multiplying throughout the globe to challenge the so-called new world order (et al. 1990:10). Burgmann argues that these social movements are 'distinct from the myriad of international non-government organisations that are also a feature of this alternative political force' (2003:4). Burgmann outlines the difference as being:

Essentially, the international non-government organisations are the respectable, reforming face of global civil society and are now courted by transnational corporations in attempts to 'legitimate' these corporations' activities. By contrast, the transnational social movements are, to varying degrees, much more radical in their demands and less institutionalised in form, and face oppositions from corporations and repressions from states, especially those social movements or elements of social movements that participate in the anti-corporate globalisation movement.

(Burgmann 2003:4)

New ethnic-religious populisms' and the postmodern politics of groups like the Zapatistas are attempting to redefine revolutionary nationalism; gay, lesbian and student movements are providing new visions of public space and democratic participation; environmental and human rights groups are articulating visions of global citizenship and transnational responsibility.

Meanwhile, older movements such as labour are finding it necessary to transform ideological appeals and mobilisation strategies, embracing more transnational, inclusive and self-reflective practices. Among many examples these suggest that there is an obvious, if multifaceted reaction to the power dynamics of (post) modern society and the global capitalist economy, creating an emergent form of globalisation from below.

Hence, if we wish to examine critically, the contradictions and dilemmas that globalisation and neoliberalism pose, as well as the possibilities that exist for new democratic orders and social movements, one vital task would be to investigate those movements that offer insights into global justice.

## **Neoliberalism, Social Movements and Radical Democracy**

The interactions between neoliberal regimes and the 'new social movements', in this case the global justice movement, underpin this thesis. The term 'new social movements' generally refers to a focus on identity over ideology, democratic processes over class-based liberation and cultural over the state as forms of social participation. Such movements are seen to embody non-instrumental visions of social change, a planetary consciousness and decentralised mobilisation strategies (Melucci 1989:5; Johnston Larana and Gusfield, 1994:5; Jordan 1994: 101). Authors such as Melucci (1989: 3-5, 11-12, 21), Touraine (1985:756), and Aronowitz (1993:16-18), among others, argue that a transition to post-industrial or post-Fordist society in the developed world has created movements that are necessarily more focused on issues of representation, reflexivity, cultural experimentation and lifestyle. Hence, what is viewed as the post-1968 interrogation of class ideology and state-oriented movements by the traditions of post-structuralism and post-Marxism is embedded within a structural shift to an information economy, technocratic or 'programmed' society, a legitimisation crisis of the state, new diasporas and the rising prominence of consumer culture (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:163; Aronowitz, 1993:17; Mayer and Roth, 1995:301; Foweraker, 1995:14).

This globalising social formation and its resistance movements have been primary subjects of study for members of the Regulation School (Steinmetz 1994; Touraine 1997; Lipietz 1992; Amin et al. 1994). This is a domain of political-economic theory that argues that the capitalist world system has functioned historically through state-capital alliances which constitute 'modes of regulation' over different historic 'regimes of accumulation' and that the current period is one of a transition from Fordism (mass production, nationally-based capital, industrial technology, Keynesian policy) to post-Fordism

(flexible production, transnational capital, information technology, neoliberalism), provoking unique social movement responses. Although regulationists like Touraine (1997), Melucci (1989), Steinmetz (1994), and Mayer and Roth (1995), focus more on post-Fordism than neoliberalism (Mayer and Roth, 1995:307), these two structures are deeply intertwined insofar as the institutions of post-Fordism in the developed world have arisen in the global neoliberal agendas of market expansion (especially in the developing world), the communication structure this requires, and state downsizing.

However, regulation theory and the new social movement literature, in discussions between political economic structure and resistance efforts, focus primarily on Western contexts and post-Fordism, and thus are of limited assistance in examining the relations between neoliberalism globally, the exportation of Fordism to the periphery, and new movement forms in the developing world. But if globalising tendencies are afoot, and if the global justice movement is considered to be a truly global movement, then it is necessary to do just such an analysis.

There are many similarities between new social movements in the developing world and the global justice movement of the North, but there are also clear distinctions that may complicate the analytical discussion of new movements (Johnston, Larana and Gusfield, 1994:6). Countries throughout the developing world have experienced structural transitions that have in some cases prompted new movement to form. However, if Northern social movements also arise from a context of post-industrialism and consumer culture, in the developing world where they are sometimes referred to as 'urban popular movements,' they have emerged from a setting of uneven peripheral Fordism, urbanisation, dependencies on foreign capital, military authoritarianism, cultural Westernisation and market penetration (Foweraker 1995:26; Calderon, Piscitelli and Rayner 1992:24). The types of movements

therefore have been more varied than the Northern movements of the past (for example, women's, gay, ecology), including in addition local peasant groups, neighbourhood associations, human rights organisations, Indigenous movements and anti-war movements (Slater 1985:1).

Thus, it would appear that the rise of the global justice movement, noted for its diverse participants from a number of social movements, and purportedly 'global' (Hardt and Negri, 2001:2) in nature, there may be more borrowed from the movements of the developing world than previously imagined.

Many Southern scholars have discussed how the penetration of market economies in the majority world has transformed communities of the South, necessitating new forms of resistance and a new orientation towards the state (Slater 1985:2; Escobar and Alvarez 1992:4; Calderon, Piscitelli and Rayner 1992: 22). This crisis has offered new opportunities to broaden socio-political citizenship to transnational arenas and to ever new political concerns, while expanding movement concerns to the realm of collective identity, critical negotiations of difference and democratic process. By way of summary Chantal Mouffe has stated, 'what is new is the diffusion of social conflict into other areas and the politicization of more and more relations' (cited in Slater 1985:3).

Whilst earlier movements in the majority world centred on modernizing and overcoming dependency through working class and agrarian efforts at national liberation, today's movements recognise the multiplicity of actors and public spaces in which democracy and justice may be sought (Castells 1983:327; Slater 1985:6; Escobar and Alvarez 1992:3; Calderon, Piscitelli and Rayner 1992:24; Wignaraja 1993; Escobar 1993; Foweraker, 1995:24). Just as in the global justice movement, these new movements interrogate the contradictions between the ideals of modernity and the realities of

neoliberalism (Schoorman 1993:188). Consequently, in a time in which imperial power is taking new forms, new nationalisms and anti-imperialisms find articulation in movements of the South, creating flexible and multiple identities and in the pursuit of new civil societies and strategic global coalitions (Hellman 1995:167).

However, the widespread poverty of the majority world and more open state oppression has caused some new movements to have direct ties to working class struggles for democracy as well as a direct challenge to the authoritarianism and limited services of the state, resulting in more continuity between new and old movement forms and less distinction between revolutionary and new social movements (Slater, 1985: 9; Camacho 1993:37; Foweraker 1995:33). Revolutionary movements like the Zapatistas, which provide much inspiration to the global justice movement, have both nationalistic and vanguardist interests as well as more multivalent visions of radical democracy with broad popular appeal to many constituencies (Comacho 1993:37). The point here is that neoliberal globalisation has created similarities among movements in the North and South. Moreover, it could be argued that the realities of dependency and the legacies of imperialism have given the new movements in the majority world a more global focus and political critique.

One perspective in new social movement research is that despite many movements abandoning proletarian ideologies and nationalisms, their new forms are, in part, frustrated expressions of class based concerns which have no ear in the age of a withering state (Amin 1993:94; Scott 1990:139; Escobar 1993:31). Of all new social movement theorists, Klaus Eder has been the most direct in attempting to 'bring class back in' and contesting culturalist accounts of movements by arguing that the logic of (post) modernity towards social differentiation, despite multiplying arenas and methods of

social conflict, does not prevent class groups from acting through new sensibilities, identities and life worlds (1993:3). In his view, new social movements at present display a romantic subjectivism and anti-rationalism, as well as exhibiting populist hostilities towards the status quo and intellectualism (Eder 1993:103). Certainly, to argue that new social movements are reducible to class interests is to engage in an historical discourse that delegitimizes the many critical and expansive contributions these movements have made in recent history.

Burgmann argues that 'term "new" was not simply in temporal opposition to "old;" [but that] it also contained a value judgement':

Movements of the working class – whether labour, communist or socialist – were typecast in the new social movement literature as old social movements, battling merely on behalf of those exploited in their working lives. There was a strong implication that they represented an inferior – even obsolete – form of political mobilisation, that their concerns were too narrowly focussed on economic deprivation and that they overlooked other important issues. In general, they were contrasted unfavourably with the new social movements, which were said to express individual needs; to assert the significance of social divisions based on gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity rather than class; and to contest expressions of power existing outside workplace relations.

(Burgmann 2003:19)

However, it is important to take seriously the charge that new social movements and their cultural forms are often expressive of new class structures and interests (Jenkins 1995:14; Wallace and Jenkins 1995:96). Further, especially in the West, it is necessary to consider that these movements are often grounded in middle class pluralism, culturalism, and anti-statism that can promote atomised social protest and quietism, or at worst they can be conservative in their opposition to coalitional agendas and structural political change. And throughout the world there are hegemonic articulations of neoliberal capital with the politics of postmodern movements. Movements, like global capital, are not immune to political limitations of a critical multiculturalism, fragmented organisations, the play of cultural

representations, and anti-statism. Thus, there is good reason to question any *a priori* celebration of diversity or postmodern social forms. But one central criterion that has emerged from social movement literature as a starting point of any critical appraisal of resistance is whether movements promote 'radical democracy'.

Among scholars of new social movements there is a common recognition that these movements represent a positive shift towards a broad decentralisation of political power, radical inclusiveness, multidimensional analysis, and an optimal combination of global consciousness and local accountability, best encapsulated by the term 'radical democracy' (Slater 1985:4-10; Evers 1985:44-5). Richard Falk has summarised this positive affirmation:

The new social movements seem at present to embody our best hopes for challenging established and oppressive political, economic, and cultural arrangements at levels of social complexity, from the interpersonal to the international...The new social movements, and the theorising that accompanies their emergence and evolution reconstitute our understanding of the 'political' and the 'global'...Both by enlarging our sense of 'the political' and insisting that everyday practices contain an element of 'the global', new social movements are dramatically altering our understanding of what the pursuit of a just world order entails in a variety of concrete situations.

(Falk 1992:125)

Authors such as Foweraker have argued that if new social movements are to have any long-term impact on the redistribution of social power, it probably will be through cumulative and gradual processes of democratisation (1995:112). A growing number of social theorists in the West (Aronowitz 1993; Fraser 1997; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Frank and Fuentes 1990; Touraine 1985, 1997; Trend et al. 1996; and West 1995) as well as in the Third World (Mattice and Camp 1996; Karl 1996; Cancilini 1995; Escobar and Alvarez 1992) have regarded radical or participatory democracy as the central defining feature of contemporary social movements and as a primary means of creating unity

in diversity throughout broad segments of the left – the 'plural universalism' of Aronwitz (1993:27), or the 'egalitarian imaginary' of Laclau and Mouffe (1985:168).

Radical democracy differs from its liberal counterparts insofar as it refers not simply to formal political participation which often conflates democracy with capitalism, but rather a thorough redistribution of political, economic, and cultural power to maximize public participation and social justice. Beyond a general inclusiveness and redistributive justice, one reason this discourse has gained favour is that it has articulated features of both Marxism and liberalism/neoclassicism for a post-Cold War era in which polycentric forms of resistance are seeking autonomy from state based ideologies and centralized economic planning (Amin 1990:97; Chinchilla 1992:49; Wignaraja 1993:10; Aronwitz 1993:35). In fact, in so far as the problems of development and democracy are mutually embedded (Touraine 1997:180), radical democracy arguably may be a global and multidimensional form of politics best suited for resisting neoliberalism.

The hopes for a radical democratic renewal hinge upon the ability of new social movements, such as the global justice movement, to create coalitions with a diversity of old and new left agendas, which goes to the core of debates regarding the 'newness' of the movement and its ability to address class-based interests for structural economic change. When one examines the structural economic and social conditions of much of the West, where the hopes of modernity have gone unfulfilled for most, or the Third World, where 'hybrid modernities reveal an incomplete and contradictory embrace of even modern, much less postmodern social forms, it is clear that there is no clean break between modernity and postmodern periods, much less between modernity and its numerous posts. Insofar as movements reflect and resist these structural conditions, we may raise serious questions about the

arbitrary character of new/old distinctions and the continuities between so-called new and old that much of the literature neglects. Despite some very clear shifts in movement politics, intellectual culture, and social structure over the last thirty years (Scott 1990:153), there are many continuities between new and old movements that may serve as the basis for broader coalitions that operate transnationally.

First, mass based revolutionary, class or state oriented movements of the past have no fewer debates regarding the politics of identity, cultural hegemony, coalition building, or spaces of democratic representation. Thus, many have argued, (Scott 1990:154; Johnston, Larana and Gusfield 1994:26; Foweraker 1995:14; Hellman 1995:171) new social movement literature is often ahistorical in homogenising all older movements and it is not uncommon to posit a repressive character without qualification. Second, as Scott claims, the new social movement preference for strategic or nomadic organisation versus older ideological absolutisms may be regarded as part of a 'fundamentalist/pragmatist tension' that has been common to movements from various eras (1990:155). Third, many new social movements in the last thirty years, which now constitute parts of the global justice movement have had obvious and extensive relationships with the state, nor have they been strangers to universal ideologies of social transformation. That is, new social movements often formed loose but significant networks with the state and with older more established movements, According to Klandermans this has received proportionally little attention (Klandermans 1990:122).

## **Reinterpreting Local and Global: Globalisation from Below**

One of the major points that made the Seattle protests so unique was the emergence of a movement for global justice, otherwise known as the global justice movement. This swelling global justice movement is a coalition of many

of the same groups which have been mobilising transnationally<sup>13</sup> previously, and its uniqueness partly rests on the variety of causes and groups it represents. The movement demands adequate responses to problems ranging from AIDS drugs for poor countries, abolition of Third World debt, genetically modified organisms, global warming, to the destruction of Indigenous life ways. Although visible expressions of the movement are often dramatic - such as the protests in Genoa and Quebec City - the movement's real strength lies in its linking of people at the grassroots – globalisation from below.

Like all global movements, the global justice movement to some extent must address new and more complex relations of difference in the facilitation of networks and strategies that meet the interests of a variety of different global strata. As many who study and participate in the movement will argue, this work is just beginning and difficult, since it requires intensive intercultural education for critical dialogue and mutual trust. It has the potential to generate conflict and agreement across many markers of difference, transforming individual identities and entire movements alike as they become socialised in new arenas of political action. Further, as the movement creates webs of interest and communication throughout the globe, it assists in the creation of a global civil society – globalisation from below (Boulding 1991:789).

The global justice movement is helping to expand and redefine citizenship through dialogue and principles of solidarity (Waterman 1993:1,45,53), creating the basis for replacing relations of imperial dependency and underdevelopment with radical democracy and a 'differentiated globalism'

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<sup>13</sup> A variety of movements have recognised the global dimensions of their given issues and have engaged in transnational mobilisations to solve them. These include International nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), global social change organisations (GSCOs) and transnational social movement organisations (TSMOs). We could also include the many riots against IMF austerity plans; ethno-nationalist and revolutionary movements; squatters movements; cooperatives, and many more too numerous to mention here.

(Boulding 1991:798). Second and more practically, this is done by creating long-term visions, education and information networks (Boulding 1991:789).

Organisationally, the global justice movement has been characterised as typically nonhierarchical, decentralised and participatory, thus mobilising in ways that have been fluid and flexible. This is enabled not only by technological and organisational innovations present within the post-Fordist institutions of capital, but also by the value commitments to anti-authoritarianism and difference in unity. The latter is best exemplified in the endeavour of the global justice movement to engage in a critical articulation of different local and national histories with current commonalities that have become ever more salient and numerous in the global economy (Webber 1994:395). Hence the movement, in spite of its great scope, has often embraced grassroots organising, community-based organisations, and local cultural identity. More than merely living the adage 'think globally, act locally' in which consciousness is global but action is local, the movement has worked towards both a critical consciousness and practical strategy that is simultaneously global and local. The typical model includes movement fragments rooted in local concerns but connected via information and strategy networks, creating flexible and differentiated structures best suited for the realisation of democracy in the current era (Garner 1994:431).

This thesis will position the global justice movement as a contemporary example of resistance to neoliberalism. Certainly, not all aspects of the global justice movement offer total refusal of the forces of transnational capital and neoliberal development. However, the global justice movement has been the most prominent voice in the discourse of a new globalisation from below, and it has a directive formative involvement in the resistance to neoliberalism throughout the world. Since the protests in Seattle, the global justice movement has had, from its outset, a clearly global orientation towards fair

trade, sustaining conditions of life on the planet, and the maintenance of human rights.

From global networks of sustainable development to local anti-sweatshop groups, the global justice movement has theorised and resisted the contradictions between capitalist development and a planet built on global justice. Therefore, the movement offers a unique case of old and new social movement coalitions as well as global resistance to neoliberal predicaments. The global justice movement can be seen as representing a combination of old and new movement forms, suggesting interesting reformulations of social movement history in the new millennium. First, it offers a new meaning of integrating the global and the local while remaining interested in a community-based globalisation from below. That is, the movement politicises local concerns by opening them to critiques of global social problems and forming networks to solve them. Therefore, if capital is able to compress time and space by homogenising the local and the global, as Giddens argues (1999), the global justice movement shows a willingness to work towards a radically democratic and heterogeneous global public sphere. Second, the movement finds it necessary to pose alternatives not only to the tendencies of global capital and neoliberal development policy, but also to the hegemonic rearticulations of this imperialism within the histories of the various movements that make up its constituency.

The examination of the global justice movement to follow in subsequent chapters provides insight into current versions of 'development' and the debates about social movements. Possibly no setting in the North offers such an intensive site for investigating the lived practice of neoliberalism and its many resistances. With any emergency there is emergence, and with any crisis there is always change and opportunity.

Many of the issues concerning the global justice movement are located in the Third World. Anzaldua's comments about the Mexican border can be applied to much of the Third World here: 'the [Third World] is an open wound, telling stories of pain and separation, genocide and destruction' (1987). Today's crisis of development in the Third World occurs as part of a long history of transgressions, including the penetration of imperial interests, which have been the sites of much resistance. Consequently it is not surprising that we find collaboration and resistance against the current dilemmas posed by neoliberalism in these places.

Thus, the global justice movement in my view, the first 'global movement' of the millennium is deeply embedded in and indebted to the Third World, and consequently is an ideal location in which to study the limitations and possibilities of resistance to neoliberalism.

## **The Bonding Properties of Tear Gas: Some Notes on Methods**

Barbara Epstein, in writing about the non-violent direct action movement in America, points out that that 'because the direct action movement is politically and culturally unconventional, conventional methods of studying it would have not worked very well'. (1993:19) Given this view, I chose to draw on a 'multiple rather than a single method' in collecting my data (Reinharz 1992:197). Following researchers such as Epstein (1993) and Roseneil (1995) I too did not come to this research 'with an empty head' or a hypothetical explanation of the global justice movement.

The process of arriving at a dialogical, meaningful, critical and experiential method of research and analysis was fraught with contradictions and challenges. The global justice movement is diffuse and diverse. It is a common refrain among global justice activists that 'I do not speak for others, I

only speak for myself'. Accordingly, it is difficult to make broad claims about global justice activism beyond personal and research experience. Global justice activism is such a multivocal, dispersed and dynamic social phenomenon that it complicates universal claims about 'the' movement's ideological, organisational or political behaviours. Instead, this thesis aims to document and analyse one vital, growing current of global justice activism that has been underreported or misrepresented in both the popular press and academic literature.

I draw on an approach similar to Clifford Geertz's 'thick description',<sup>14</sup> an interpretive layering of practices, symbols, actions and social structures which sculpts the processes of the social construction of reality so that they can be 'seen' or understood. My method might also be called 'critical hermeneutics': an interpretation which seeks a 'deeper' meaning but which considers that meaning as partially constructed by my interpretation and thus always open to further interrogation. The analytic challenges of making sense of the complex cultural forms of a contemporary movement, such as those of the global justice movement, are formidable.

Examining complex social formations such as the global justice movement also presents a number of interesting methodological issues. Obviously, it requires tracing a cultural formation 'across and within multiple sites of activity' (Marcus 1995), thereby breaking with the trope of community in the classic sense of shared values, shared identity and shared culture (Marcus 1992:315). At the same time it entails a blurring of boundaries between 'us' and 'them' in new and interesting ways. In the past, research often rested on a dualism between the researcher on the one hand, and the people being described on the other. Separated by space and culture, positivist methods emphasised the two. In some branches of social science this distance is now

being collapsed as researchers increasingly participate in the political processes they describe.

As Lichterman (1998) argues, observing and participating in social action as the action is happening allows movement researchers to learn about meanings of movements that would be difficult to uncover through other methods alone. During the course of this research, I was constantly confronted with the inseparability of 'us' and 'them,' finding myself drawn into an advocacy relationship with my 'informants' that blurred the boundaries between researcher and activist. I played a dual role, participating in demonstrations, actions and other political activities, all while watching, taking mental notes, and transforming my experiences into 'data'. The fact that I was involved in some political activities I sought to investigate further blurred the boundary for me. In the course of these activities I have found myself variously perceived as a supporter, an apologist, a hostile critic, and an objective observer of the movement.

Constantly shifting between researcher and participant, between outsider and subject, my position was simultaneously ambiguous, productive, and frustrating. Negotiating my ambiguous status was never easy. I struggled when asked to identify myself at movement meetings or 'spokes councils', unsure of how others sitting around the circle would react to being the subjects of my study. Some did not appreciate being observed and told me so. Others, despite being reminded repeatedly, forgot I had different interests from theirs. Lichterman (1998:415) argues that participant observation offers a unique opportunity for researchers to 'refashion' some of the theoretical debates around contemporary social movements because this research strategy begins with the lived, implicit meanings in the field. Similarly, Melucci (1992:67) writes:

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<sup>14</sup> Clifford Geertz, 'Notes on the Balinese Cockfight' in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

The researcher interested in social movements should not forget that the collective actors are not the object of analysis; rather they produce the object of analysis and supply its meanings...the researcher has to try and enter the actors' interior world, to reconstruct from inside the logic for the frames as lived and experienced by the actors themselves.

In devising this study, I wanted to use a multiple-site method that addresses the movement's global organisation without sacrificing ethnography of a local community of activists. I adopted a two-track approach, which involved long-term participant observation in the local community of activists based in Melbourne as well as shorter-term research at a number of other sites, which reflect the movement and represent important 'nodes' in the global justice movement. One of the advantages of doing research this way is that it has enabled me to see how transnational networks are established amongst the global justice movement in different communities, and if that has constituted an activist identity that transcends local difference.

When I began participant observation with activists in Melbourne, I remember being struck by three things. The first was the intense identification some activists had with the movement and how strongly they felt part of a movement. The second was the sophistication of many activists in their knowledge surrounding global issues and in addition, technology. The other aspect of global justice activism that I immediately found striking was the amount of 'work' that went into it. Initially I felt that the work was pointless, as it often served to organise large-scale protests and seemed to have little chance of effecting change for those people it most sought it for. I soon realised, however, that this 'work' was the means through which the movement was constituted. As a result I became interested in the daily production of the movement. One part of the interest in this quotidian centred on interactions and negotiations amongst participants. I paid particular attention to the arenas where activists came together, such as movement meetings, where the pragmatics of the movement are most

visible. Through this method I gathered useful and rich data on how the movement constructs and produces itself, particularly in relation to the generalised characteristics and assertions made of it, often by non-movement participants.

Although my main research took place in Melbourne, this is a genuinely intercontinental project which also includes fieldwork in the United States, Canada and India. I carried out shorter-term fieldwork in the United States six months after the Seattle protests, in Calgary, Canada at the World Petroleum Conference protests in June 2000 and was present at the mobilisation against the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in Quebec City, in April 2001. This fieldwork enabled me to think comparatively about how the movement operates in different cities and to 'map' the movement's larger structure. In mapping the movement I traced the ways in which groups in various 'nodes' of the transnational global justice network interact with one another, which in turn helped me to explore the shape global justice protest takes in different national contexts.

Empirically, there were two main levels of analysis. In order to supplement my participant observation and the interviews, I also analysed secondary sources of data. Edelman (2001:287) notes that 'some of the most provocative analyses of social movements' visions, strategies and practices appear in non-academic media'. Background information was obtained through primary source document analysis, together with mailing list archives and web sites. Other written documents included those from public archives and private collections of leaflets, newspapers, fieldwork notes from a series of interviews conducted in India, photographs and diaries.

As participants rely heavily on the Internet for networking, mobilising and resisting (Langman, Morriss and Zalewski 2001, Smith 2001b, Starr 2000), for

each of the mobilisations and movements discussed data was collected from local and international media, together with independent media sources. These included independent media web sites, the web sites of a number of activist groups, participation in email discussion lists of past and upcoming protests, and listserve archives which provided fertile ground for evidence on how these groups have utilised email and mailing lists for coordinating with other groups, planning and disseminating information. Monitoring these lists was effectively a form of participant observation, allowing me to track important issues. On any given day I would participate in email discussion groups, listserves, receive and answer emails, conduct interviews, listen to web-based radio and watch web-based video.

In the non-virtual world I conducted multi-sited participant observation for two years in a range of settings: action-planning meetings, spokes council meetings, cultural events, fundraisers, mobilisations, teach-ins, conferences and street theatre. The participant observation entailed a close involvement with activists based around a core of approximately twenty in Australia, and thirty in the United States (10 of these activists were from the Zapatista inspired group *Ya Basta!* and asked to remain nameless). Research participants in Australia were recruited through accidental sampling techniques (see Bouma 1994:117) and networks. The role of key activists in helping me locate and contact relevant participants cannot be underestimated. In sampling activists from the United States I began by contacting key figures who were mentioned numerous in articles and web sites. I slowly built up relationships with three people via email and phone contact. Two of these activists (based in Boston and New York) over time became almost an unstated critical reference group. They provided a sounding board for ideas I had about the thesis, commented on the structure and administered interviews I had developed with people I was unable to reach in the United States. After the events of September 11, 2001 they assisted me in re-contacting activists to re-

interview and contributed on issues facing the global justice movement in America at that time. They regularly forwarded me a range of information they knew to be relevant to my research, whether it was thoughts they had as individuals, articles they had written, campaigning directions of the groups they were involved in, web site links and other material of interest.

These activists assisted me in using a 'snowball sampling' technique (Coleman 1958), working outwards. I conducted phone, email and personal interviews with activists people recommended and became part of an affinity group, to enable me to participate in the Quebec City actions. In choosing an appropriate method of data gathering, I reflected on my desire to produce data that reflects the complexity, richness and diversity of the participant's narratives. All things considered, I quickly dismissed the use of surveys and questionnaires with their explicitly worded questions, which seem hardly able to capture the presence of non-verbal elements of meaning making. On the contrary, the non-structured nature of a dialogue allows the kind of space and intimacy in which participants can express their thoughts, emotions, memories and experiences with relevant comfort. When such an environment is made available, people are more predisposed to engage in discussion of the issues at hand, and in due course to arrive at their own conclusions as insights.

In order to capture activists' accounts of their experience, perceptions and participation, I asked three affinity groups to maintain online or written journals whilst participating in the lead-up to S11, Quebec City and Prague. One affinity group spoke into a tape recorder throughout the day of action (A20) in Quebec City, enabling me to capture what I was unable to witness. It was important to me from the outset to note as Roseneil does, that problems of objectification and exploitation in the research process do not disappear, despite shared experiences between the researcher and

researched (1995:12). I therefore saw it as imperative to offer a range of methods in collecting data. Like Reinharz in *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, I also saw the collection of data as 'a journey' (211) and as the journey continued I began to draw on different methods and tools.

Prior to September 11, 2001 I interviewed fifty activists in Australia and the U.S. using both a semi-structured questionnaire and in-depth interviewing. In order to gain information for Chapter Five, I undertook twenty-three interviews in late 2002. Of these twenty-three interviews six were with Southern activists who were in New York at a conference and whom I had met in Quebec City. These lasted between one to three hours and a number of activists were interviewed multiple times, as trust developed. I also used these occasions to share previous interview transcripts and invite the interviewee's analysis. These interviews were loosely structured around a set of themes and questions drawn up in advance and involved activists 'telling me their story'. The interviews took a dialogic form, the interviewees often asking me about what I thought. Like Roseneil I did not want to theorise about these activists but with them (1995:12). In this way, I did not hide my identification from those being researched, sharing my story and encouraging them to identify with me. Many contacted me later by email or letter to further discuss points we had touched on in the interview. Data was collected in field notes, audio and visual records. The interviews used in Chapter Four were undertaken in India in 1995 – 1996 as part of another project. The quotes are from villagers and movement leaders. At this time I was working with Indian activists and have drawn on these field notes throughout the thesis. Photographs, video and Internet material has complemented the detailed inside observations and interviews and extended the possibilities for analysis and interpretation.

The method of data collection I used borrowed from Glaser and Strauss's 'grounded theory' (1967). Essentially this meant that I shared with them a

commitment to refining and testing theory throughout the process of data collection. This meant that as theory emerged it would guide the collection of the data. I followed what Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) call a process of 'respondent validation'. This approach makes use of the 'knowledgeability and agency' (Roseneil 1993) of the interviewees and it meant that often they were theorising with me, rather than a more traditional approach where I would theorise about them.

Although Hammersley and Atkinson warn against the 'theorising interviewee' or someone that 'moves away from description into analysis' (1983:189) I found this process invaluable. Thus, I will attempt to present as much material as possible in the form of questions, answers and direct speech. This strategy is designed to suffuse my conclusions with a level of transparency and accountability and to point out precisely when, where and how these conclusions differed from activists themselves. I do hope to present the activists as a source of knowledge rather than as 'data'. My sharing of their concerns and perceptions will be presented, as far as it is practicable within the parameters of this scholarly form, using their own idioms, narrative styles and structures and with their emphases on what they saw as important. Thus, this project is always open, never complete and perpetually inserted in an ever-changing dialogue about social movements and democracy.

## Chapter Two

### **By Their Vision Shall Ye Know Them: Strategy and Vision in the Movement for Global Justice**

**The longing for a better world will need to arise at the imagined meeting place of many movements of resistance, as many as there are sites of enclosure and exclusion. The resistance will be as transnational as capital. Because enclosure takes myriad forms, so shall resistance to it.**

(Boal, cited in Notes from Nowhere, 2003:29).

**No longer will an affinity for used clothes, a refusal to eat fast food, a vegetarian lifestyle and a subscription to Adbusters suffice. I want to buy my self a gas mask, tear this world apart and rebuild from the roots with others of a like mind.<sup>15</sup>**

The previous chapter suggested that the global justice movement that emerged on the streets at Seattle was not an isolated movement, but part of a continuum of social movements that have emerged to challenge development discourse and neoliberalism often with their roots in Third World activism and critiques of 'development'.

Whilst struggles against neoliberalism in the South are not new, it is only in recent years that the application of neoliberalism has begun to be more openly and publicly opposed by large groups in the North. One reason for this may be that while neoliberal policies have been imposed on Third World governments for many years, the adoption of such doctrines in Anglo-American societies only occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the impact of these policies on the general welfare of workers in these societies has been (arguably) far less deleterious than it has on their counterparts in the 'less-developed countries'. The reasons for the emergence of a global justice movement with such a high profile now, therefore, are just as much to do with

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<sup>15</sup> A FTAA Diary zine. [www.No.media.kings.org](http://www.No.media.kings.org).

the extension of neoliberal doctrines to the economies of the North as they are to do with a sudden ethical imperative to assist 'those in need'.

Although the global justice movement emerges from a history of development critique, a number of factors also point to its departure from these origins. How different the movement is from the previous resistance that had taken place became evident in the significance of the protests against the third ministerial meeting of the WTO in Seattle during the week of November 28 to December 3 1999. Seattle marked a turning point in a number of ways. As Danaher and Burbach note, never before had so much anti-corporate critique appeared in corporate controlled media (2000:7). *The Los Angeles Times* opined: 'On the tear gas shrouded streets of Seattle, the unruly forces of democracy collided with the elite world of trade policy. And when the meeting ended in failure on Friday the elitists had lost and the debate had changed forever'. Thus, what came to be known as 'N30' with its penetration of the corporate media with an anti-corporate message built on 'a growing public distrust of the corporate free trade agenda' (ibid.) became a landmark in contemporary imagination. As Danaher and Burbach describe in *Globalise This!* Seattle marked the 'greatest failure of elite trade diplomacy since the end of World War 2' (ibid.).

More importantly, 'N30' would be interpreted, as Naomi Klein has already suggested, as the USA's 'coming out'.<sup>16</sup> It marked the emergence of a new global movement for citizen power, the 'great premiere in society of world resistance to globalisation' (Hernandez Navarro, 2000:41). Estimates of the number of people who took part in the protests in Seattle vary, but most accounts claim around 40 to 50,000. Aside from the sheer number of people who participated, 'according to the *Seattle Times* ...the demonstrations were

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<sup>16</sup> "Well I believe that we are at the very early stages of a new internal political moment, and Seattle was the sort of 'coming out' party for Americans": It's the Left, Jim.

larger than those of 1970, when twenty to thirty thousand people shut down Interstate 5 to protest the Vietnam War'.<sup>17</sup>

Another important aspect of the protests was the fact that they involved an array of groups from a huge spectrum of political and social backgrounds. As mentioned in the introduction, this convergence was celebrated by activists, and commented on by most journalists. 'It seems as though every group with every complaint from every corner of the world is represented in Seattle this week' commented ABC reporter Peter Jennings during the protests (12/3/99). When the conference was over he then remarked, 'the thousands of demonstrators will go home, or on to some other venue where they'll try to generate attention for whatever cause moves them' (cited in Akerman, 2000: 61). The fact that such a diversity of groups was able to act in unison raises obvious questions: is there anything in common between such diverse groups as anarchists, communists, environmentalists, farmers, liberals, pacifists, students, Third World solidarity activists, trade unionists and even otherwise 'apolitical' local residents? Similarly, can such a heterogenous movement have any clear goals, strategy or vision?

Anti-globalisation resistance has a number of distinguishing features that both illuminate the changing nature of social movements and depart from previous critiques of development. These features will be examined in this chapter through an exploration of the philosophy of the global justice movement. In doing this I will also consider criticisms levelled against them in order to demonstrate how they challenge traditional conceptions of social movements and offer new directions for theorising contemporary practices of radical democracy.

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<sup>17</sup> William K. Tabb, 'The World Trade organization? Stop World take Over', *Monthly Review*, vol. 51, p.1.

Whilst it is important to locate the emergence of the global justice movement within its wider structural contexts, its formation and emergence cannot be simply 'read off' social structures or the political environment of the time. Like all social movements, the global justice movement emerged and continues through the agency of human actors, whose subjective motivations must be considered. Nor is it sufficient to provide a historical description of the various protests that have taken place. The movement's making was not a one-off event, but a continuous process in which people are mobilised and activated.

In order to understand what led to the development of a movement for global justice, what makes it distinctive and the possibilities it holds, this chapter attempts to outline and analyse the key aspects of the 'philosophy' of the global justice movement. The perspectives of forty activists were investigated to see what they saw as the fundamental problems they were fighting, what they saw as their vision of the future and how they see their strategy for achieving that vision.

The activist narratives that will be explored were gathered via face-to-face interviews between July 2000 and May 2001. This was a particularly significant period for the movement. Protests had occurred in Seattle, Washington, Melbourne, Prague and Quebec City and planning for Genoa was well underway. There was an extensive amount of discussion occurring within the movement itself, about tactics, strategy and vision. The majority of interviews were conducted at protests in the United States, Australia and Canada, and a smaller number in organisation offices in New York, Seattle, Boston, Philadelphia and Melbourne. A total of forty formal taped interviews took place, each of them lasting 90 minutes. The activists interviewed represent a wide range of social movement organisations, affinity groups and grassroots organisations. Many are grassroots organisers and 'frontline' activists. It is both

possible and illuminating to quantify these responses, which I have attempted to do, merging them with what I consider to be rich and suggestive qualitative data.

These interviews demonstrate that it is necessary to explore the basic analytic discourses activists use in order to understand and subsequently resist neoliberalism. Each activist interviewed articulated various narratives about the fundamental problems they were fighting, their visions of the future and their goals and strategies. These three aspects represent the basic outline of this common analytical narrative and the structure of the discussion to follow.

## **Fundamental Problems**

For those with a commitment to global justice, the 1990s were a bleak period. In a barren landscape of political activism 'dominated by brittle minded economic orthodoxy' (Crieder 2000:143), there were continual reminders of the so-called inevitability of globalisation. The decade also marked the development of institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) based primarily on what Shiva describes as the 'helplessness of the Third World in the face of a single super power' (2000:120). However, the protests in Seattle dispensed with the myth that globalisation and free trade cannot be stopped or challenged. It also, as Vandana Shiva reminds us, 'got rid of the argument that the U.S. as the only super power, would always have its way' (2000:121).

On that day in Seattle, the super power found itself under siege by citizens' representative of issues, movements and political interests that spanned the globe. It was not only 'middle class white activists'. Dissent also occurred inside with the African, Latin American and Caribbean countries previously excluded from 'green room' negotiations, also rebelling and refusing to be

'bullied any longer' (Shiva 2000:121). Even India, a major player which had forced the Uruguay round decisions on their citizens (ibid.), despite massive protests from farmers and workers across India, took on the superpower on the issue of 'trade sanctions linked to labour issues' (Shiva 2000: 121).

The promise of Seattle was captured in the flavour of this 'loose jointed new movement - people of disparate purposes setting aside old differences, united by the spirit of smart, playful optimism' (Greider, 2000:143). The key to understanding why this struggle of so many was so inspirational is because of the fact that it is recognised as being against the same 'enemy' (Starr, 2001): the global economic system. It is argued that this definition of a common enemy is the beginning of a global revolution, 'a revolution in values as well as institutions. It seeks to replace the money values in the current system with the life values of a truly democratic system' (Danaher & Burbach, 2000:9).

Although the responses of the interviewees showed that individual activists have their own personal interpretations and the reasons for getting and staying involved changed over time, in general the movement constructs its actions surrounding its understanding of this common enemy. This is what global justice activists consider to be the primary contradiction, or central myths, that drives many of the crises experienced today. Much of the identity of global justice activism revolves around challenging global capital. Most activists explain their understanding of the fundamental problems they are fighting in terms of a number of different but interrelated systemic problems. I have identified four predominant explanations given in the interviews, both for activists' initial involvement and for staying involved: capitalism, the economic system, power imbalances, hierarchy and authoritarianism and false consciousness. Each of these five explanations will now be discussed.

## 1. Capitalism: The World is Not for Sale

Although two competing possibilities exist within the movement as to how to challenge neoliberalism, the 'fix it or nix it' arguments, the economic system is seen by the majority of activists to be the central problem leading to many of the catastrophes occurring throughout the world. As is reflected in the above data, half of the interview participants said the problem was capitalism, pure and simple. These activists consider capitalism to be an inherently destructive project causing suffering and despair to the world's peoples, environments and cultures, not merely as an unfortunate by-product, but as its *modus operandi*. This drive, defined in multiple ways - capitalism, neoliberalism, globalisation, the inevitable belief in progress, development, free trade and even the ideology of white supremacy - is seen to be not managed by an invisible hand that randomly decides market and currency fluctuations. Rather, as the quotation below from an interview with Peter Chung from the student liberation movement in New York reflects, it is a system of global governance that prioritises capital at the expense of labour, the environment and human rights:

*There has to be a wholesale restructuring of government institutions, the economic system, and the ways we relate to each other and the world outside of us. Basically we need to destroy the government and the institutions that it supports, the corporations that it supports. I don't think we can give people real control and real power under the current governmental system.*

(Chung, personal interview 2000)

Capitalism is understood in this context by activists as leading to a destruction of communities, environments and lifeways, and activists feel there is no possibility for reforming this inherently destructive system. In targeting NAFTA, the FTAA, or the WTO etc, activists are deliberately recognising the intimate relationship between these agreements and institutions to a much larger global order, as reflected in the following perceptions of interviewees:

*I just think there are a whole bunch of problems that stem out of capitalism and I think that's ultimately what we're fighting. You know, I think everything stems from that. Degradation of the environment, horrible working conditions, labour issues. I mean everything bad I can think of basically stems from capitalism and the way that it perpetuates itself in society.*

(Davis, personal interview 2000)

*I think it is certainly a time of crisis. Which is perhaps a banal thing to say because crisis has been the defining feature of the entire historical period since the industrial revolution. There has been a transition in the last twenty years from state capitalism centered on the welfare state to capitalism shorn of that welfare state to economic rationalism or neoliberalism. We are not going to accomplish anything with the current industrial state in place. We are not talking about an overthrow of government; we are talking about an overthrow of capitalism.*

(Melbourne-based affinity group, personal interview 2001)

In this sense, many of the activists believe that the effects of commodification go beyond the disruption of social institutions to profound psychic trauma, which leads to both alienation and rage.

*Those of us growing up now have watched our minds, our towns, our open spaces, our sense of community and even the sense of our identity and value systems be commodified, and we've been so preyed upon by the branding efforts of these corporate interests that we have reached a breaking point... Look at the average 16 year old today. The tendrils of commodification are far more and are squeezing far tighter than they ever did to me. Pepsi, Jordache and MTV never squeezed as hard as they do today, and we're seeing really smart, caring young people with an incredibly articulate critique rising up as a result.*

(Alario, personal interview 2000)

*People here don't know what's been taken away from them but they feel the loss, particularly young people. They feel instinctively the emptiness of a society as materialistic as ours. Spiritual people might call it 'soul.' Any spark that can galvanize it is important. The true revolutionary commodity is hope. The thing that keeps people from getting involved is the idea that they can't change anything. Apathy is their solution: "I hate corporations but I can't do anything about them. I'll retreat into drugs, subculture, etc." The American Empire is due to collapse. It's less about how many people we have but how accurately those folks can capture and frame the issues. Our media-saturated society turns people into spectators. What we have to do is create the "unspectacle" spectacle.*

(Reinsborough, personal interview 2000)

## 2. 'Human Need Not Corporate Greed': The Economic System

Other activists did not explicitly mention capitalism but said the problem lay in an economic system that puts profits before people, echoing one of the slogans heard often at global justice protests: 'Human Need Not Corporate Greed'. These activists' critique is pointedly anti-corporate, not anti-capitalist, believing that one of the perversities of modern capitalism is that corporations are given full legal rights and privileges as if they were actual 'corporeal' persons. Phoebe Shellenberg from the Wages for Housework Campaign discussed this view with me at an interview in Philadelphia:

*Rather than a market that serves people, people are serving the market. Are we using our resources for a better life or are we there to serve this machine that has gone crazy and is cutting a genocidal swath through communities on every continent?*

(Personal interview 2000)

A segment of the global justice movement has begun to invade the sanctuary of anonymity for corporate owners and managers. As John Vidal (cited in Klein, 2000: 325) writes 'a lot of activists are attaching themselves leech-like on to the side of the body corporate'. Whilst Klein notes that this leech-like attachment can take many forms, 'from the socially respectable to the near terrorist' (ibid.), corporate accountability activists, from high tech international hackers to the biotic pie brigade, have developed great skill in pressuring corporations to change their objectionable policies. By disseminating information to the public and the wider activist community about the many political and economic interconnections between corporations, an education process is underway about the many environmental and human rights abuses committed by corporations. People are learning that corporations exist because citizens charter them and give them a piece of their sovereignty. Activists believe that this can be taken away, if enough citizens demand it.

### 3. 'WTO? Hell No!': Power Distribution

The global distribution of power and the consolidation of power in the hands of corporations, global elites and organisations such as the World Bank, IMF and WTO were also emphasised. For activists, these agencies exalt technocratic means of decision-making and control:

*There's a structural problem, a consolidation of power in the hands of a tiny elite. It's easy to throw around terms like corporations or global capitalism, but these are just tools used by tiny elites to redistribute power and accumulate wealth.*

(Reinsborough, personal interview 2000)

A diverse range of activists and organisations is working to challenge this power and advocating for a return to the local in terms of citizen empowerment. These efforts span the political spectrum from left to right, yet they agree that as much decision making as possible should take place at the local level. This is in sharp contrast to the agenda being pushed by the WTO, IMF and World Bank.

Cam Walker from Friends of the Earth in Melbourne describes the need to confront both the actual decisions of corporations and unilateral agencies and the discourse:

*The issue is who controls the resources? Increasingly we are witnessing corporations controlling those resources and they are not holding to any values beyond the need for profit, and hence what's in a sense a natural issue in regards to loss of bio-diversity requires a political response. Because it requires you to tackle the TNCs and so increasingly they are the focus of why people do activism, not just about trade but about everything from political power to the loss of our forests and so it's a logical process.*

(Walker, personal interview 2000)

Although in the past non-government organisations (NGOs) have decried corporate elitism and manipulation of processes by such agency decision makers, they rarely challenged the authority or 'right' of agencies and

corporations to make decisions. Some activists have near-vilified the mainstream NGOs criticising them for their 'compromise' politics. A segment of the global justice movement argues that a professionalised bureaucratic elite of managers, lawyers, and lobbyists has seized control of development and aid organisations, centralising power away from grassroots activists, and has kept the movement within the confines of liberal-bourgeois reform politics.

The mainstream NGOs were too willing to deal and compromise with pro-development/anti-environmentalist politicians, mainly because they shared the same neoliberal paradigm and allegiance to globalisation and consumerist culture, but also because they cared more for their professional careers and their access to power brokers than they cared for the population of the Third World. Activists from the beginning wanted to thwart the collaboration of liberal NGOs with the state, thus engaging in a radical philosophical, political, cultural critique of the 'unholy allegiance' of mainstream development agencies with the corporate state and industrial society. Some global justice activists therefore oppose these organisations on these grounds and attempt to expand the debate beyond economic grounds, raising arguments based on democracy and justice. The view expressed is that these arguments are almost never pronounced within such structures.

Beyond the polemics, there is a lot of interaction and collaboration occurring at the grassroots level between global justice activists and NGOs. It should be noted that within these development and aid agencies there are many radicals who choose to agitate for no-compromise positions from 'within'. It is up for speculation the degree to which these activists have been inspired or nurtured in their internal rebellions by the example of global justice activists agitating from 'without'. The openness of the global justice movement, the

fact that it is not an organisation with formally defined membership criteria, allows cooperation to occur with members of other organisations and movements also adopting no-compromise positions. Thus, whilst some activists condemn mainstream environmental and development organisations, they are often willing to work with grassroots activists from these same organisations as long as their joint projects do not involve compromise. A good example of this is the S11 protests in Melbourne, and it is worth turning our attention to this here.

### **S11: Seattle + Washington = Melbourne** <sup>18</sup>

If 'N30' was the United State's 'coming out', then 'S11' – three days of protest against, and blockade of, the World Economic Forum's Asia-Pacific Economic Summit in Melbourne from September 11 to 13, 2000 – was Australia's. The estimated 10,000 protestors who assembled outside (or in the words of *The Australian*, 'laid violent siege to',) (*The Australian*, September 12, 2000, p.1), Crown Casino failed to cause the same level of disruption, nor attract the same level of international support as did the protestors in Seattle.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, there is little question that, in terms of [Australian political history], S11 was hugely significant.

According to the Melbourne newspaper *The Age*:

The amorphous S11 sees itself as WEF's democratic counterpoint. It exists in name only and like a geometric point, it has position, but no magnitude. It organises, but is not an organisation. How can it be otherwise when it has no corporate identity, no legal standing nor any leadership?

(*The Age*, August 26 2000).

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<sup>18</sup> 'Seattle + Washington = Melbourne': a slogan featured on the S11 website (<http://www.S11.org>) and subjected to much commentary in the local and national press.

<sup>19</sup> S11 solidarity actions appear to have been confined to London and New Zealand; see <http://www.S11.org> for more.

Organising for the WEF protests began many months before September 11, in January 2000. The 'S11-Alliance', which was a coalition of mostly 'reds' and 'greens', met weekly during this period, and functioned as a kind of centralising force in protest organising. Counterbalancing this force was the tendency towards 'autonomous' organising of the kind that had characterised previous anti-capitalist protests, based largely on non-hierarchical organising structures. In fact, one of the main groups responsible for organising S11- S11AWOL or the 'Autonomous Web of Liberation'<sup>20</sup> - broke away from the Alliance because of this 'centralising' tendency. In an editorial in *Arena Magazine*, Guy Rundle claims that 'S11 was the first protest in this 'series' in which the decentralised affinity group structure meshed effectively with a tightly coordinated 'marshalling' structure throughout the protest (no. 49, October-November, 2000, p.2). Whether this is true or not - and it has been the subject of much debate within activist circles - Rundle raises an important point when he compares S11 to previous protests.

S11, like N30, brought together a range of groups under a common umbrella, that of opposition to 'corporate greed'. Part of the inspiration for S11 was obviously provided by the example given by previous 'days of action' against corporate globalisation. And like previous 'anti-globalisation' protests, the coalition it brought together was in many cases fragile and contained within it a number of potentially contradictory tendencies. Nevertheless, a number of important lessons had been taught to the global justice movement, lessons which as I will later argue, have their origin in the Zapatistas' commitment to creating new political spaces in which the principles of autonomy, dialogue and inclusivity are accorded central importance. Inspired by the efforts of the EZLN to create autonomous spaces in the villages and towns of Chiapas, Mexico, activists around the world have tried to recreate this sense of

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<sup>20</sup> For more information see <http://www.antimedia.net/S11awol>

autonomy in scores of other cities when the central business districts have been occupied and transformed during global justice protests.

#### 4. Hierarchy and Authoritarianism

Disillusion with conventional political processes and the traditional means of development campaigning contributed to activists' willingness to take the bold steps necessary to participate in Seattle. Joining various NGOs, attending meetings, collecting 'signatures' protesting 'bad decisions', and monitoring bureaucratic proceedings seemed inadequate, given the gravity and scope of the situation. Many involved in S11 described how they felt that conventional campaigning was insufficient to meet the gravity of the situation and what was needed was a thorough rejection of the very right of the corporations, elites and decision makers to make decisions or manage at all. David Solnit from the Freedom Rising Travelling Affinity Group and puppet maker extraordinaire expresses the opinions of numerous activists interviewed when he suggests that hierarchical and authoritarian structures in general are the problem:

*I think the problem is the global economic and political system that reaches into every community and has been accelerated in the last few years. Underlying that is top-down systems of domination, of hierarchy, that dis-empower people based on race, gender, and class. So to me the solution is to come up with non-hierarchical, egalitarian, directly democratic alternatives.*

(Solnit, personal interview 2000)

The fact that authority and hierarchy are seen as fundamental problems can assist in understanding the commitment by the movement to non-hierarchical organisational forms and direct action. For example, the basic organising structure used in global justice protests worldwide is based on two separate but related organisational tools: 'affinity groups' and 'spokescouncils'. In essence, an affinity group is a small group of people, (in number anywhere

from a mere handful to two dozen) united on the basis of a common 'affinity'. An anonymous flyer produced for S11 defines an affinity group as follows: 'An affinity group is a group of people who have an affinity for each other, know each other's strengths and weaknesses, support each other, and do (or intend to do) political/campaign work together'.<sup>21</sup>

The use of affinity groups and spokescouncils as a model for organising non-violent direct action allows for the elaboration of both a strategic goal and a common method of pursuing it. A 'spokescouncil' on the other hand, is a means of coordinating the actions of a number of affinity groups or, alternatively, a number of affinity groups that together form a 'cluster'. A spokescouncil consists of one or more delegates from each affinity group assembling in a common space in order to exchange information and allow for the possibility of concerted action – such as the blockading of a street intersection, between groups. Viv Sharples in *Peace News* describes this process:

In the area around Seattle and Washington DC, the area around the meeting sites was divided into pie slices, and clusters of [affinity groups] took responsibility for blockading a particular slice of the pie in whatever ways they chose, be it locking down to each other or to objects, sitting down and linking arms, having a street party, creating barricades etc...  
(*Peace News*, no.2439, June-August 2000:37)

The widespread use of such organisational tools, previously used predominantly in women's anti-nuclear peace camps such as Greenham Common,<sup>22</sup> are politically very significant because such organisational forms are created outside and against capitalist social relations. In essence, anti-globalisation activists are engaged in an attempt to reconcile radically democratic means within the creation of radical democracy. Affinity groups and spokescouncils encourage, and in many ways, even demand that

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<sup>21</sup> 'Affinity Groups' [August/September 2000].

<sup>22</sup> See Sasha Roseniel, *Disarming Patriarchy*.

individuals actively participate in democratic decision-making processes. It is widely believed within the movement that all decisions affecting large mobilisations should be taken collectively, openly and by consensus. In fact, these processes are designed specifically in order to encourage a maximum rate of participation. The end result of this process is the coming together of a range of groups with a variety of interests, which in turn, unsurprisingly perhaps, has resulted in the emergence of decentralised and democratic protest actions.

The use of consensus processes by the global justice movement function as a critique of neoliberal politics as well as a practical method of learning an alternative form of citizenship. During actions such as Seattle where protestors sat on cloth webs in circles to make decisions in their affinity groups, the circle of the group embodied the dynamic of the consensus process and proclaimed the non-hierarchical principles of the movement. The circle of consensus acts as a symbol of an alternative political order, albeit an unrealised one, placed against the linear, hierarchical and neoliberal one.

Consensus processes operate on the assumption that the participation of everyone equally will produce the best synthesis of differing opinions, perceptions and desires, thus resulting in a decision which everyone can support. Whether or not this actually occurs for every decision, the practice of consensus in this way assumes that each participant has the means, ability and responsibility to contribute to the formation of a decision, and that information will be widely distributed and made available through the use of that process. Consensus processes function as a hermeneutic method, not just for making decisions but also for continuously generating new ways of interpreting political problems; political knowledge is gained through agreement within the group. This 'truth' is, however open to change over time and to challenge from new or different interpretations. This process has

implications for the kind of political relations constructed within the movement. As an educative political process, consensus creates an arena in which to practise the skills of an alternative citizenship. The wide distribution of information, the assumption that anyone can make good decisions, and the fluid status of knowledge all undermine any attempts to develop experts or professionals within the movement. Agreement or 'reaching consensus' requires, in theory, the active contribution of every member.

When thousands of demonstrators gathered in Quebec in April 2000 for another in the series of anti-corporate protests at the time, there were many questions still to be settled regarding protest tactics and other matters. A three-hour open meeting was held that I attended in which two thousand people participated. Miraculously the issues were skilfully settled satisfactorily by consensus. Most of the participants had never been to such a protest before and were not familiar with the consensus process. And yet an effective collaborative space was soon established and business proceeded in an orderly fashion. In my view this was an extraordinary amazing accomplishment, deserving of some attention. For a two thousand person meeting to even be attempted seems out of the ordinary, but for it also to be productive is of great note.

'Listening' therefore is of particular importance to the global justice movement as it avoids divisiveness and reduces the likelihood of the breaking up of a movement into factions. Even over the emotionally-laden issue of 'violence' (such as window breaking), groups are able to openly discuss their deeply felt differences and then accept to respect each other by keeping their actions separate in agreed ways. Factionalism has undermined many previous movements, and this movement's inclusiveness gives it some unique strengths. Internally, this inclusiveness enables the movement to act with a high degree of coherence and unity, despite differences in beliefs and

priorities. Externally, the inclusiveness gives the movement the potential to reach out to a wide range of new constituencies. Anyone who wants a more democratic and just world, and who wants to do something about it, can be welcomed as a movement participant.

At all the large mobilisations since Seattle participants have attempted to incorporate the consensus process, and 'time' is a very important factor in achieving this. The majority of activists interviewed mentioned that lack of time was a major factor in the inability to 'listen to everyone'. When a decision needs to be made immediately (when a state of emergency was declared in Seattle for instance) representatives from affinity groups will decide matters at spokescouncils and then provide feedback to their affinity group. Sometimes people will go along with what leaders say without questioning them. In writing about the large international meetings in Prague, Graeme Chesters makes reference to the deep philosophical divisions amongst anarchist and socialist groups, who debated strategy. Chesters notes that in some instances meetings lasted 'in excess of 12 hours' and 'were ideologically split' (2001:10). However, despite these divisions, he notes that there 'is broad acknowledgement of an emerging consensus' (ibid: 11). When asked about the respect that the movement attempts to provide all participants, one activist remarked:

*The movement way is to listen to everyone...not just for the sake of listening because it's a nice thing to do but because everyone has something to say. As you can see I'm older. I have never been a member of a political party or union. My husband is a union organiser and I always supported his organising. But when Seattle happened, he got involved and I got involved. Now I have something to say. I can talk and I can listen...I think I even listen to what my kids say more than what I used to...I have a voice just like everyone else and everyone needs to be heard.*

*(Sanger, personal interview 2000)*

## 5. False Consciousness: A New World is Possible

In ways reminiscent of Sixties activists who held broader utopian aims, several participants suggested that although they saw the primary problem as being the system, part of the problem also lies within us, in our culture or consciousness:

*... I actually believe that it goes back to an absence of love on some level. I had an opportunity to meet Renato Ruggiero when he was director general of the WTO. Unfortunately I wasn't smart enough at the time to ask him about his relationships with his kids, or with God, or with nature. I think part of it is detachment from the land, from reverence for life, from a sense of love and respect, even before responsibility... I think now what we're facing is peoples' disconnection to one another, to love, to wonder, to a sense of community that is available to all of us in being with other living things.*

(Alario, personal interview 2000)

These activists regard the mass protests and rallies of the past as ineffectual in addressing the many facets of globalisation and neoliberalism, which cannot be reformed by means of conventional politics. Like the movements of the Sixties, such as the Diggers who 'dismantled the distinction between leaders and followers' (Stephens, 1998:27) and who initiated free food projects in the Haight-Ashbury, this part of the global justice movement is motivated by a fierce anti-commercialism. Jon Sellers, one of the founders of the Ruckus society, and Liz Butler of the Coastal Rainforest Coalition in Seattle discussed this with me at an interview held at non-violent direct action training in Vermont:

*We need to reward those things what we hold sacred. What do we lionize now? What if all of the sudden we said, "It's not the people that have them most that are coolest, it's the people that do the most with the least that we're going to celebrate and hold up as an example"? It's weird. So much of it is just cutting through the static that we're bombarded with and connecting from a central place as human beings and talking about what's important to us.*

(Sellers, personal interview 2001)

*We've set up a culture that values money over people, a culture of haves and have-nots. The U.S. Democracy is about ensuring that the power*

*balance in place doesn't change. The corporations and the rich people have power and have control over other folks. We use racism, sexism and intellectual elitism to enforce it.... They also try to buy everyone into the concept that if we just had a little more money it would be fine—the whole American dream thing. It keeps people complacent. People think they have a say in what happens to them. It's sort of like Soma from Brave New World. It's false consciousness driven by corporations. They drive government and they always have. They drive everything from education to the images that people encounter to reinforcing a set of beliefs that are about disempowering people that are about keeping people committed to a corporate society. The Meat and Dairy Council provides our information on nutrition. We have Coke and Pepsi all over the wall.... You spend your whole life being taught this from 4, 5 or earlier.*

(Butler, personal interview 2001)

In our uncertain world, where tradition is perceived as having less and less hold over us, activists commented that they were increasingly forced to create their own codes for living (Roseneil, 2000:114). Dominica Settle's response below reflects a strong sense of the loss of faith in moral absolutes, meta-political ideologies and scientific truth as a legitimation for beliefs (ibid.). The absence of this universal set of principles grounded in reason gives way to a more fluid approach to an ethics that is self- consciously ambiguous, local and contingent:

*In terms of globalisation, I think it's about the value system of this society that we have been putting up with for a long time. But now it's all coming to a head. The fact that when money is your prime objective a lot of things fall off the end. Like say the rights of people who don't have any and I think in capitalist times that's always been a problem. We need some fundamental changes. I come from the perspective that it's not so much we need to change to communism or anarchism or socialism, but I think it's more we need to change the underlying values. I think you can fuck people over under any system and that until we start respecting everybody including poor, black, whatever, we are going to be screwed. I think this problem has been there forever but is coming much more visible because globalisation is shining the light on inequalities in society. Corporate rule is just getting bigger and bigger so that everyone notices it and goes 'hang on a minute!'*

(Settle, personal interview 2000)

Settle's words express the understanding shared by many activists that it is impossible to appeal for legitimation of their politics to the very ideologies that brought the world to the brink of environmental and economic disaster. The global justice movement's critique of this ensures that its politics are

understood to be about values, not claims to truth. The values of the movement are never consciously or explicitly laid out in the forms of rules, guidelines or policies; rather they are flexibly and loosely held. According to New Social Movement theorists (Cohen, 1985: 670; Ferree, 1992: 33; Kalndermans, 1992: 92; Melucci, 1984: 830), actions undertaken by activists are not merely instrumental resources to serve extrinsic goals; the interactional experiences and emotional outcomes of movement participation are goals within themselves. NSM actors structure their social relations and collective actions within a 'prefigurative politics' (Breines, 1989:6; Epstein 1991:16). The immediate goal of prefigurative political activism is to gain personal empowerment in collective struggle. Accordingly, the means and ends of activism must be congruent, otherwise cognitive dissonance would occur. In effect, actors attempt to link personal change with social change, believing that they can change their lives in the present while fighting for general socio-politico-cultural changes in the future (Melucci, 1984:827, 1989:63; Morris, 1992:369; Taylor and Whittier, 1992:110; Touraine, 1985:749, 1988:132). Participation in activism is therefore regarded as a benefit in itself rather than a 'cost' or a duty, and every individual freely decides how and when to participate (Donati, 1984:848).

## **Opening Up a World of Possibilities**

Global justice activism means getting to the roots of global injustice which, according to activists, means challenging the very system and worldview that dominates our neoliberal, post-industrial, information age. Thus, many activists locate the roots of global injustice deep in Western consciousness and modernity, not merely in current political leaders or economic policies. Global justice activists such as Kevin Danaher from Global Exchange in San Francisco challenge the dominant neoliberal discourses and their underlying

paradigms. Like others, he believes these are the root sources of the extreme forms of injustice we are seeing in the world today:

*The money currently rules. You have money and you use it to buy commodities. Then you sell it for money and that has to be bigger than the money you started out with. A corporation doesn't invest in Zimbabwe unless it has the expectation of taking more out than they put in. It's the same with mountaintop removal and coal mining in Appalachia. It's no coincidence that the places with greatest natural wealth endowments, the gold of South Africa, the oil of Niger delta – these are the places with the worst inequality and environmental devastation. It's the definition of a paradox—something that appears contradictory but in fact makes perfect sense. You have an extractive model, so by definition the system creates inequality. What's important in this system is the quantitative amassing of money—not the quality but the quantity of stuff you control or own, and this gives obscene and absurd results like people with billions of dollars. You can't spend billions of dollars.... [The alternative is] C-M-C. You have commodity; you exchange it for money. Let's say your commodity is massage. You exchange it for money only to get other commodities in order to live. So money is subordinated to the exchange of use values between human beings, rather than use values – C – being subordinated to money values, exchange values. There's your two exchanges. One subordinates money to utility and the other subordinates utility to money. If exchange value dominates use value, you will destroy the planet. If exchange, if money values are subordinated to commodity values, to use values, that is, to real human need and natural need, then we have a chance to survive and not destroy the biosphere.*

(Danaher, personal interview 2000)

It matters little that global justice activists will not, or sometimes cannot, win their battles against the corporate state, for the activists interviewed believe that they have no other choice than to resist and take action. The view was expressed that they are morally compelled from within their collective global conscience to act in defence of those throughout the world suffering under neoliberal dominance. Thus, protesting economic summits or meetings of multilateral organisations, world economic forums, advocating the dismantling of huge dams in the Third World, demanding fair trade, and calling for transformation of the economic system are viewed as entirely rational and necessary actions.

Activists challenge the paradigmatic power of these dominant discourses because their global worldview compels them to resist, regardless of the

apparent 'futility' of their actions. The contingencies of social conflict, however, make the outcome of each confrontation uncertain. There have been some significant real victories where activists have beaten the system and stopped proposals of the World Bank and also influenced decisions such as eliminating Third World debt and funding for the AIDS crisis in Africa. With other recent mobilisations that have questioned the arguments of the inevitability of corporate globalisation, politics and power have been redefined (Shiva, 2000: 122) and corporations are on the back foot. Both corporations and multilateral organisations have begun justifying themselves in different language. A prime example is the new mythology of the WTO as 'protector of the poor' (ibid.). Vandana Shiva cites a disturbing article in the *Times of India* in which Swaminathan Anklesaria Iyer is quoted as declaring the 'WTO the protector of India, the TNCs of India as natural allies and citizens' groups as the real enemies of the Third World' (2000:122). Naomi Klein also notes this changing of corporate responses when she cites Shell employing an 'Internet manager' who 'oversees the monitoring of all online references to the company, responds to E-mail queries about social issues and has helped to establish Shell's online "social concerns" discussion forum on the company web site' (2000:394). Thus, as Melucci (1989:75) argues, activists wage both real and ideological challenges as a means of unmasking the dominant ideologies and demonstrating to the public a different way of perceiving the world and acting within it. It is to these alternative perceptions of the future that we now turn.

## **Future Visions**

The activists interviewed had both a critique of the fundamental problems they were fighting, and well-defined visions of the future. By and large, the visions expressed were remarkably coherent; they imagined future societies that were radically democratic, with radically different economies, and

organised around principles of mutual respect, diversity, justice and sustainability. The greatest axis of difference was the degree to which they envisioned a world in which existing institutions would be reformed or entirely dismantled.

As can be seen a commitment to democracy and autonomy were perhaps the most consistent themes that emerged as activists discussed what is wrong with this world and what would be different in the world they want to create. The majority described a world in which people have far more control over their lives and their communities. In these visions, democracy is a conspicuously local affair. When these activists spoke of 'democracy,' they didn't talk about elections. Many described future visions that were entirely devoid of the state:

*We need to work toward a truly democratic society, where everyone has equal opportunity to make their voices heard, where everyone's preferences and values are truly reflected. It requires so much change in the way things work now that we almost need a new name for it. What we call democracy is certainly not that.*

(Lawson-Remer, personal interview 2000)

Beyond the immediate battles, the global justice movement has gone on the offensive and attempted to tell a positive story about how the world will look if its values prevail. David Solnit described such a vision to me, sitting under a bridge amidst the tear gas at the Quebec City protests:

*It looks like an ecosystem, with each local community deciding how they want to run their lives. Rather than having a monoculture—this social system, this party structure—we want to maintain that diversity because it's healthy.... We are creating structures that give people direct control over the things that matter, over what happens in their lives, homes, communities, schools, workplace, etc. That's how I try to restructure society in the organizing I do. The utopian vision already exists—there's already parts of peoples' lives that they run themselves without governments, without corporations. People in the workplace manage without bosses, families work together—small spheres of our life that we have control of. The goal is to expand those spheres to cover more and more of our lives. There are lots of historical examples when people have risen up and thrown off oppressive systems. In Spain, from '36-'38, people*

*took over the land, redistributed goods, etc. It's very possible to run society in a common sense way, without capitalism or state socialism.*

*(Solnit, personal interview 2001)*

In both Australia and the United States, activists linked their idea of a radically democratic society to an economy that has been fundamentally transformed. This involved wide ranging proposals, from the WTO being replaced by a body that is fully democratic, transparent and accountable to the citizens of the world instead of to corporations, to the forcing of corporations to prove their worth to society or be dismantled. In this respect, Kai Lumumba Barrows of the Student Liberation Action Movement (SLAM), an organisation of young people of colour, and Damian Sullivan from Friends of the Earth in Melbourne were exemplary:

*We would have health care and education and food and clothing, and everyone's basic needs would be met, and collective work—meaningful work—and responsibility, and a sense of respect, an honouring of creativity in human beings and nature. It would be cooperative, with more flexibility in the new society for human error and a general agreement on rehabilitative methods for justice as opposed to punitive justice. I want a world with all those good things—a classic utopian world. I really don't like governments. I'm not looking for a society that has a state or a body of people determining the lives of the many. It goes back to the notion of authoritarianism. It would be more cooperative economically and in terms of decision-making. We'd have community control.*

*(Barrows, personal interview 2000)*

*I think I'm more into a diverse model of self-governing regions or something like that. I don't know if this model lives up to the challenge that it needs to deal with, which is the capitalist system as it currently exists. I see two possible solutions. I see a very compromised vision with a sort of civil society and government initiated UN type body that was empowered to try and govern globally without being authoritarian. Without the Security Council and the role they can sometimes play. It's more egalitarian and has more Southern input in it. So you have an empowered civil society, which represents the movements of peasants and various different interests. Some sort of global governance that was people friendly. I think there would be huge problems, like the power structures wouldn't dissolve in a grand assembly. You may be able to have a kind of framework where people are empowered and take power away from the WTO and are re-empowering things like the UN's commission on Trade and Development in a way that the South were empowered and taking control from the TNCs. Where you have a tax system where corporations are heavily taxed and that means there's money and you have a distributive system where you have people on the*

*ground who are able to decide what they want within their regional areas. I know its pie in the sky when you think about ethnic tensions and things like that. The alternative is an anarchist type system where you abolish all power structures, abolish the state and have self-governing groups that trade. I'm not sure I can imagine what the exact vision of such a system might be.*

(Sullivan, personal interview 2001)

How exactly the economy would change was open to question. Activists variously described an economy that 'put people before profits', was local, cooperative, or without corporations. These 'local' responses to globalisation have been subjected to critique, based mainly on the concern that a focus on local action often fails to recognise the impact of globally oppressive political and economic relationships and, when it does, unrealistically assumes the level of change that is possible. Piven and Cloward, who examine why movements for social change survive or fail, note that success depends more on ability to disrupt than on organisational prowess (cited in Wiseman, 1997:79). One implication of this is the concern that many social movements are readily coopted and bought off by state and market institutions. But the deeper problem is that 'people cannot defy institutions to which they have no access and to which they make no contribution' (ibid.). What this statement implies is that movements are constrained by a lack of access to global organisations, which means that as globalisation increases movements will find it more difficult to locate their targets. Acknowledging that local action may therefore not be enough, the notion of 'globalisation from below' mentioned in Chapter One has particular salience. It aims to restore to communities the power to nurture their environments; to enhance the access of people to the responses they need; to democratise local, national and transnational political institutions and to impose pacification on conflicting power centres (Brecher, Brown Childs & Cutler, 1993:xv).

This advocacy of globalisation from below, acting locally to create more democratic and accountable social, political, economic and environmental relationships is expressed by activists from a variety of different organisations:

*We want caring work and the care of people to be the central point of the economy and the way to get there is to start paying or getting our resources to those who are doing that work — growing the food, teaching, caring for children and elders — the women.*

(Shellenberg, personal interview, 2000)

*I'm an internationalist, a globalist, but I believe good solutions are going to come from reinvigorating local communities. Inherent in that is a globalisation of information technology, sharing ideas and potentially technology transfer and so we are going to need to go back into renewal technologies which again, will hopefully see a wresting of power away from the transnationals who currently control all the infrastructure and energy systems.*

(Walker, personal interview 2001)

*Utopian. But the problem in laying out a blue print is that then it is one single person's utopia. If you try and accomplish that by any means necessary, how are you different from Hitler? I think you don't need to have a rigid schema. But liberation, respect, local democracy, mass education.*

(Mr. Red. Melbourne based affinity group, personal interview 2001)

Mike Prokosch from United for a Fair Economy presented a thoughtful and analytical framework when he argued that local communities should not be beholden to the IMF, the World Bank or transnational corporations. Rather, communities should be able to develop investment and develop programs that suit local needs, including passing anti-sweatshop purchasing restrictions, promoting local credit unions and local barter currency, and implementing investment policies for their local government, churches, and unions that reflect social responsibility criteria:

*The economy [I envision] is quite a bit more local. It's not extremely local or protectionist. Keynes said everything that can be produced locally should be produced locally. He also said something to the effect of, "let trade be global, but global finance needs to be controlled." Finance and trade are very different things. Internationalisation of capital will play havoc with communities. [In my vision] people would still have property. It certainly would be good if a replacement could be found for*

*corporations. Or take away their personhood. Go back to corporation as something set up by peoples' governments for the common good.*

(Prokosch, personal interview 2000)

It has been suggested that the first step in any process of resisting globalisation is to link self interest with global interests, linking the local and immediate conditions people face with the local processes that are affecting them (Brecher & Costello, 1994).

Not surprisingly, almost all the activists also described a world where social relations are transformed, a world that is far more just, and organised around principles of diversity and mutual respect/honour. Many saw this as the inevitable outcome in a world where power would be shared more evenly and the economy would be cooperative and people-centred:

*I'd really like to see us start changing the mechanisms that make people passive so they can start taking control of their lives—that's the ultimate vision. I can say "world peace, let's stop tearing down rainforest and let's have equal education, free education," there's things I'd like to see but more importantly is I'd like people to have the ability to create change in those areas, and not be stopped by the institutions that stand in the way. So that if a group of people said, "We'd like to have some free education," they would actually have the resources and the ability to change that and make it happen.*

(Chung, personal interview 2000)

*Again it's value stuff. I would like to see a really radical shift in the way in which we see our society and maybe interact with other human beings, and I really think that's more fundamental than a political system. I'd like to think that this globalisation issue is a way of it starting to bring about that value change. It's all kind of like idealistic, but I kind of think idealism is a good thing.*

(Settle, personal interview 2001)

Also described were vivid visions of a world that is sustainable, operating within ecological limits, or living in harmony and balance with nature. All those interviewed pointed out that global trade should not be an end in itself, but rather the instrument for achieving equitable and sustainable development, including protection for workers and the environment. Global

trade should not undermine the ability of each nation, state or local community to meet its citizens' social, environmental, cultural or economic needs. Celia Alario, a long-time radical environmentalist who helped coordinate media outreach for the protests in Seattle, Washington D.C., Philadelphia and Los Angeles, was eager to point out that international development should not be export driven, but rather prioritise food security, sustainability and democratic participation:

*It's not a world that's too artificially free of life and death or conflict or the predatory nature that exists in the wild, but it's a place that's far more in balance. It's a place where it's impossible for people to continue to extract and alter the matter of the earth in a way that creates such poisons and where people are living much closer to each other and the earth. Not more simply in a Luddite way (I love my palm pilot, although I'd give it up for this world if I had to), but it's a world where people are more in the loop where their food comes from. The larger system has subsided away because it is clunky and outdated. It has been pushed aside for more simple, local systems of economics, health care, distribution of goods and services. It is a place where the earth is healing and in recovery. It may take billions of years and quite frankly if we don't survive that—and it's likely that we won't—I know the earth will recover, and I take solace in that, and it changes the bar for recovery, for what I'm looking for. It lets me sleep easy at night.*

(Alario, personal interview 2000)

As these quotes suggest, many activists had vivid visions of the future societies they are struggling to bring into being. For some activists, however, specific visions of the future did not play a big role in the way they conceptualised their work. Six of the forty activists said that, for the most part, they had no idea what the world they were working toward would look like. Recounting his experience at the protests at the Republican Convention in Philadelphia, Phoebe Shellenberg said:

*During the convention I got asked that a lot in a hostile way, and I'm not ashamed to say we don't know what we want. We can't know what we want, or even what the possibilities are, because things have been so limited.... We can't know what the world will look like, nor would we want to, without everyone being able to say what they want. That is a question of building power from the ground up. No one can speak for anyone else about how things should be.*

(Shellenberg, personal interview 2000)

For Russ Davis, director of Massachusetts Jobs with Justice, 'vision' was less relevant than building strategies out of the on-the-ground practice of social change. When asked about his vision, he simply said, 'I'm not prepared to speculate. I don't really think about it too much.'

## Big Picture Strategy

A common charge levelled against this movement by its critics on both the right and the left is that it is tactically driven ('direct action fetishism') and lacking in coherent strategy. This research suggests otherwise. Most of the activists had a strong sense of how this movement can help realise their visions of a world transformed. As with their visions of the future, a number of common themes emerged. Most activists felt that it was important to build a diverse mass movement to resist 'the system' on all fronts, to transform the culture and consciousness of the public, and to build alternative economic and social institutions. Less than a third suggested that reform by the state had a significant role to play in their strategy.

In an interview with Patrick Reinsborough, the grassroots coordinator for the Rainforest Action Network and one of many organisers of the protests in Seattle, Washington D.C. and Philadelphia, he offered one way of combining these three types of strategies:

*American patterns of consumption are the engine of the global economy and our willingness to be consumers where how we make political and economic decision is how we buy rather than producers of ideas, culture, etc., is a problem. If we flip that around we can withdraw obedience from the system and that type of mass disobedience can topple unjust and undemocratic institutions in our society. The system is maintained by hypocrisy and lies here, while in other parts of the world it's about despotism and oppression. It's far more clear. Here in the U.S. we have a mythology of democracy that has never been true. To be able to reveal that is a powerful way of getting people to wake up. A key piece is reclaiming our history. Control is maintained by masking American history - not just the horrible history of genocide but the true history that every right we enjoy today has been gained through struggle, through*

*mobilisation of people against illegitimate authority.... By attacking these myths, it allows us to link up the key sectors, transforming economic and political relations, creating cultural ferment that creates a space for people to see something new.*

*I don't have a master plan, but I have a lot of excitement and enthusiasm for the way that emerging grass-roots movements are starting to link up and identify the problem in a way that leads to more fundamental solutions, stepping outside of the terms of the debate set by corporations and elites and saying the very operating system of the planet, to borrow a metaphor from technology, needs to be changed. Once we frame the problem in the correct way it moves things forwards. It's easy to be a protest movement and they can be very powerful—they can stop wars and win concessions. But at some point that protest movement has to transform itself into a movement that actually changes power relations. We have the opportunity to do that. One thing that's missing is to create institutions. We're only starting to do that. With the IMC movement [Independent Media Centers] we are building a whole network of controlling and democratising the flow of information. We need to look at institutions as a tool for getting around the elites that are standing in the way of us moving toward a sane and just, democratic society.*

(Reinsborough, personal interview 2000)

In speaking of a mass movement that would both actively protest and withdraw obedience from the system, Reinsborough echoed themes that were central to strategies offered by many of the activists. For these activists (perhaps not surprisingly) the key social change is millions of people, acting together to resist, which requires long-term movement building:

*If you ask people basic questions – "Do people deserve health care? Respect in their job? Control in the community?" they say, "Yes." So if there's a way to begin basic organizing, education, and agitation, we would have many more people trying to push things in the direction we do want but movements by and large stay insular. One of the things I've been doing after Prague is thinking about eight or so critical questions and controversies that face the movement. And one is, what is our role in terms of long-term community-based organization vs. mass mobilisation I think it's all necessary—we need both. How do we begin to integrate those things? our long term organizing, how do we get people to mobilize quickly? When we do mass mobilization, how do we make sure we're building for the future?*

(Fithian, personal interview 2000)

*I'd like to believe we're on the right path right now. I don't know how we do it on some level. It's a big farce somehow. It reminds me of the Wizard of Oz. No one's figured out that it's all behind the curtain. No one's figured out that the corporations and the government only have as much power as we give them, especially because only a few people have the resources. There's a lot more of us than them. The chief of police can't be*

*the chief of police if we run him out of town. Even the army doesn't have that many guns. If all the people in the world say no more, we win. It's about convincing people that we do have power. People with power do what they do because they can make money. They have power because we've given it to them. It sounds simple although I haven't figured out how to do it, except keep doing what we're doing. It's about getting people to challenge corporations every time they turn around.*

(Butler, personal interview 2000)

## **Multifaceted Resistance**

One of the most widely critiqued aspects of the global justice movement was its 'stew of grievances' (Akerman, 2000:60). Many reporters who attempted to cover the multifaceted nature of the protests in Seattle did so in ways that were partial and distorted. Few attempted to examine protestors' specific complaints, rather naming them 'all purpose agitators' (*US News* 13/12/99) and 'terminally aggrieved' (Macklin, 5/12/99).

The most common reaction on the part of *hostile* critics has been to question the rationality of such groups, groups with quite divergent interests, it is argued, working together. The sentiments expressed in Charles Krauthammer's article published one week after N30 and titled 'Return of the Luddites' is typical. After citing George Orwell's famous comments on the ability of 'socialism' to attract a range of quite bizarre people to its banner, Krauthammer proceeds to claim that:

*...The bogeymen of globalisation and world trade [today] bring out their own kooky crowd. They were there in Seattle last week: Zapatistas, anti-Nike-ites, butterfly defenders. They joined steelworkers and the Sierra Club, Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan in a giant anti-trade jamboree... The mayhem was ecumenical. You had your one-world paranoids... And you had your apolitical Luddites, who refuse to accept that growth, prosperity and upward living standards always entail some dislocation.*

(*Time*, December 13, 1999, p.37).

Another common reaction is to ask how and why these seemingly disparate groups collectively decided to take the drastic step of not only protesting

against the WTO but also attempting to shut it down. As Tim Colebatch asserted:

It is one thing to protest against a meeting of people you disagree with. It is something quite different to use force to try and prevent that meeting from taking place. One is consistent with a belief in liberty; the other is not.  
(*The Age*, September 6, 2000. p.23).

On the other hand, this multifaceted resistance was seen by activists to be not only preferable, but also necessary. The multifaceted nature of the movement aims to defend and extend radical pluralism and to transform this into a political position (Esteva, 2001:159). To be a pluralist, activists and theorists (Esteva, *ibid.*) argue, is to recognise and respect differences and to reject 'all pretence of homogeneity that in the name of an illusionary equality making some more equal than others, attempts to suppress those differences' (*ibid.*). In this way, the social majorities are equalised in their oppression, and the radical otherness of the other, the different, is accepted. Many spoke of a society where personal freedom was realised in mutual interdependence with others. In part of a wider conversation with long-time activist Mike Prokosch in Boston, he pointed out that the global movement's struggle for democracy involves widening and deepening the spaces where communities can exert their own power, and that this rejects the myth that one movement, with one leader, can create long-term change:

*[We get there] more by challenging than by proposing. The piece that has to be there is the strongly oppositional piece. Without that, you're not going to force them to change, and they have to change because of the enormous concentration of wealth and power. Resistance, agitation, mobilization. In a very interesting way, a postmodern way, we need to unify many movements in relationships of autonomy, rather than to create one hierarchically ordered movement.*

(Prokosch, personal interview 2000)

The protests that occurred in Seattle and elsewhere take on a different perspective if seen in this light. In rejecting a party platform or a technocratic leadership, the movement advocates living in a state of democracy, before,

during and after the mobilisations. It is widely assumed by many activists that democracy will only exist 'when real men and women govern their own lives, according to the various styles of governance that have been practiced in thousands of their places' (Esteva, 2001: 162). Thus, it affirms radical democracy and describes a society in which the power is in the hands of the people. Many who participated in Seattle describe this practice of direct democracy as one of the most inspiring features of the new movement:

*It's not effective to have a central movement where everyone is under one umbrella. The global resistance looks like an ecosystem. There's not one tactic, one form of resistance that makes sense for everybody. In Seattle every sector of society came out to resist but they did it in their own way. Church people held vigils, we had the shut down, the teach-ins, etc. The power of what happened in the streets wasn't that there were just 10,000 people in the shutdown but that every sector of society was out representing all week, and representatives of so many global movements were mixing around the streets. If it was just 10,000 people from the direct action movement it wouldn't have resonated the way it did. Every sector of society that's being screwed over by the existing system, which is everyone but the wealthy (and even them if you look at their psychic lives) resisting. So it's about people organizing mass movements in their communities and being able to coordinate and collaborate between movements, and as we do this, we topple the existing institutions, not just corporate globalisation but also most of our governments. It's about really doing away with the dominant structures that keep people down. People are used to having a central labour movement where they have a unified strike. Hundreds of movements organizing in their own way, finding weak links, creating forms of struggle that suit their communities. Leftists often desire to create unity and get everyone under the same organizational umbrella, but a lot of us are realizing that to push everyone under one form is like trying to tell all the species in the forest to live a certain way. Monocultures are vulnerable and sickly.*

(Solnit, personal interview 2000)

One of the first ways of achieving this sense of democracy is described well by Gustavo Esteva in *Creating your own path at the grassroots* (2001). Esteva, citing an example from Mexico, comments that many suffer the alienation of modern mass societies, because they do not belong to a place. This loss of place results in powerlessness and an inability to mobilise.

The global justice movement, the sense of community and the unity of politics, helps restore a sense of place. In these places, whether in convergence centers or on the streets, people do not surrender their power to the state. Instead, in what may appear as a smorgasbord of disparate issues and causes, people can follow their own initiatives, not those coming from 'an order or law formulated above and outside them' (Esteva, 2001:162). They can thus create the place to which they belong and which belongs to them. Cam Walker from Friends of the Earth in Melbourne pointed out that this sense of creation of place needs to extend beyond large-scale mobilisations:

*It has to be very diverse and on many levels and needs to be sophisticated. So on the very absolute international level we need to be watch dogging, tackling the WEFs and WTOs of the world and we need to be putting more and more back into our local organising and at the same time we need to do international solidarity work. I see it as a holistic thing. Whether you are working in a food coop or on the front line at Seattle, it's part of the same picture. We need to maintain that and the danger is that we tend to narrow down our focus because we feel more effective doing x y and z and the danger is that it is just one thread amongst the bigger picture. So I see it as very diverse, coordinated, but not controlled and that is quite significant. I think that more and more we are going to have to put more energy into creating alternative structures. Which is why these mass mobilisations are interesting. Because how do you have mass scale democracy and a local thread?*

(Walker, personal interview 2001)

Due to the distant locations of many of the power structures, this means that connections designed to bring local forms of resistance together and the creation of alliances of networks are a high priority. This has been discussed by Jeremy Brecher who claims that what is needed is to tie down the giants of corporate power with an array of interconnected local grassroots movements and struggles. The aim of this is to counter the 'divide and rule' tactics of globalisation by creating networks of solidarity through grassroots rebellion, coalition building, transnational network building and the creation of international institutions (cited in Wiseman, 1998:145). Brecher and Costello believe one starting point for a solution lies in the expansion of transnational

citizen action (145). To transform common problems and interests into common goals and action they propose what they call the 'Lilliput Strategy' (145). This centres on the belief that, in order to change global forces, people do have the resources and power available if they combine with other movements in different places. This can be compared with the same strategies currently being adopted by global corporations. Just as the corporate strategy creates worldwide production networks linking separate companies, the Lilliput Strategy is developed around the idea of local organisations networking with strategic alliances throughout the world.

## **Dealing with Diversity**

However, questions of political agency arise out of this Lilliput Strategy, namely, who will be the principal actors in the struggles to resist globalisation (Wiseman, 1998:145). These questions reflect an ongoing debate about diversity (or lack thereof) within the movement, with activists emphasising the importance of building a movement that crosses class and colour lines as essential for success.

Aziz Choudry has pointed out that many struggles against neoliberalism taking place in the global South are connected to anti-colonial movements with long histories. However, he notes that the voices most heard in the media are not activists from the South, let alone Indigenous people in the countries of the global North. Thus he argued that the history of globalisation and resistance to it is compressed into the last two or three decades, which downplays or ignores anti-imperialist struggles.

This critique is echoed by Kai Lumumba Barrows, who mentioned that in fact large sections of the Seattle organising coalitions focussed on 'helping those in the Third World' rather than linking it to the living conditions of communities

of colour within the United States. These issues pose the most profound challenges for U.S activists, in a country where life expectancy is greater for some people in some very poor nations than it is for African American males in America:

*You have to understand [working on Seattle] it was such a coalition from the start with the organising of it. So it was people for Fair Trade, it was people in the unions and stuff. Basically, what the issue boiled down to was, we have to help developing nations. And no body wanted to talk about the fact that there were so many communities within the United States who are on a par with developing nations. There are some neighbourhoods where there isn't clean water because the pipes are so bad. And we need to talk about that. We need to talk about the marginalised communities here in the U.S. and how their plight relates to the globalisation of other developing nations.*

(Barrows, personal interview 2000)

Damian Sullivan in Melbourne added another perspective on this, commenting that not only must activists be aware of relationships with communities of colour but also in a movement where activists often travel to participate in mobilisations, they must acknowledge cultural differences. Speaking with me very soon after the demonstrations in Prague, Sullivan talked of what he called 'activist imperialism' in relaying difficulties between European and American activists:

*We need to try and listen to voices of the places we are not from. For instance, the example of S26 and the Americans going to Prague and how there was cultural activist imperialism, even unknowingly, where the Americans were not even aware of Eastern European nuances, I think there is a huge need for cross cultural understanding. There needs to be a respect of difference.*

(Sullivan, personal interview 2001)

As the quotes above suggest, for most of these activists changing people's culture and/or consciousness is a critical element to fermenting resistance and creating change.

## Changing Culture

Changing culture and consciousness are clearly critical elements of the strategies advocated by a considerable number of global justice activists. Many also emphasised that these changes must begin *within* the movement itself, and the best way to do this is by modelling the world toward which activists are struggling - in other words, being the change that they are trying to create. This inseparability of means and ends is derived from the anarchist/situationist tradition (Roseneil 1995:70) in which the reinvention of everyday life is considered a revolutionary act. It is not just that the means determines the end, but also that the present matters in and of itself, thereby making the route to social change as important as the desired goal.

Many first-hand accounts of these protests describe the powerful emotional impact of participating in the creation of mini-utopias within the protests themselves. This process is clearly one that some organisers are actively working to recreate:

*How do you build into our current practice an alternative? One of the things I love about the convergences [the activist gatherings that have coincided with each of the mass protests] is that we try to make sure that everyone's needs are taken care of. There's food, there's childcare, there's a free clothes store, there's a place for intellectual growth with the discussions we have, there's a place for working your body through training. It shows that you can have different processes to live by. That's part of the strategy, to show people in a concrete way.... I do see it as a new movement and what it's about is to show people what it's like—that you can be alive. Through our art, our theatre, our humour, there's a positive energy that we're generating that draws people.*

(Fithian, personal interview 2000)

This transformation of culture and consciousness within the movement is one way in which activists suggested that it could plant the seeds of the new world right now, in the midst of this world. But most activists also emphasised another aspect of building alternatives: the deliberate creation of alternative social, economic, or communication institutions like the Fair Trade coffee

cooperatives, permanent activist convergences, or the Independent Media Centers. This strategy—building alternative institutions that go beyond simple protest organisations—as a critical strategy for change, was widely advocated:

*Another piece is delivering the goods for the people that participate in the movement.... The movement needs to think more about taking care of people economically, or helping people find a place to plant their feet in an economy that sustains them. In my experience after graduating from college, when the New Left started to break up, one of the great arguments was over challenging the system, forcing change, vs. creating alternatives, alternative institutions. This is the synthesis of those. We definitely need to confront power and force it to reform, and we'll see how far the reform goes. Is it going to be transformation? What kind of challenge and overthrow of existing institutions will it take to achieve transformation? But don't wait for the system to deliver you everything; don't count on challenges to achieve everything... People in different places can create their own economic relationships and their own better economies by working directly together. So far this movement is, ironically, a lot stronger on the critique and the opposition than on the global solidarity piece (ironic because of how much of it came out of the Central American solidarity movement). What's interesting is that there's a real internationalist perspective, but it's implicit in the program. So these are ways to make it more explicit. And there are institutions that are modelling that. Maybe they're modelling that. The fair-trade movement, fair trade coffee, for example.... But that can happen within national economies as well, and I think most of it will.*

(Prokosch, personal interview 2000)

*One thing we're seeing is the rise of alternative media and institutions. We need to do what the Panthers did in the sixties. They fused service with politics. They were attending to people's needs within the movement.*

(Economopoulos, personal interview 2000)

Kevin Danaher is the co-founder of Global Exchange, a human rights organisation that has pioneered new models of mixing political activism and alternative economic institutions, like their successful campaign to get Starbucks to carry Fair Trade coffee. In an interview at the world Petroleum Conference protests in Calgary, he suggested that alternative institutions are a key route to political power:

*What this movement in opposition to capitalism has to do is create economic enterprises that can meet human needs without destroying nature and exploiting people... Central to Marxism is control over means*

*of production, what will happen when capitalists control the means of production. Marxists have talked about that for years but they never seem to do anything about it. They specialize in newsletters talking about it but they don't even control the print shop where those newsletters are printed, let alone setting up stores. What you're left with is a Leninist model where the left creates a political vanguard, a questionable concept in itself—who will lead the vanguard? —that seizes the state, and then the state will force capitalists to be nice. The only problem is, it doesn't work. We see that in what happened in China: you get market Stalinism, a corporate takeover of the economy with no political freedoms to fight against the worst aspects of that... We have to develop green enterprise. Then if you run a green party and that is founded on an economic base—organic farmers, socially responsible investors, an economic base predicated on a different ideology about the economy - then you get a chance to do something about state power where it's not just based on an election every four years, but it's organised on an economic base of trade unions and workers, yes, but also small businesses, even large businesses that are interested in not destroying the earth and exploiting people....*

*It's already happening—the pieces of the bridge are already being built. Organic agriculture is growing faster than chemical agriculture... We know how to do solar power. We know how to do Community Supported Agriculture, where you have a direct relationship between families and the local farmers. You cut out the Safeway's. We know how to do micro-enterprise lending. There are 2000 institutions all over the planet based on the model pioneered by the Grameen Bank, providing a way for people to earn their way out of poverty... We have fair trade networks and fair trade labels. You can buy coffee that was grown organically, by people with access to credit and technical assistance. We have Eco-labelling—there's so much Eco-labelling that the danger is the proliferation of labels and degrading of the value of it in terms of consumer consciousness... These are small steps compared to the massive change that needs to happen but they point in the same direction. They point toward a movement that is creating, brick by brick, a new edifice, a democratically organised, sustainable, green economy. The only question is, how long will it take to be dominant?*

(Danaher, personal interview 2000)

Danaher's words are to some degree illustrative of the fundamental difference between the strategies espoused by this movement and the traditional state-oriented strategies of the left, in both their liberal and radical variants. Very few activists suggested that armed revolution was the ultimate solution, and only one of these suggested that the purpose was to seize control of the state. Similarly, very few advocated typical reformist strategies like pushing governments to adopt more liberal social welfare policies or stricter rules governing economic activity. Only two spoke of using the state to counter the power of corporations, and only one other activist mentioned

the kind of electoral strategy Kevin described. And in most cases these efforts were tangential to activists' strategies of choice.

At the same time, many of the activists interviewed work with organisations that often pressure governments to take action. Some described using these kinds of campaigns to weaken their opponents, e.g. stopping fast track legislation in Congress to hamstring efforts to negotiate new free trade treaties (Prokosch 2000). It would clearly not be accurate to say that all or even most of them have turned their back on the idea of the state or representative government, or that the state plays no role in their strategies. But it was clear that very few expected the state to solve their problems. For the most part, they saw electoral politics and state-oriented reform campaigns as useless, counterproductive or, at most, as tactics rather than broad strategies.

Even among many activists who did not explicitly say that revolution was inevitable, there was a strong sense that the current world system is unprecedented in terms of its effects on both natural and human communities. This suggests that by its very direness the present situation might make the prospects for radical change qualitatively different from those faced by past movements.

*[This movement is coming together] because we can see the light at the end of the tunnel and it turns out the light is an approaching train. You have to tip up the track, stop the train, get out of the tunnel. We can see our own demise, or if not our demise, degradation. There are millions starving in a world that produces more food than ever in history.*

(Danaher, personal interview 2000)

*The rate of change and the rate of destruction is accelerating. Half of the world won't have enough water by 2025. We're destroying the life support systems of the planet. We're playing God with the planet, acting without the precautionary principle and without full knowledge of the implications of our actions, like genetically engineering fish genes into tomatoes. We're pushing the envelope of who we are on this planet. We approach policy from a very anthropocentric perspective. We have a global economy based on short-term quarterly profit, and that omits all these*

*externalities and omitted variables. It's bad math. But the answer is, "Don't worry about it, technology will take care of it." This doesn't consider the reality of where we're at and what's happening. People around the globe work in sweatshops and live in shantytowns. 40 million people in this country don't have healthcare and we have the highest incarceration rate in the world. We've already lost 80 percent of the world forests. We need to rethink things and pull on the reins.*

(Economopoulos, personal interview 2000)

Jon Sellers from the Ruckus Society agreed that the extremity of the situation may prompt change as citizens realise the consequences, but also was adamant in stating that the situation is caused by corporate control:

*The corporate audacity on the planet has gotten so ridiculous. It's just so nakedly obvious. Even people with blinders on can't say it's not happening. It's hard to not recognise that a major fix is on, that people are working more and more and more for less and less and less. Even people bought off with commodities are beginning to recognise that those things come at a major cost to their culture and community.*

(Sellers, personal interview 2000)

Cecilia Alario, an independent activist from San Francisco, described how the gravity of the situation and the commodification of value systems have resulted in a breaking point, causing many young people to search for meaning. She suggested that the global justice movement provides an antidote to their sense of powerlessness to affect corporate globalisation:

*Those of us growing up now have watched our minds, our towns, our open spaces, our sense of community and even the sense of our identity and value systems be commodified, and we've been so preyed upon by the branding efforts of these corporate interests that we've reached a breaking point... Look at the average sixteen-year-old today. The tendrils of commodification are far more and are squeezing far tighter than they ever did to me. Pepsi, Jordache and MTV never squeezed as hard as they do today, and we're seeing really smart, caring young people with an incredibly articulate critique rising up as a result.*

(Alario, personal interview 2000)

Of course, the severity of the current situation could make prospects for change either better or worse than in the past. Some activists were far less optimistic. Whilst the majority interviewed described clear future visions, a far

smaller number said they had no good strategy for how to get there, because they were unsure if the movement could realise that vision at all:

*That's my view of the future, what I would love to see ... but the reality is that what I work for every day is something far more simple... What I would hold out in front of me as a goal is to do what I could to have people love it [the earth], have an experience of love, or what Thomas Aquinas spoke of as a "beatific vision," just so they could recognise what we have wrought. The truth of the matter is I'm not sure [how to realise my vision]. Seven or eight years ago I would have told you exactly how. I would have thought I knew. When you're thirty-two you realise you don't know shit, your mom was right. three or four months ago I might have thought it looks a little bit like the things we've been doing. But I'm uncertain now about whether any of the things we've been doing over the last year will get us there. I have doubts about working within the system, and I have doubts that we can do much outside the system.*

(Alario, personal interview 2000)

*Good question. Whew. The reason I'm stuck is that I'm a pragmatist. I don't really imagine victory for us. Our role is more about damage control because of the nature of power. I define success as getting one person to think differently and act differently.*

(Fithian, personal interview 2000)

\* \* \* \* \*

In this chapter I have traced the key philosophical aspects of the global justice movement offering the views of activists that counter the common assertions about the movement: that it is incoherent and lacking in vision and strategy. While in my view, the historical roots of the global justice movement lie in critiques of development and Third World movements against neoliberalism, nevertheless, the global justice movement is a qualitatively 'new' kind of social movement. This contemporary resistance to neoliberalism represents a potential synthesis of the anti-capitalism of old social movements with new social movements' commitment to broadening the nature of this opposition, and the pursuit of an alternative political and social agenda through non-electoral, non-mainstream forms of political action.

The philosophy of the global justice movement challenges traditional forms of political discourse, from both 'left' and 'right', by emphasising the importance of the micro-political and questioning the dominant understanding of its relationship to the macro-political as strictly subordinate. In essence, it aims to radically restructure the relationship between the citizen and state in a democratic fashion.

Taken together, these two points suggest that the theory and practice of the global justice movement borrows in significant ways from the anarchist tradition and numerous social movements of the past, such as those of the Sixties and Situationism. Far from being incoherent and lacking in strategy, as many assert, I contend that the movement requires both the left and the right to take a fresh look at the global justice politics, and that the movement represents what is likely to be a continuing challenge for the left and right as a whole. In particular it brings to the foreground the issue of the scope, nature and meaning of democracy as one of the defining issues of contemporary politics, and challenges both the left and the right to come to grips with a nascent form of globalised radical democracy. Drawing on traditions of radically democratic, decentralised political citizenship and practice, the global justice movement identifies a crucial blind spot of both left and right theory: the right's merely formal conception of democracy, and the traditional left's vanguardist contempt for democratic processes and local, autonomous struggles.

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that the philosophy of the global justice movement is opposed to a common enemy of neoliberalism; that it functions in ways which challenge institutionalised authorities as well as the left; that it is a departure from its origins of development theory, and represents one possible way old and new social movements can effectively

work together in opposition to corporate power. Finally I have suggested that the global justice movement will refocus the attention of political theorists on the importance of democratic practices in social movements, and that this shift in thinking will assist in explaining the links the global justice movement is forging between the global and the local.

## Chapter Three

### Freedom Fighters: The Zapatistas, the Internet and Global Justice Activists

**Indigenous Brothers and Sisters of Mexico:  
Brothers and sisters of Mexico and the world:  
In this, the seventh year of the war against oblivion,  
We repeat who we are.  
We are wind, we are. Not the breath that breathes for us.  
We are word, we are. Not the lips that speak to us.  
We are steps, we are. Not the foot that moves us.  
We are heartbeat, we are. Not the heart that pulses.  
We are a bridge we are. Not the lands that form a union.  
We are road, we are. Not the point of arrival or departure.  
We are place, we are. Not those who occupy that place.  
We do not exist, we are. Seven times we are.  
We are the reflection repeated.  
The reflection, we are.  
The hand that just opened the window, we are.  
We are the timid knock at the door of tomorrow.**  
(Comandante David and Subcomandante Marcos 2001)

When activists dressed as sea turtles and Santas stumbled through tear gas and took on riot cops in a 'carnavalesque blockade' to shut down the WTO meetings, many observers were taken by surprise (Kauffman 2002:33). In the demonstrations that followed in Washington, the same irreverent creativity was on display, with radical cheerleaders, roaming corporate loan sharks and a contraption that ate pieces of earth and spat out coins.

In June 2000 in the oil capital of Canada, Calgary, at the World Petroleum Conference demonstrations, Edmonton's troupe of gender-bending cheerleaders waved pompoms and fifty activists pulled down their pants spelling 'wind power now!' and later organised 'Team Earth' to play 'Team Shell' at the base of the company's glimmering skyscraper in a traffic-stopping hockey match for the fate of the planet. Several months later, in Quebec City, a giant catapult was built that hurled teddy bears over the

fence separating demonstrators from the Summit of the Americas and an airplane dropped from the sky thousands of leaflets that read 'Ya Basta! Resistance is in the air!' It appeared that every time you turned around there was some new demonstration as part of the anti-corporate movement, as creative and as militant as the one that preceded it.

If recent times have seen the advent of a neoliberal regime of accumulation with the requisite agendas of free trade, export-oriented industrialisation, and neo-imperial dependencies, they have also seen a new wave of movements that have worked to construct alternative visions of development and transnational democratic publics (Garner 1994:427; Brecher and Costello 1994). With every crisis there is opportunity, and with each emergency there is an emergence of new social forms that present unique possibilities for the future. It is no surprise, then, that recent protests against neoliberalism caused many to suggest an emergence of a new 'anti-globalisation movement'. As L.A. Kauffman writes, 'to the political mainstream, the clashes in Seattle seemed to materialize from nowhere' (2002:35), the presumption being that the left in the U.S. had 'virtually disappeared' (ibid.). This led many to attempt to describe what they saw at Seattle in terms of the similarities between these protests and anarchism, Sixties radicalism and situationism. Others heralded these protests as the beginning of a new global movement, of a 'new community' or a 'new culture' in the making.

Certainly, what we are witnessing is the emergence or the 'political reinvention' of a remarkable movement culture. The culture is non-hierarchical, operates on consensus, looks to no singular leaders and is based on no particular ideology. According to Lauffman it is 'effective, decentralised, multivocal radicalism based on direct action' (ibid.). It is noted for its creativity, irreverence and use of the Internet and a culture of 'constant

loosely structured and sometimes compulsive information swapping' (Klein, 2002:17).

But the question remains, is it a 'new' culture? A quick scan of history will reveal that the sources of this creative and effective ensemble (Yuen, 2002:10) of protest styles are many. Kauffman claims that this radical renewal took place 'in movements that outsiders tended to view as "single issue" and separate from one another, with little relevance beyond their own particular spheres: the gay and lesbian liberation movements, the feminist movement [and] the anti-nuclear movement' (2002:35). Andrew Boyd also notes the relevance of movements of the 80s and 90s 'groups like ACT- UP, and the Lesbian Avengers [who] inspired a new style of high concept shock politics that was both identity affirming and visually arresting' (2002:246). But he also points to other, more recent influences:

The US labour movement, hit hard by globalisation, began to innovate and seek out new allies. Among them was Earth First! which was experimenting with new technologies of radical direct action in the forests of Northern California. The Critical Mass Bike rides, dubbed 'organised coincidences', provided a working model of a celebratory, self-organizing protest. New ideas also migrated across the ocean. Reclaim the Streets began in London in the early 1990s. A loose collection of ravers, artists, and anti-car activists, RTS bought the underground rave dance scene out of the warehouses and clubs and into charged political spaces. A RTS action is part protest, part street party, part a gesture that reclaims the streets from the private exclusive use of the car and returns them to collective use as a commons. Quickly, a tall three-pronged tripod structure is set up, blocking the street. Someone scampers to the top. A truck with a sound system arrives, and before the police can respond, hundreds are dancing in the streets. It is both a negative act of resistance and a positive act of celebration, community building and self-expression. It is a mass civil disobedience in which ravers, performance artists, and fire jugglers set the tone.

(Boyd 2002: 246)

By the time of the WTO meeting in Seattle, the Reclaim the Streets (RTS) style of protest of 'temporarily occupying capitalist spaces through music and dance' (Yuen 2002: 11) had taken hold of the activist imagination. The Direct Action Network (DAN) had adapted the convergence model to handle the

democratic planning of a mass blockade. Activists borrowed from movements of the late Sixties and early Seventies in their use of consensus processes, affinity groups, spokescouncils and non-violent codes. Seattle activists divided a map of the city into pie slices with 'independent yet coordinated affinity groups' (Boyd 2002:246), taking responsibility for each slice. With this decision-making model, 'thousands of people could organise themselves like so many rings in a many-ringed circus' (ibid.). As discussed in the previous chapter such improvisational and mobile demonstrations are not entirely new (Yuen, 2002:11), but in Seattle the 'conjunction of mobile and territorial tactics proved to be uniquely complimentary' (ibid.), allowing activists to throw a 'costume ball' (Boyd 2002: 246) that also successfully blockaded the WTO.

In the words of Roseneil (1995:13) 'ideas and actions however novel they seem, always grow out of what has gone before'. Kalle Lasn similarly points to the influence of previous movements when he writes about the history of anti-corporate culture jammers:

We place ourselves in a revolutionary continuum that includes, moving backward in time, early punk rockers, the 60s hippie movement, a group of European intellectuals and conceptual artists called the Situationist International, the surrealists, Dadaists, anarchists and a host of other social agitators down through the ages whose chief aim was to challenge the prevailing ethos in a way that was so primal and heartfelt it could only be true.

(Lasn 2000:99)

Lasn comments that the common denominators uniting these movements is a 'belligerent attitude towards authority', a 'willingness to take big risks' and a 'commitment to pursue small, spontaneous moments of truth', whilst Kauffman notes that the novelty of the current movement lies in 'its vitality, ambition and breadth' (2002:38). Whilst it has been noted that there are more differences than similarities between the global justice movement and the protest of the Sixties (Yuen, 2002:9; Epstein, 2002: 53), it is evident from

both the above quotes that many previous movements' 'cleared space and opened up a path' (Roseneil, 1995: 27) for the global justice movement. While the emphasis on democratic process in the movement can be linked to the civil rights movement and early new left and the creativity linked to counter-culturalists and activists of the late 60s, 70s and 80s and older currents of anarchism and council communism, what is often overlooked is an acknowledgement that the turn towards radical democracy owes much to the influence of non-Western political theory, particularly that from Indigenous people (Yuen, 2002).

One aspect that does make the global justice movement distinctive is that inspiration for Seattle also came from across the US border and through the influence of non-Western theory described by Yuen. In 1994 the Zapatistas burst from the jungles of Chiapas into the political imagination of activists around the world. The so-called 'first postmodern revolutionary movement' set aside the dry manifesto and the sectarian vanguard for fable, poetry, theatre and a democratic movement of movements against global capitalism (Boyd 2002:246), demonstrating to many that 'guerrilla war can be guerrilla theatre' (Yuen, 2002:13).

When activists took to the streets in Seattle many arrived wearing black ski masks and red bandannas that have come to be associated with the Zapatista rebels (Callahan, 2002:38). As Callahan notes 'in Seattle *paliacates* (bandannas) covered the faces of anarchists, autonomists and environmentalists linked with a variety of affinity groups, as well as other activists long associated with the conflict in Chiapas who claim Zapatismo as a politics and Zapatista as an identity' (2002:38).

Many have made the link between the Zapatistas and global justice activists. Manuel Callahan in his article 'Zapatismo and the Politics of Solidarity'

remarks that Jorge Castaneda, a writer who had previously dismissed the Zapatistas' significance, commented post-Seattle that 'part of the Zapatista rebellions legacy lives on, if only through its promise in recent events in Seattle' (Callahan, 2002:37). There were even fears that the Zapatistas would arrive by caravan and storm Seattle which 'proved excessive' (Callahan, 2002:38). Seattle was not the first time global justice activists had acted in solidarity with the Zapatistas. During the International Day of Action on June 18 1988, a group of activists calling themselves the 'Electronic Disturbance Theatre' launched an international cyber blockade of the Mexican Embassy in solidarity with the Zapatista communities. Later, in the protests that occurred in Genoa in 2001, a message from Subcommandante Marcos was boomed over the PA (Ryan, 2002:302), leading one activist to ask 'how can one town hold so many Che Guevara T-shirts, Zapatista palicates and Palestinian scarves?' (ibid.)

What is it about a group of Mexican Indians who rose up in 1994 against the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement calling themselves 'professionals of hope' (Marcos 1995:167) that has so strongly seized activists' imaginations? Is it because the Zapatistas symbolise a revival of protest and hope in what was a barren landscape of activism? Is it, as suggested by Adler Hellmann, a strategy for activists 'disenchanted by the prospects of revolutionary change in their own society' to embrace the cause of a revolutionary movement in the global South? (2000:162) Or does the Zapatista use of symbolism, poetry, romanticism and hope suggest an ability to 'reinvent the re-enchantment of the world? (Lawry, cited in Adler Hellmann 2000:162) Adler Hellmann suggests that some of the appeal to outsiders of the events in Chiapas lies in the 'extremity of the case' (2000:162) and that what makes it so compelling is that it is a 'confrontation between the powerless and the powerful, the pure and the impure, the honest and the corrupt' (ibid.).

This chapter attempts to answer some of these questions by exploring the global justice movement's relationship with the Zapatistas. It will argue that although the decentralised character of the Zapatistas and their reliance on words and ideas over weapons has captured Northern activists' imaginations, it is primarily the Zapatistas use of the Internet as a method of struggle that has enabled them to gain such enormous leverage in support of their local-national cause, ironically by using many of the same technologies that are facilitating economic globalisation. Access to computer networks in particular provides many Zapatista supporters with the means to represent themselves, to retain significant control over information vital to the movement, and to forge links with global justice activists and political movements that support their cause. As Pickerill (2004) notes in her research on environmental activists and their use of the Internet 'activists have used CMC [computer mediated communication] to make linkages to like minded individuals nationally and internationally. These connections have given the comfort of solidarity to activists (especially those involved in isolated or small scale campaigns' (3).

The relationship between the global justice movement in the North and the revolutionaries in the South is not without its tensions and contradictions. Journalists working for the mainstream international media produce tales of Marcos in the jungle uploading EZLN communiqués from a mobile telephone directly on to the Internet. This version of events is in fact so common that those outside Mexico who rely on mainstream media for their news of the movement are more likely to associate the Zapatistas with cyberspace than with Chiapas. Such direct links between the remote corners of Mexico and the rest of the world are apocryphal. Indeed, these renditions reveal more about the 'developed' world's celebration of technology than they do about the Zapatista movement itself and, like the majority of mainstream accounts of the EZLN, offer a grossly over-simplified picture of both the Zapatista movement and the Internet's role in it.

Whilst the Internet does play a critical role it is important however not to conflate the Internet with the communication that it facilitates. To do so would be to fetishise new communication, a practice Tomlinson refers to as 'Gee Wizzery' (1999:20). The problem with Gee-Wizzery is that it denies the limitations of the Internet, namely the fact that the overwhelming majority of the world's populations have no access to computers. In Mexico, only an estimated 2.7 million of more than one hundred million citizens enjoy access to the Internet (Dillon 2000:3). Pickerill notes that 'access is obviously a prerequisite for the use of CMC, but additionally the ways in which activists organise their access may reflect their broader organisational principles' (2004:3). Championing the Internet as the answer to social inequality also ignores the complex and slow work of resistance. Those who argue that new communication technology will have particular, seemingly inevitable social consequences imply that technology functions beyond human control. If the technology itself is inherently liberating, there is little need to understand or undertake the demanding work of improving access, establishing democratic uses or contributing to the policy debates that will ultimately determine its future uses.

The use of the Internet by Northern activists in providing cyber solidarity to the insurgents has raised many questions (Reinke, 2002:80). In her article 'Utopia in Chiapas? Questioning Disembodied Politics' Reinke writes that in using the Internet the Zapatista struggle has been appropriated from Chiapas to a 'removed, central disseminating point' and that this 'may have a distorting effect', 'creating tensions that contradict claims about the utopian potential of new tools of communication' (ibid.). Reinke's point is an important one because it raises the issue of whether the Zapatista struggle has been appropriated for the purposes of Northern activists, and whether the principles that the Zapatistas are fighting for have been distorted. In 1998

Zapatista supporters from the Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT)<sup>23</sup> in New York used civil disobedience tactics against the Mexican Government and financial web sites, prompting protest from online supporters of the Zapatistas. One frequent criticism was that such tactics violate the Zapatistas' rules of free speech.

Another objection centred on the difficulty of demonstrating that such actions are not the rogue work of a few individuals but involve thousands of people and are thus politically significant. The most conscious criticism was aimed at the EDT's failure to consult with other Zapatista activists, particularly supporters in Mexico who ostensibly were most likely to suffer government retaliation. One activist group in Mexico, *Ame la Paz*, accused the EDT of reflecting colonial discourses and practices by imposing their ideas and their brand of activism on an entire movement, ideas which were not cogent with that particular group's view of the movement. They posted a message which read 'Boundaries are disregarded by colonial mindsets gazing now from cyber-opticians which feel they can enter anyone's space...the EDT project ought to be reconsidered from the perspective of the colonial gaze...' (Chiapas 95 Archives). In turn EDT agreed to call off future attacks on sites in Mexico but not before accusing *Ame la Paz* of being xenophobic and nationalist, bent on maintaining Mexican sovereignty which, in the context of the 'borderless' Zapatista movement, is a slanderous accusation.

This argument was largely rejected by other non-Western activists. In a letter addressed to one of the members of the EDT, someone diplomatically suggested the possibility that international supporters of the movement (himself included) were replicating a sort of paternalism similar to that of colonialism 'despite our best intentions'. He went on to write:

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<sup>23</sup> EDT is a small group of cyber activists and artists engaged in developing the theory and practice of Electronic Civil Disobedience. Working at the intersection of radical politics, performance art and computer software design, EDT has produced a device called Flood Net. This URL based software is used to flood and block opponents' websites.

We must be open to other's perspectives, especially when they conflict with our own. This is not to say that, just because activists in the US and Europe, for the most part, enjoy privileges in relation to those struggling in Mexico and [that they] are therefore always incorrect when at odds with those in Mexico. But we do need to be able to try to understand their arguments on their own terms without resorting immediately to the theoretical categories at hand that support our position while negating, even ignoring, the other's.

(Chiapas 95 Archives)

This discussion of EDT tactics represents a unique element in the character of organising in cyberspace. Examining the discourse of the Zapatista movement and its relationship with global justice activists not only identifies the potential uses of the Internet (and its drawbacks), but also demonstrates how a local struggle addresses the reality of globalisation and how Zapatista supporters position themselves in relation to the global economic and social forces that simultaneously impede and facilitate their struggle. Pickerill writes that the 'process of learning from other movements and groups have always existed, and are not reliant upon the use of CMC, but the technology has reduced the cost and increased the speed of these interactions – contributing to a potential increase in exchanges' (2004:3).

The focus here is not exclusively on the Internet but more broadly on what this instance of its use within the larger context of communication and coalition-building strategies of the Zapatistas can reveal. By initially connecting various sympathetic organisations located around the world, the Internet extended the reach of the Zapatista movement and has had far-reaching influence on the global justice movement. Marcos acknowledges that the Zapatista ideology changed as the movement broadened. He argues that during the EZLN-sponsored Democratic National Convention in 1995, the EZLN recognised the strength of the movement's civilian and international components. From that point, according to Marcos, 'The EZLN began to modify its discourse and its initiatives to reinforce this relationship' (Womak 1999:107).

By modifying the discourse of the movement as well as its initiatives, the Zapatistas included a wider range of voices and issues in their cause. Zapatista issues and objectives both influence and are influenced by global politics. This in part is due to the ease in with which news of the movement can be circulated through the use of the Internet. The examination of the ideology of the movement, 'Zapatismo', to follow, highlights the simultaneous impact of local, national and global political forces.

Before examining the influence of the Zapatistas on the global justice movement it should be noted that, while the Zapatistas are known to many activists as creating a new form of democratic politics, they are living in a situation of war. While this chapter is devoted to Zapatista political concepts and especially how they are articulated in the global justice movement, it is important to keep in mind that one cannot think about the development of political discourse and ideas without placing them in the concrete material context from which they emerge. While what follows will focus on the cultural expressions of the Zapatistas, the political context in which the people of Chiapas live makes their attempt 'to do politics differently' even more remarkable.

## **Ya Basta!**

In March 2001, after seven years under siege by 70,000 Mexican troops in the jungles of Chiapas, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) sent twenty-four delegates on a two-week caravan to Mexico City. Crowds cheered them on from roadsides along the way and mass rallies were held in twelve different states to demonstrate support for the San Andre's Accords, an Indigenous bill of rights, that newly elected President Vicente Fox had submitted to Congress. In Mexico City an exuberant crowd of approximately 100,000 national and international supporters gathered in the city's main

plaza to welcome them (Thompson and Weiner 2001). Nobel Prize winning Portuguese author Jose Saramago, who was among the supporters, commented: 'I don't believe that in any place, in any space in this world – and I have the memory of my own revolution twenty six years ago – I don't remember a more moving moment' (Giordano 2001). Indeed, the Zapatistas have inspired a tremendous amount of support in Mexico and from around the world for human rights and other issues linked to their cause.

It is an often cited concurrence that January 1 1994 was the date of two events which together signified a moment of transition and restructuring in the advent of neoliberalism: the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect, and the EZLN or Zapatistas initiated their campaign of resistance. On that day, Mexican and U.S. policy makers heralded NAFTA as the beginning of a new era of cooperation and prosperity that could restore the global competitiveness of U.S. based capital while assisting Mexico to enter the so-called 'First World'. Enhancing the conditions of unfettered investment, production and profitability across the continent was the clear goal. Simultaneously, the Zapatista insurgency in Chiapas warned that the predicted prosperity of neoliberalism and 'free trade' would not be realised for Indigenous and working people and that NAFTA would be a death sentence for all Mexicans. It heralded the emergence of a new revolutionary politics focussed on radically democratic governance, an open civil society or public space, and economic autonomy from neoliberalism. Witnessed on that one day was a dramatic demonstration of tension conflict that continues to define the political crisis of neoliberalism in the globe.

When, on New Year's Day 1994, the EZLN took over five main municipalities in Chiapas, hardly anyone knew who they were or what they stood for. *Televisia*, the national television network aligned with the Mexican ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and most of Mexico's major news media limited

their coverage of the rebellion, downplaying its significance and denouncing the Zapatista leadership as foreign intellectuals, communists or both. From the first day of the rebellion, the Zapatistas fought to gain media exposure that respects their demands, and in fact the movement has succeeded in eliciting widespread support within Mexico and around the world. Led by their media savvy spokesman, Subcommandante Marcos, the Zapatistas orchestrated their New Year's Day raid to disseminate their message.

Simply stated, the Zapatistas are fighting for democratic reforms that would end the corrupt policies and unjust economic practices prevailing in Mexico. Most generally they oppose the new global order which they see as another instance of the colonisation that began over five hundred years ago. They are fighting against the exclusionary consequences of economic modernisation, but they also challenge the inevitability of a new geopolitical order under which capitalism would become universally accepted (Castells 1997).

The Zapatista rebellion is a paradoxical example of a resistance to neoliberalism. The Zapatistas emerged within a rich context of liberation theology, independent peasant movements and Maoist organising. They coalesced around traditional peasant issues, such as the need for land reform, but they also called for an end to the oppression of Indigenous people, and were part of a long-standing Indigenous movement demanding self-determination. At the same time as being a Latin American armed struggle this movement called for the inclusion of women and for men to take their share of the housework (Johnston 1997). Although the movement was motivated by local concerns, it demanded broader changes at the levels of national government and international economics. The rebels called for the resignation of the PRI (institutional Revolutionary Party) regime and a renegotiation of NAFTA.

To complicate matters further, this was not a simple or straightforward act of rebellion. Although it was truly a military affair, there was a respect for civil society and democracy and a decision to bypass conventional organisations. The Zapatistas did not perceive their goal as the overthrow of state power but strove for the development of an inclusive and meaningful democracy in Mexico and the creation of a new world where freedom, democracy and justice reign. The EZLN's strategy sought to mobilise the opposition forces within 'civil society' rather than take over state power and in this they posed a theoretical and practical challenge: a challenge to established ideas about the Indigenous people of Latin America, a challenge to the understanding of the Mexican state and a challenge to the revolutionary left, as reflected in this quote by Marcos:

Something broke in this year, not just the false image of modernity sold to us by neo-liberalism, not just the falsity of government projects, of institutional alms, not just the neglect of the country of its original inhabitants, but also the rigid schemes of the Left living in and from the past. In the midst of this navigating from pain to hope, political struggle finds itself naked, bereft of the rusty garb inherited from pain: it is hope which obliges it to look for new forms of struggle, that is, new ways of being political, of doing politics: a new politics, a new political morality, a new political ethic is not just a wish, it is the only way to go forward, to jump to the other side.

(Subcommandante Marcos - Citado por Rosario Ibarra,  
*La Jornada* 2/5/95)

The idea was to create a show of opposition that was not a call to arms and violence but rather, a means of awakening the progressive forces of civil society to provide an impulse for democratic change. Instead of justifying the uprising with a ready made ideology, the Zapatista 'declaration of war' asked the civilian population to participate decisively in support of the struggle for 'jobs, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace'. In a letter to a Chiapan journalist, the leader of the Zapatistas, Marcos, wrote that the triumph would not be 'seizing state power' but 'something even harder to win: a new world' (Marcos Subcommandante Insurgentes 1995b:109).

Thus, rather than demanding national statehood, the Zapatistas are demanding self-determination (Reinke 2002: 83) and autonomy from both the Mexican state and neoliberal ideologies. The Zapatistas argue that the ideologies and practices of a neoliberal economy have brought only poverty and further oppression to their communities. Their desire is for the communities themselves to determine the way in which they live (ibid.) Thus, the Zapatistas' organisational structures are based on a bottom-up decision-making process adhering to principles of participatory democracy.

## **The Zapatistas and Their Self-Image**

Instead of engaging in the futile task of trying to discover some 'true nature' of the Zapatista movement, the focus here is on how the movement defines itself – through communiqués, letters and interviews, and in the context of the dynamics of local, national and global economic social forces. There are three layers to the movement. At the base are the Indigenous people from several Mayan language and ethnic groups whose social structure is egalitarian, communitarian and consultative. In the middle are members of the EZLN leadership, mostly educated middle-class Latinos who came to Chiapas to create a hierarchically-structured guerrilla army and were influenced by the local Indigenous groups to adapt instead a more egalitarian approach to organising an army of resistance. The third layer consists of local and transnational non-government organisations and activists (Ronfeldt et. al 1998).

## **Indigenous Struggle: Demand for Land and Liberty**

The EZLN leadership and constituents are often accused of being predominantly middle-class white intellectuals, but the group is comprised of

peasants from the Chiapas highlands, most of them Indians - Tzeltales, Tzotziles and Choles (Womack 1999, Castells 1997, Cleaver 1998a, Colliar 1994). In a January 6 1994 communiqué, the EZLN refuted the rumours regarding its constituents:

The commanders and troop elements of the EZLN are mostly Indians from Chiapas. This is so because the Indigenous people represent the poorest and most humiliated sector in Mexico, but also as can be seen, the most dignified. We are thousands of armed Indigenous people, and behind us there are tens of thousands of our families.

(Autonomeia 1994:80)

Most scholars agree that members of the EZLN are generally from communities established since the 1940s in the Lacandon rainforest on the Guatemalan border (Womack 1999, Castells 1997, Cleaver 1998a, Colliar 1994). These communities were created in an attempt to remedy the social crisis created in part by the expansion of landless peasants who worked farms and ranches in the area. In their declaration of war the EZLN referred to the history of Mexico and specifically to the poverty and suffering in Chiapas, as factors that impelled the uprising. And the EZLN takes its name from Emiliano Zapata, a leader of Mexico's 1910 revolution, whose slogan '*Tierra y Libertad*' (Land and Liberty) continues to be heard throughout Mexico today. According to Womack, the idea of the Mexican revolution as national movement of working people, for working people is a myth. He writes: 'The real Mexican Revolution was many improvised, fluctuating, shifting and uneven movements, again and again at odds with each other, a few of them actually revolutionary (but eventually defeated or contained), some of them popular working people, led by ferocious politicians contending for personal power' (1999:8). But the myth of Zapata as the hero of Mexico's revolutionary past is very much alive in Mexico. In fact, a common explanation for the poverty and oppression in Chiapas is that 'The Mexican Revolution never reached Chiapas'. Thus it makes sense to believe that things would change if the spirit of Zapata were brought back to finish what he started. In fact, the

Revolution did not reach Chiapas. Even its most progressive accomplishments, like Article 27 of the Mexican constitution, which guaranteed restitution or grants of federal lands as collectively held land (*ejidos*) to villages who needed them, could not triumph over 500 years of political corruption, racism and more recently neoliberalist policies. (Womack 1999, Castells 1997, Cleaver 1998a, Colliar 1994).

For centuries, Indigenous people and peasants have suffered abuse by colonizers, bureaucrats and settlers. For decades they have been forced to move periodically as the status of their settlements was altered according to the interests of the government and of the landowners. In 1972, for example, former President Echeverria decided to create a 'bio-reserve' of Monte Azul. To complete this project he returned most of the forest to sixty-six families of the original Lacandon tribe, thus ordering the relocation of four-thousand Indian families who had settled in the area after expulsion from their original communities. This new arrangement was not motivated by concern for the well-being of the tribe or by a need to preserve the environment. The arrangement suited a government eager to award logging rights for the entire region to a forestry company (Womack 1999). Most of the Indians refused to relocate and have been struggling ever since for their right to the land.

The status of communal land took on new dimensions of uncertainty after former President Salina's reform of Article 27. The reform ended communal possession of agricultural property by the villagers in favor of full commercialisation of individual property – a measure directly related to Mexico's alignment with privatisation in accordance with NAFTA. According to Marcos, 'it was the reform of Article 27 that most radicalized the *companeros*. That reform closed the door on the Indigenous people's strategies for surviving legally and peacefully. That's why they rose up in

arms.' In February of 1994, a journalist from *La Jornada* asked Marcos to describe the goals of the Zapatista movement in terms of land reform. He answered in somewhat uncertain terms:

An important step would be to annul Salina's reforms of Article 27...What the companeros say is that land is life, and if you don't have land you are living dead...Annulling the Salina's reforms wouldn't be enough, but it would be a start. It would be a way to open a wider discussion in which the countryside can be taken into account alongside the governmental commitment to NAFTA. It's NAFTA that really directed the reforms of Article 27.

(Autonomeia 1994:153)

While the people of Chiapas understand their problems to be closely related to the reforms of Article 27 and other neoliberal policies that privilege international economic expansion and the Mexican middle and upper classes over Mexican peasants and the urban poor, the government sees Chiapas as suffering from underdevelopment. Mexico is often described as 'two nations' – the Mexico whose growth has been spurred by NAFTA, and 'el otro Mexico' or the 'other Mexico' that is backward and left behind. Within a month of the initial EZLN uprising the Mexican government promised more development aid to the area, and these regional development efforts and others in similarly 'underdeveloped' states would be buttressed by World Bank Loans of 400 million dollars (Cleaver 1998a). The EZLN denounced these development plans as another step in their cultural assimilation and the annihilation of any chance of economic independence. They pointed out that there have never been 'two nations' but rather they have labored for 500 years within the framework of capitalist development and have simply been held at the bottom (Autonomeia 1994).

Along with major land rights defeats, the fragile economy of the peasant communities worsened in the 1990s when neoliberalisation policies implemented in preparation for NAFTA ended restrictions on imports of corn and eliminated protections on the price of coffee. The local economy, based

as it was on forestry, cattle, coffee and corn, was effectively dismantled. Today, despite the fact that over half of Mexico's national hydroelectric energy comes from Chiapas, along with twenty percent of its total electricity, only a third of homes in Chiapas have electricity. Everyday Pemex [the national oil company] extracts oil and gas and, as Marcos describes it, 'leaves behind the mark of capitalism: ecological destruction, agricultural plunder, hyperinflation, alcoholism, prostitution and poverty' (Autonomea 1994:26). Still, the forests are cleared in search of more petroleum while campesinos are forbidden under threats of steep fines and jail time from cutting down trees. An agricultural centre, Chiapas has the lowest rates of home electrification, schooling and literacy among all the states of Mexico (Womack 1999:11).

In 1992 and 1993 peasants mobilised peacefully against these conditions. The government's lack of response to the march of Xi Nich, which bought thousands of peasants from Palanque to Mexico City, and several other peaceful protests including a nine-thousand person demonstration on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus's arrival in America, led to a change in tactics for many. The membership of the EZLN grew as people increasingly chose the threat of injury or death in confrontation with the Mexican Army over the insidious destruction of poverty and powerlessness. As EZLN Captain Elisa told *La Jornada*:

When I lived in my house with my family, I didn't know anything. I didn't know how to read. I didn't go to school. But when I joined the Zapatista National Liberation Army, I learned how to read, I learned all of the Spanish I know, how to write and I was trained for war...We want a better life and that is why I joined the EZLN.

(Autonomea 1994: 101-102)

When asked why he joined the EZLN, 21-year-old soldier Leon responded: 'I worked in San Cristobal de las Casas as a plumber...It wasn't enough to live on. One time I came to town for my papers to join the Federal Army. My

family told me: "It would be better if you go to join the EZLN" (Autonomea 1994:102).

And Laura, a 21-year-old Tzeltal who leads an assault group, explained:

I began out of conscience, to fight in favor of the poor, since it is not right that they keep killing the children. I participated in the combat at Ocoingo. When the enemy came, I felt brave, I wanted to kill someone, to shout with anger and hit them so that they would be humiliated as they have humiliated us for so long.

(Autonomea 1994:102)

According to Castells, 'By the middle of 1993, in most communities of the Lacandon, corn was not planted, coffee was left in the bushes, children withdrew from schools, and cattle were sold to buy weapons' (Autonomea 1994:75). The people of Chiapas highlands were busy preparing for armed revolt.

## **Asking We Walk**

Most accounts agree that the EZLN, or at least its initial leadership came out of the Che Guevara-inspired clandestine revolutionary movement called the Forces of National Liberation (FLN). Formed in Northern Mexico in part as a reaction to the government's massacre of students in Tlatelolco in 1968, members of the movement began training in the jungle of Chiapas in the 1970s with plans to launch an insurgency. According to Renfeldt et al, the movement's leaders had a difficult time eliciting the support of the local Indigenous community, particularly since local organisations were decentralised and based on community relations (1998). To the Chiapas Indians, power was to be used in serving the people, not commanding it, the theory of *Mandar Obedeciendo*: Command by Obeying.

After a series of setbacks in urban areas, a few FLN revolutionaries undertook the daunting task of establishing their credibility among the country's most oppressed citizens, joining their communities and sharing in their hardship.

Marcos claims:

The military issue began when we got there...We arrived and we set to work. At the national level, the country was following a process similar to the one the state of Chiapas is experiencing now: Political avenues [were] closed...We came in through a teaching-learning process. the companeros taught me what they know about the mountains and I taught them what I knew. And that's how I began to move up through the ranks.

(Autonomea 1994:147)

This process of living and learning from Indigenous communities developed another key Zapatista principle *Preguntando Caminamos*: Asking We Walk. From the beginning, the Zapatistas had to listen to the communities they were trying to organise. By learning to listen, the early Zapatista activists constructed a new methodology for building a movement. By listening, the Zapatistas learned of the struggle of the people and that the culture of the people, in a sense was the culture of struggle. For example, as Marcos writes:

That is the great lesson that Indigenous communities teach to the EZLN. The original EZLN, the one that formed in 1983, is a political organization in the sense that it speaks and what it says has to be done. The Indigenous communities teach it to listen, and that is what we learn. The principal lesson that we learn from the Indigenous people is that we have to learn to hear, to listen.

(Marcos Subcommandante Insurgente 1995b: 47)

The popular phrase sums up the importance the Zapatistas place on listening to others. The phrase 'asking we walk' means walking along a path to political and social change in which the Zapatistas ask questions of themselves and most importantly, of civil society with whom they are in dialogue. As Cleaver states: 'The will of the majority is the path on which those who command should walk. If they separate their step from the path of the people, the heart that commands should be changed for another that

obeys' (Cleaver 1994 cited in Reinke 2002:84). Cecena (1198:146) explains that *preguntando caminamos* suggests that the Zapatistas do not have a preconceived plan for revolutionary democratic change in Mexico but rather want to construct a democratic Mexico alongside other sectors of civil society. This does not mean, of course, that the Zapatistas do not have a vision of how they want to live in their communities or suggestions about changes to Mexican society. Rather it means that the Zapatistas accept they are only one voice among many in Mexico with ideas about how to democratise the country and achieve liberty and justice for all Mexicans.

In June 1995 the Zapatistas issued a communiqué in which they announced the organisation of *consulta nacional*. The Zapatistas would use the *consulta* to learn if Mexican civil society agreed with the basic demands of the Zapatistas and how they felt about the trajectory of the Zapatista struggle. In the announcement the Zapatistas discuss the importance of asking questions and listening. They write:

We do not want to make decisions without first listening to those who have helped us in our search for peace and justice and dignity. We cannot do the same as the bad government, who makes decisions without asking those, who, it is supposed, sustain it.

(CCR-IG quoted in Cee and Sipro, 1995:218)

The EZLN is led by the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee (CCRI) composed of delegates from the various committees, which are in turn responsible for local communities. In a communiqué dated February 27 1994, the CCRI-CG, the civilian command of the Zapatistas writes about the development of the EZLN and its leadership role in the community:

Our path was always that the will of many be in the hearts of the men and women who command. The will of the majority was the path on which he who commands must walk. If he separates his step from the path of the will of the people, the heart who commands should be changed for another who obeys. Thus was born our strength in the jungle, he who leads obeys if he is true, and he who follows leads through the common heart of true men and women. Another word came from afar

so that this government was named and this work gave the name 'democracy' to our way that was from before words traveled.

(Quoted in EZLN, 1994)

These principles of 'command by obeying' and 'asking we walk' have created constant friction in negotiations with the government. This grassroots decision-making process frustrated government negotiators who were forced to wait for an extended period of time as EZLN representatives painstakingly consulted each community in its social base for a vote on a first government peace offer (it was rejected). Given the poor conditions of communication in the Lacandona jungle, and the need to discuss everything thoroughly, the principle of 'command by obeying' means that decisions take time. When the government representatives insisted on rapid replies, the Zapatistas replied that they did not understand the Indigenous clock.

We as Indians, have rhythms, forms of understanding, of deciding, of reaching agreements. And when we told them that, they replied by making fun of us; well then, they said, we don't understand why you say that because we see you have Japanese watches, so how do you say you are wearing Indigenous watches, that's from Japan.

(*La Jornada* 17/5/95)

And Commandante Tacho commented: 'They haven't learned. They understand us backwards. We use time, not the clock'. (*La Jornada* 17/5/95)

According to an interview with members of the CCRI, the committee mainly makes decisions regarding political and organisational issues, while Subcommandante Marcos is in charge of both public relations and military strategy. One EZLN member explains, 'Marcos speaks good Spanish. We still make a lot of mistakes. That is why we need him to do many things for us' (*Autonomea* 1994:139). In addition, Marcos' much celebrated public relations skills and his star-quality allure are often credited with the movements' popular appeal.

## **Recent History of Networks and NGOs**

Those who claim that Marcos' charisma accounts for the international attention paid the Zapatistas underestimate the degree to which the issues surrounding the movement resonate with supporters. The local, national and international relevance of the issues espoused by the Zapatistas is essential to the success of the movement in terms of rallying the support of different activists and NGOs. Brysk stresses the importance of maximising support by tapping into all of the relevant venues. He writes: 'an Indigenous people may face the following kinds of issues: being killed (a human rights issue), poverty (a developmental issue), land theft (which becomes a migration issue), and land use conflicts (which may be a market issue).' In this situation,

The rational response of a social movement is to launch simultaneous appeals in all appropriate venues and over time, to concentrate on those issue areas governed by accessible and responsive international regimes. In general, information-processing regimes such as human rights and ecology are more accessible to NGOs than state-centric arrangements for trade arms or control.

(Brysk 1994)

This is precisely what the Zapatistas have done. NGO representatives, journalists and activists flooded Chiapas immediately upon news of the uprising – not to catch a glimpse of Marcos, but to demonstrate their support for the ideals of the movement and to offer some degree of protection. As Marcos comments:

We think the time is ripe at an international level. We think that at the international level there is a sensibility for the Mexican people to rise up against a dictatorship of such long standing...And at the national level there is much discontent, but what was needed was for someone to give a lesson in dignity. It fell to the lowest citizens of this country to raise their heads with dignity. And this should be a lesson for all. We cannot let ourselves be treated in this way, and we have to try to construct a better world, a world truly for everyone.

(Autonomea 1994:65)

Ronfeldt, Arquilla, Fuller & Fuller argue that, without the support of NGOs, the Zapatista movement would have followed the path of a classic insurgency. The movement's capacity to mount information operations depends upon its ability to attract NGOs to its cause, and in turn on the ability of NGOs to capture the interest of the media and to use the Internet and other new communication technologies (1998).

The Zapatistas brought with them to the New Year's Day uprising a printed declaration of war against the government. News of the declaration was phoned into CNN and later, when journalists arrived, the declaration was disseminated through print and broadcast reports. Most of the reports included only excerpts from the declaration, excerpts which were often taken out of context or which were too brief to give the public an understanding of the Zapatista motives and goals. As the conflict escalated, most national and international commercial media refused to reproduce the communiqués and letters sent out by the EZLN, seriously constraining the movement ability to disseminate its message (Cleaver 1998a). As a remedy, Zapatista supporters with access to communiqués and to computer networks began to post them and in doing so catapulted news of the movement into headlines around the world. The Zapatista ' dispatches' went out to Usenet groups, Peacenet conferences, and Internet lists of NGOs and activists whose members were already concerned with Mexico. Zapatista communiqués circulated through a variety of related networks, including those centred on Indigenous rights and women's rights, to name just a couple. Receptive readers re-posted the messages, and Zapatista-related reports and information were soon spread across cyberspace.

This network of communication and information has become vital to both national and international Zapatista supporters in order to 'facilitate networking and to boost solidarity among activists' (Pickerill 2004: 3).

Moreover, the Internet allows the Zapatistas to tap into the support of established movements enabling them to 'share solutions and ideas' and draw strength from each other's support (ibid). It is no coincidence, for instance, that the EZLN chose the day NAFTA went into effect to declare war on the Mexican government. The leaders of the United States, Canada and Mexico promised, among other things, that the trade pact would open U.S and Canadian markets to Mexican exports and therefore accelerate the country's economic development. The Zapatistas on the other hand expected NAFTA to drive large numbers of workers off the land, creating a surplus of industrial labour and contributing to rural misery (Chomsky 1995). Indeed, the Zapatista army called NAFTA a 'death sentence' for Indians, claiming that the international agreement would widen the already existing rift between the rich and poor and that it would destroy what remains of the Indian way of life.

Networks of grassroots groups in Canada, the United States, and Mexico resisted the implementation of NAFTA. In each country, broad coalitions such as the Mexican Action network on Free Trade were established, made up of several hundred groups opposed to the new trade pact. The timing of the EZLN declaration was part of a calculated strategy on the part of the Zapatistas to tap into this elaborate international anti-NAFTA network.

The strategy worked. Groups that were already organised in opposition to NAFTA rallied around the Zapatistas. The EZLN were likewise able to tap into the support of international non-governmental organisations concerned with issues such as Native American rights, environmental protection, human rights and the threat of 'neoliberal' capitalism. The Zapatista cause has also been taken up by celebrities such as film maker Oliver Stone and former French First Lady Danielle Mitterand, both of whom attended a 1996 conference in Chiapas organised by the Zapatistas (Robberson 1995; Cleaver 1998b;

Castells 1997). Celebrity support has given the movement added exposure and lent it a sort of leftist brand-name appeal. These groups and individuals unified by the desire to resist the negative impact on local conditions – in this case the Mexican nation – of corporate and state-driven globalisation are part of the larger global justice movement. In addition, this network of solidarity has largely protected the movement against the repressive intentions of the Mexican government. In one instance, more than a year after the initial uprising, then President Ernesto Zedillo ordered the army to break the cease-fire with the Zapatista rebels and other leaders. Within hours, the president's words along with a call for urgent action had been distributed all over the world on the Internet. Zedillo promptly ordered his troops to retreat. Many heralded this as proof of the power of the Internet to affect 'real-world' politics (Robberson 1995, Cleaver 1998a, Castells 1997).

## **Zapatismo**

In a 1996 interview with French sociologist Yvon Le Bot, Marcos describes how the various layers of the movement came together under the philosophy called Zapatismo:

There's the EZLN as such, the Indian Communities. That's original Zapatismo, let's say. Then civilian Zapatismo...It begins as a kind of diffuse committee of solidarity, focused on what is happening here and evolves into political organisation...Then there is the third Zapatismo, bigger, more dispersed, people who have empathy for the EZLN and are ready to support it, but who have no intention of organising or who already belong to other political or social organisations.

(Womack 1999:325)

Marcos admits that the EZLN modifies its discourse and its initiatives to reinforce the relationship between the armed forces of the EZLN and the larger civilian population of Mexico supporters. He is less clear on how the international component of the movement helps define Zapatismo:

You can't truly call this [international support] Zapatismo. Zapatismo is the common point, or the pretext for converging each one has his own logic, but recognises himself in certain very general propositions of Zapatismo. I see no resemblance at all among Basque, Greek, Kurdish, Swedish, Japanese Zapatistas, except that they all come here and each has its idea of Zapatismo or of what it should be. In any case it's a phenomenon that exists, and beyond the solidarity with the Indian movement, it aims more and more to retrieve a series of universal values that can serve as well for Australians, Japanese, Greeks, Kurds, Catalans, Chicanos, Indians from Ecuador, for example, or the Mapuche (Indians in Chile)...Zapatismo has maybe only helped them to remember that it's worthwhile to struggle, that it is necessary. For us it's important to be very clear on this matter, not to look to create a universal doctrine.

(Womack 1999:325)

Nevertheless, he views international support as essential to the success of the Zapatista movement, crediting it with providing invaluable protection that allows the insurgents to resist government and economic oppression (Womack 1999:326).

Marcos believes that the EZLN's most difficult and important task is to define relations among these four components: the EZLN or the Indian communities, Mexican civilian supporters, Mexican sympathisers and, finally, international supporters and sympathisers. While he describes the international supporters as more effective protection than the EZLN army, he locates the power to define relations in the hands of the EZLN - its core leadership and Indian communities. And he admits doing so in part by modifying the EZLN discourse to reinforce the relationship between the armed forces or the core of the EZLN and other factions of the movement. This process of precisely defining Zapatismo is the most important aspect of the struggle, according to Marcos, 'because it ultimately determines whether the EZLN will be just another organisation or, on the contrary, contribute something truly new...' (Womack 1999:325).

In practical terms Marcos is describing the essence of the simultaneous processes of localisation and globalisation, and how nationalism figures in the equation. According to him, local forces define the movement with an eye

toward winning and maintaining the allegiance of the Mexican people. And international activists to some extent protect the movement against the Mexican military, strengthening its ability to resist government and economic oppression. This mixing of international, national and local forces also shapes the discourse within the movement. Indeed, EZLN leaders understand the success of the movement to be contingent upon the continuing contribution of local, national and international voices. Many web sites post fictional narratives by Marcos that explore the tension between local and global forces. In the words of Old Antonio, a recurring character in his stories, 'When you dream, you have to look at the star high up there, but when you struggle, you have to look at the hand pointing at the star'. His characters often stress the view that both close and distant forces profoundly influence the struggle.

This belief is evident in the organising of political initiatives such as the Intercontinental Encounter against Neoliberalism. This event united activists and academics from around the globe. Held in August 1996, it gathered together three thousand people from fifty four countries. People from all over the world travelled to forums constructed in what the Zapatistas called 'Aguascalientes' in four Zapatista communities in Chiapas. The name 'Aguascalientes' comes from the name of the Northern Mexican City, in which during the Revolution in 1914, all of the revolutionary factions gathered together to plan a new revolutionary government. This event demonstrated the far reach that Zapatismo was beginning to have globally, and showed the Mexican government that the Zapatistas were not alone. It also demonstrated that Zapatismo was not solely a 'local' movement as many had argued. People from all over the world who attended were not just concerned with providing solidarity to Mexico's oppressed Indians. Rather, they were interested to try and construct a global alternative to neoliberalism. In this sense, despite being against global power systems, the Zapatistas do not deny globalisation in totality (Reinke, 2002:84). In holding the Encounter

the Zapatistas acknowledged that the same oppressions are occurring throughout the globe as a result of neoliberalism, and therefore it is possible to use this development to build one movement. The activists who participated in this event had a vested interest in the outcome of the Zapatista struggle and felt they had many things to share and learn from the Indigenous insurgents. Zapatismo became attractive to European young activists, particularly in Spain and Italy. These activists played, and continue to play, an important role in the peace camps where human rights are recorded and documented in Chiapas. The Encounter was not just 'revolutionary tourism'. It was an exercise in building an alternative politics on a global level.

The Zapatistas are demonstrating a new kind of relationship with those who support them. This relationship is 'dialogic' (Street 1996) and inter-subjective (Lenkersdorf 1996), and encourages their supporters to act beyond solidarity (Reinke 2002:84). That is, the Zapatistas apply the same principles of political organising with their international sympathisers as they do in their own communities. They dialogue with everyone in the community in order to make decisions. Everyone has a right to voice his/her opinion. In order to become a decision that is truly a product of the community, everyone must be heard. So the goal of Zapatista events, such as the Encounter is to build a community of equals on a local, national and international level. Reinke describes the Zapatista vision:

Their vision is for a network of struggles to link up throughout the world. Rather than a homogenous globalisation of neoliberal policies the struggle is for a globalised respect of difference. One of the principles of the Zapatista struggle has been to recognise that what is needed is a world where there is room for many worlds. This inspires the idea of linking similar campaigns of resistance across the globe, building on the commonality of seeking autonomy while respecting the differences of each of those groups in struggling for a different system of power. The Zapatistas see this coming about through a dialogue within civil societies, throughout the world, to come up with a better global plan'.

(2002: 84-85)

This vision exemplifies the Zapatista mantra 'One no many yeses'. The Zapatistas and others resisting neoliberalism are refusing the dominance of the economic sector and culture of individualism and violence that attends neoliberalism and globalisation. Global justice activists in both the North and the South have also begun to refuse to participate in or comply with the Western capitalist project. The rejection of power is the 'one no' of the Zapatistas and those involved in the resistance against neoliberalism.

At the same time as the many diverse elements of civil society are affirming a common identity as anti-capitalist, they retain and affirm their separate identities by pronouncing their word and presenting their vision of alternatives to neoliberalism based on their unique contexts, customs and traditions. The 'many yeses' demonstrates the Zapatista recognition of and commitment to the diversity of peoples who constitute civil society. It recognises the heterogeneity of civil society in its struggle for alternatives to neoliberalism and capitalist logic and culture. Since the Zapatistas come from a very unique background with specific customs, traditions and epistemologies their approach to living outside of and beyond neoliberalism is unique (Cecena, 1998). Their theories and practices of autonomy and self-determination are likely to be different from the practices among relatively privileged sectors of civil society. Further, the Zapatistas understand that a commitment to democracy is synonymous with a commitment to diversity.

The success of the Zapatista movement at garnering international support has drawn the attention of researchers from the CIA and U.S. government think tank RAND. Both organisations have issued reports urging government intelligence agencies to move away from the traditional hierarchical operations and to co-opt grassroots methods by creating more horizontal and dispersed intelligence networks. Rondfeldt et al. argue: 'What is important to know about these [new grassroots] networks is not just their ability to organise

activities, but also to produce their own 'cultural codes' and then disseminate them throughout societies' (1998:114).

A large part of the Zapatista struggle occurs at the site of popular culture and this is of great relevance to the global justice movement. The Zapatistas have focussed on obtaining public support, not by overthrowing the military but by using new technology and activist networks to expose parts of Mexican society and the larger global society to Zapatista ideas and images. They therefore conduct their struggle on two fronts: in the realm of traditional politics they wage armed combat and conduct government negotiation; in the world of popular culture they grant media interviews, post online communiqués, appear on stage at rock concerts, publish children's books and poetry, and so on. Like other revolutionaries, the Zapatistas recognise attempts to transform society through the state as futile if they are not accompanied by efforts to win the support of the people, as evident in this quote by Marcos:

The 'centre' asks us, demands of us, that we should sign a peace agreement quickly and convert ourselves into an 'institutional' political force, that is to say, convert ourselves into yet another part of the machinery of power. To them we answer NO and they do not understand it. They do not understand that we are not in agreement with those ideas. They do not understand that we do not want offices or posts in the government. They do not understand that we are struggling not for the steps to be swept clean from the top to bottom, but for there to be no stairs, for there to be no kingdom at all

(*La Jornada* 11-13 August 1997).

Castells also comments:

Because our historical vision has become so used to orderly battalions, colourful banners, and scripted proclamations of social change, we are at a loss when confronted with the subtle pervasiveness of incremental changes of symbols processed through multiform networks, away from the halls of power.

(1997:362)

The Internet plays a critical role in this pervasive and incremental change. It enables communication among the local, national and international supporters and therefore facilitates the reciprocal impact among these elements on the ideology and agenda of the movement. The relationship between the Zapatista movement and international supporters defines the identity of the movement, not by tainting its authenticity, but by broadening the discourse of the movement to address the issues and concerns of international supporters and therefore integrating them into the movement. By enlarging the scope of the movement through a carefully considered approach to the public and use of the Internet and other communication strategies, the Zapatistas are able to assert themselves with ideas rather than military force. In doing so, the Zapatistas create an alternative path of resistance.

### **The Zapatistas Online: Friends with High-Tech Tools**

Many claim that the Zapatista movement's online network is one of the most successful examples of the use of the Internet by a grassroots social movement (Castells 1997, Cleaver 1998a, Downing 2001). The online discussion has not only rallied support for the Zapatistas but also sparked a worldwide discussion on the meanings and implications of the rebellion in terms of various other confrontations with the contemporary capitalist economic and political policies.

Before exploring the online movement, it must be noted that although the Internet plays a key role in facilitating action on the part of Zapatista supporters, the Zapatista movement also depends on more traditional media to communicate with the public. Additionally, in her study of British environmental activists and their use of the internet Pickerill notes that

although the Internet is used to organise global struggles, the results are most frequently locally based:

Despite the organisation of some global protests such as J18, protests against the WTO in November 1999, and more recently, against meetings of the IMF and World Bank in Prague in September 2000, international interactions were more often than not used to assert the importance of specific place based campaigns. This use of CMC reflects what Washbourne (1999a) terms 'translocalism' - using technology to reach an international audience and mobilise a global consciousness, while simultaneously reasserting the importance of the local.

(Pickerill 2003)

Exaggerated accounts claim the jungle in Chiapas is equipped with computers, mobile phones and fax machines. Given the extreme poverty in the highlands where the movement is based – the lack of roads, electricity, telephones, and communications infrastructure - the movement has depended on outside communication personnel from the outset. The sort of wireless technology that could facilitate direct communication with the web has only recently become available, eight years after the uprising. In addition, many of the Zapatistas do not speak Spanish and most are illiterate (Downing 2001). Despite these obstacles, efforts are being made to increase access to computers and other media. For example, the Chiapas Media Project is working to bring computers and video equipment and training to Indigenous communities in Chiapas to empower communities struggling for democracy, land reform and autonomy to develop alternative media so their voices can be heard around the world.

For now at least the Zapatista-related material online does not come directly from the EZLN. In my five years as a user of online Zapatista listservs and Usenet groups, I have never received a posting sent directly by Marcos or even seen an archived posting with an address that could be linked to him as the source. He does, however, send email messages to specific people or groups through intermediaries. Most often, Marcos' writings are distributed through the most immediately accessible channels. Statements first brought

to the public through newspapers and magazines or on video and radio broadcasts eventually make their way onto the Internet where they are widely distributed and archived. And yet, frequently the Internet is the first means of distribution. By most accounts, writings by Marcos and other members of the EZLN reach the public via civilian allies with Internet access. In the editor's note of *Our Word is our Weapon: Selected Writings from Subcommandante Marcos*, Juana Ponce de Leon describes the process:

Segment by segment, [a communiqué] is passed secretly from hand to hand, galloped inside a satchel, hidden in a cyclist's bag, slipped into a backpack, or perhaps thrust into a sack of beans, then propped into the back of an open truck, crammed with Indigenous villagers who make the hours-long journey to the closest market or doctor, and our messenger to a contact person with Internet access.

(2001 xxiii)

Marcos acknowledges the importance of the Internet and the supporters who use it to spread EZLN-related news and discussions:

There are people that have put us on the Internet, and the Zapatismo has occupied a space of which nobody had thought. The Mexican political system has gained international prestige in the media thanks to its informational control, its control over the production of news, control over news, anchors, and also thanks to its control over journalists through corruption, threats and assassination. This is a country where journalists are assassinated with a certain frequency. The fact that this type of news has sneaked out through a channel that is uncontrollable, efficient, and fast is a very tough blow [to the Mexican state].

(Le Bot 1997)

The Internet, with its ability to bypass many forms of censorship and other restrictions to which broadcast and print media are subject, provides a space where protests can be initiated against real and perceived military attacks in moments of crisis. In addition, computer networks are exceptionally used in facilitating community building through dialogue. Pickerill provides an insight into this process in the context of her study into British environmental groups:

There is a tendency...to promote the need for participatory (or direct) democracy. Thus there is an emphasis upon the need for inclusion – of themselves in the political decision-making process, but also more

generally as a model for society. Such models of inclusive, non-hierarchical and/or consensus decision making structures are practised (or at least attempted) by many groups...In order to practice what they preach, this attitude of inclusion should also be reflected in environmentalists' use of CMC'.

(Pickerill 2004:3)

In 1994, for example, the EZLN organised the *Consulta Nacional e Internacional* (National and International Plebiscite) in order to solicit feedback on Zapatista demands and the role of the EZLN as a political entity. In the video the EZLN produced to accompany the questionnaire, Marcos explains the meaning and purpose of each question, assuring viewers that the Zapatistas are prepared to follow the instruction of their respondents, even if that requires restructuring their organisation and reconceptualising their goals. The *Consulta* was translated into various languages and distributed internationally in print and electronic form. While volunteers enlisted participation in Mexico City, Mexican delegates to the United Nations Conference in Beijing distributed the questions to other conference participants. The EZLN received over 1.3 million responses from people all over the world. The breadth of this sort of action and response was made possible by the Internet, and yet it would not have succeeded without the use of more traditional means and media (Downing 2001:226).

To understand the meaning of this online movement, it is necessary first to map the terrain of the discourse. A search for the term *Zapatista* on any major web browser yields a list of thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of links to various web sites. These web sites or individual web pages can contain information and analyses of the Zapatista movement, video animation, photographs, news clips, audio files, discussion threads,<sup>24</sup> and so on. Many of these are hosted by universities and non-profit organisations and include links to news and discussion groups, university servers in Mexico, archives of Zapatista communiqués, information and reports. They are, almost without

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<sup>24</sup> A discussion thread is a collection of postings generated in an online discussion group. 'Threads' are often arranged and posted on websites according to topic.

exception, pro-Zapatista. Mexican government sites largely ignore the existence of the Zapatistas, downplaying the conflict in the rare instances of its mention and providing little information.

While the text of the majority of sites and postings are in English or Spanish, there are a handful of sites and listservs that provide content in other languages, including Italian, French, German, Dutch, Portuguese and Japanese. The majority of sites and lists are run on servers in the United States and Mexico; however, many are also run from Italy, Australia, Ireland, Spain and France among other locations. Sites cover a range of topics but most are related to one or more of the following issues: media activism, human rights, anti-neoliberalism, and peace/religion. The International Service for Peace (*Servicio Internacional para la Paz* or SIPAZ), for example, a religious group that advocates non-violence, has a multilingual web site that posts quarterly reports on human rights violations, a chronology of events in Chiapas, urgent action alerts, background on member organisations (with links to many of their web pages), information on SIPAZ activities in Chiapas, and an invitation to join the effort.

The Irish Mexico group runs a strongly anti-neoliberal site in support of the EZLN from Ireland that contains a wide variety of materials and links to other pages. It includes brief introductions to the history, economy, Indigenous people and politics of Mexico and to the EZLN. There are a series of reports, sometimes illustrated, from or about the Intercontinental Encuentro and other Zapatista-related issues, and a chronology of the group's activities in Ireland with links to a bulletin board where users post responses to material on the web site. *Nuevo Amanecer Press* (NAP) is an Internet information service supporting the defence of human rights, especially, although not uniquely, in Chiapas. Its web pages, run from Mexico, contain information in Spanish about the struggle for Indigenous rights, a partial archive of NAP bulletins and a collection of reports from *La Jornada*. It also provides an extensive report on

the School of the Americas, where Latin American military personnel are trained in counterinsurgency, or what some consider state terrorism. It also links to pages on celebrated U.S. human rights cases such as those of Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu-Jamal, as well as to other human rights groups in Mexico and elsewhere.

Web pages constructed by individuals are as numerous and as useful as those constructed by organisations. For example, Justin Paulson created Ya Basta!, one of the most comprehensive sites related to the Zapatistas, as a means of making information on the Zapatista uprising widely available. The site includes selected EZLN communiqués in four languages, articles from print and electronic sources, news reports, contact information for the president of Mexico and embassies worldwide, and information on how to contribute humanitarian aid or become a peace camp volunteer. The site also provides the means to send electronic letters of support to the EZLN – letters of support composed online, emailed to solidarity workers in Mexico and then delivered to the EZLN in print form. Ya Basta! is just one of the many sites that demonstrate the ability of individuals to contribute to the movement through the Internet.

Individuals also contribute to the movement through lists that distribute messages to members via email, and newsgroups which function as web-based bulletin boards. In the wake of the initial uprising, several lists began distributing daily reports on the Zapatistas, including ChiapasL, run initially from Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM) and later from University of California at San Diego; Chiapas95, run from the University of Texas-Austin; EZLN-it run from Italy; FZLN-info in Mexico; Zap, a mailing list based in Melbourne, and many more. The objective of these forums was to distribute or discuss information not given accurate or substantial treatment in the mainstream media. And as the number of people involved in this process of

uploading, re-posting, and translating has grown, so have the efficacy and organisation of these lists. On some lists, for example, a cooperative division of labour has emerged, so that a dozen people or more take individual responsibility for routing information from various sources to a single website or subscriber list. As a result of such cooperation, finding significant resources on the web has become relatively easy (Cleaver 1998a).

## The Myths that Frame Online Zapatista Discourse

Examining approximately 500 websites and their links, and seven listserv postings and their archives, I have found five general categories: information sites, fiction sites, organisational sites, arts and photography sites and travel and merchandise sites, and sites that include scholarly papers and analysis. I have broken down these categories here according to myths or the key aspects that I believe make the Zapatistas so appealing to Western activists. Roland Barthes (1972) has argued that literature, like all forms of communication, is essentially a system of signs which encodes various ideologies or 'myths' and should be decoded in terms of its own organising principles or internal structure.<sup>25</sup>

Communication created and circulated online yields distinct yet sometimes overlapping myths which create the larger patterns of meaning that organise the movement and make it comprehensible and appealing. Three significant myths seem to underpin the discourse: the myth of the 'universal Marcos'; of

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<sup>25</sup> Barthes' analysis hinges on the bourgeois nature of myth and the cultural dominance of the bourgeoisie. He claims that through myth 'bourgeois ideology can therefore spread over everything and in doing so lose its name without risk'. And he also contends that myth is a value, which robs images of their historicity in order to make them serve to perpetuate dominant bourgeois culture. As Barthes writes, 'the very principle of myth [is to] transform history into nature'. This, he argues, ultimately serves to showcase and conserve bourgeois culture, framing its transient, historical characteristics as somehow eternal, inevitable and not to be challenged. While I am using Barthes' concepts of myth to describe the underlying codes of the Zapatista movement that form the larger narrative of the movement, I am not adopting his assertion that myth is necessarily negative or that it inevitably functions in support of the status quo.

'noble savages and passive victims'; and of the 'neoliberal beast'. Combined, these myths inscribe the movement with meaning that goes well beyond events and circumstances in Chiapas, and they encourage the involvement of national and international activists by inviting them into the discourse of the movement.

## 1. The Myth of the 'Universal Marcos'

In the May 1994 issue of *Vanity Fair*, Marcos described himself as a 'brilliant myth.' Then, a week later, he boasted to a group of journalists: 'I told them [*Vanity Fair*] a whole bunch of lies that I don't remember right now'. Marcos is known for his decidedly casual approach to interviews – inviting reporters into the jungle, making them wait for days, and showing up, if at all, in the middle of the night – which has earned him respect from some and disdain from others. When he joked with the *San Francisco Chronicle* that he was once fired from a restaurant in San Francisco for being gay, the Mexican Press ran headlines claiming that Marcos had 'admitted' he was homosexual. Marcos responded by asserting that the story could not be literally true because he was not a real person, but rather a myth. In a communiqué in response to the controversy he wrote:

Marcos is black in South Africa, Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel...pacifist in Bosnia, a housewife alone on a Saturday night in any city in Mexico...a single woman on the metro at 10p.m...Marcos is all the exploited, marginalised and oppressed minorities and shape shifters.

(Autonomea 1994)

While at the same time Marcos makes himself and the Zapatista movement universal, he is also a strong advocate for diversity which appeals to those who oppose the homogenisation of cultures. In a letter addressed to 'Those who protest with us after Acteal' Marcos writes: 'We agree with you. The struggle for peace and for humanity is an intercontinental issue. As that too-

little-credited internationalist Old Don Antonio [a character of Marcos' fictional writing] used to say: 'Life without those who are different is empty and damns you to stagnation' (Ponce de Leon 2001:142). But this support of diversity complicates the notion that Marcos and even the struggle of the Zapatistas are universal, that they in fact reflect the circumstances of all those who suffer under the current environment of neoliberal economics. For this suggests that people and their problems are basically the same everywhere and the same strategies of resistance can be called upon no matter what the circumstance.

It is the need to establish himself as myth, as universal, that drives Marcos to create a persona which others then reproduce, one that resonates with a wide range of people and their experiences. This sympathetic persona contributes to the wide popularity of the movement. By thoughtfully representing the conflict in Chiapas and the Indigenous struggle for human rights, and by pointing out the threats that neoliberalism poses to everyone, Marcos holds up a mirror to those who feel disenfranchised or marginalised throughout the world, embracing their difference and at the same time ushering them into a worldwide struggle.

The myth of the universal Marcos is bolstered by the fact that his identity has remained obscure. Indeed his appearance is mythic. Apart from his alleged green eyes, he has no individual characteristic to set him apart. He dresses in army green, his face covered by a black ski mask. Marcos has made synonymous the outsider demanding recognition and justice with a rebel in a black ski mask. The masks partly symbolise loyalty to the movement, but the masks, like many aspects of the EZLN, they seem to be part publicity stunt, part poetic symbol, and part military strategy. Marcos offers a variety of explanations for the masks. Just after Marcos read the Declaration of War, a journalist from *La Jornada* asked him why some members of the EZLN were

masked and others were not. He responded: 'Those of us who are more handsome always have to protect ourselves...We have to watch out for protagonism, in other words, that people do not promote themselves too much' (Autonomedia 1994:62). In a communiqué espousing the virtues of truth and democracy he argues that masks are not simply a means to disguise identities, but serve as a symbol of the masks of truth that cover Mexico:

We could show our faces, but the big difference is that Marcos has always known his real face, and the civil society is just awakening from the long and lazy dream of 'Modernity' imposed at a cost to all. Subcommandante Marcos is ready to take off his mask. Is Mexican civil society ready to lift its mask?

(Knudson 1998:511)

An article in the *Columbian Journalism Review* suggests that the mask has yet another purpose: 'the mystery of Marcos helps continue to make him a good story, despite a lot of exposure; his secret identity allows him to be both elusive and accessible at the same time' (Simon 1994).

The stereotype of the ski masked wearing anti-globalisation protestor has been used by mainstream media in an attempt to generate a sense of danger and criminality. However, many activists argue that the correct interpretation of mask-wearing is based on promoting anonymity and egalitarianism. To wear a mask, it is argued, is to stand in solidarity with those who are 'faceless'. The following quote reflects the use of the mask by activists as a way of revealing identity, rather than concealing it, as many critics claim:

Those in authority fear the mask for their power partly resides in identifying, stamping and cataloguing, in knowing who you are. Our masks are not to conceal our identity but to reveal it. Today we shall give this resistance a face; by putting on our masks we reveal our unity and by raising our voices in the street we speak our anger at the facelessness of power.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Message printed on the inside of 9000 masks distributed at the June 18, 1999, Carnival Against Capitalism in London.

Global justice activists perceive the wearing of the mask to be part of a politics of refusal. This notion of refusal also has links with the situationist and anti-disciplinary movement of the Sixties, such as the Yippies. Refusal in this sense can be anything that short circuits the hierarchies of everyday life between a performer and an audience. For one that refuses, the forms of direct action are empowering, funny and immediately gratifying. Many global justice activists wear the mask to remain anonymous and choose to stay nameless as the following quote by a Melbourne activist points out:

I choose to stay nameless and faceless. I make my (r)evolution not for recognition. I want no fame, nor infamy. I want no lead role, nor bit part. This is by and for us all. I choose to remain anonymous in all I do, to provide inspiration. To act as a human conscience, without putting a name on it. No more pushing of socialist worker, nor green left weekly. No more the *Herald Sun*, nor *The Age*. No more 'spokespeople'. No more 'our idea is best'.

(Interview with Canstin 2001)

Other aspects of Zapatista strategy mirrored in the global justice movement are the use of Karen Elliot and Monty Canstin as 'multiple names' used by global justice activists and artists across the globe. They are responsible for many actions that are organised, yet remain unnamed and un-claimed, thereby making the concept of identity irrelevant according to a Melbourne-based activist:

*This is for the whole planet. Not ME. Not You. Everyone. Thus, we remain Karen. So people know who to blame. To inspire others to be Monty. You can do it. We can change. Anyone can go out at night with a spraycan. Anyone can photocopy an idea. Anyone can talk to their family and friends about freedom. Break down the relationships of authority. Think for yourself. Anyone can refuse. We can't even imagine the freedoms possible. Be Karen Elliot today'.*

(Personal interview, 2001)

Therefore, the use of the mask enables participants to both hide personal identity through anonymity and to borrow or assume a collective identity derived from reassembling and representing culturally significant symbols from other liberation struggles. As we can see from the magnitude of the media

coverage surrounding masked protestors, the significance of the mask ultimately depends as much on others' interpretation of these symbols as it does on the 'performance' itself. Whilst many mainstream analysts criticise the use of the mask, implying that those activists who wear the mask are 'masquerading as revolutionaries' or are criminals (which in turn attempts to discredit a whole movement), in a clear manifestation of the contradictory significance acquired by the symbol of the mask the masked activists are often actually seen to possess more credence and are provided a stronger image of accountability and trust than those without the mask. Perhaps this is due to the versatile symbolic capital provided by the mask, in which each member of the audience can attribute an interpretive value to the activist 'performance' reading in a significance based on his or her own cultural experience and social and political orientation. This would begin to explain the source of the universal appeal the Zapatistas and masked activists have gained with solidarity groups everywhere.

While all of Marcos' work deals with issues of power and politics, not all of his writing comes in the form of letters and communiqués. Perhaps his most popular writings are a form of folklore. His 'Tales from a Sleepless Solitude' have been likened to Italo Calvino's Italian Folklores, where the dilemmas of adult life – desire, love, solitude and death - are central. Often, Marcos' romantic character converses with his 'other self', a cynical devil's advocate. These personal tales reveal his isolation and uncertainty. In the tales of Don Durito of the Lacandon, a knight-errant and beetle with a penchant for storytelling, we see the world from below, literally and metaphorically. Durito is comic, but his absurd chivalry and valour spin around issues of dignity, values, proper behaviour and civic duty. 'Marcos,' the beetle's lackey, endures verbal abuse, sleepless nights, and many hours of dictation with great humour and healthy doses of self-mockery. In another set of tales, Old Don Antonio, a Mayan Shaman passes on the oral tradition kept up by Indigenous

communities. These tales highlight the Indigenous belief that only by asking questions do we begin the process of change. By inserting himself into these fictional tales Marcos further contributes to his own mythical status; he becomes as much the man who jokes with reporters as the one that deliberates with a beetle. In the tradition of literary magical realism, imagination frees him from the constraints of the 'real', allowing him to explore topics and themes more effectively than he might in non-fiction. And his fiction gives international and national supporters another means through which to connect with the movement.

While Internet postings are seldom critical of Marcos or the movement, they often assess its strategies. One ChiapasL poster, for example, wrote:

Although I respect Marcos and believe he is sincere I do think that the Zapatistas should produce other spokespersons which can manipulate the media in the way that Marcos does.

Another poster responded:

In only having one spokesman, Marcos, the Zapatistas are able to keep their communication consistent. I can, however, see a case for having more than one, in that they would be able to release more communications at the same time, and on a more varied series of topics. Whereas Marcos communicates, and yes he does manipulate the media, he can only release one thing at a time. So maybe it is time someone else joined him. Does anyone else in the group have thoughts on this subject?

To which a third poster added:

Perhaps someone of Indigenous descent should join Marcos as a spokesman i.e. someone in the CCRI. Although the EZLN is against caudillismo there is a tendency for the EZLN to create its own version of caudillismo through Marcos. A lot of the newspapers in England report that Marcos is the leader of the EZLN as Torofijio is with the Colombian FARC. The media fails to highlight how Marcos is merely a Subcommandante who is subordinate to the commandantes in the CCRI who are themselves subordinate to the Indigenous communities they represent through the democratic principle of command obeying.

Equally as common are postings that gush with praise for Marcos, such as the following post from Izapatista that appeared under the subject 'I Think I'm Obsessed'.

Call me crazy, but I am now officially obsessed with Marcos. I seriously need to meet this man. He has me totally captivated. Now I really sound like a college student huh? Does he actually communicate with people outside the EZLN? Where is he? And I am kind of confused about how much is known about him now, still nothing? Is he gay, single, straight, married, American, Mexican, a professor, a musician? Seriously, what's the deal? He claims to be everything.

This posting generated many responses that expressed similar infatuation with Marcos:

I'm so glad you wrote what you did. I'm a high school history teacher and feel the same way. You *MUST* try to find a photo that appeared in the New York Times on March 29<sup>th</sup> page A4. It almost brought tears to my eyes. It was a photo of the Zapatistas... led by a woman calling herself 'Commander Esther' on the floor of the Mexican Congress.... the final culmination of their long march throughout Mexico. In the meantime, I too want to meet Marcos. I want so badly to try and do a documentary on the Zapatistas, and in it include an interview with Marcos... but as you, I wonder if he ever speaks to anyone... except the major networks, he is very media savvy.

The second poster's assumption that Marcos is more accessible to mainstream media than to her is ironic considering the movement has depended so heavily on independent media and supporters to spread the word of their struggle. Despite widespread international involvement there is very little discussion within the movement about what this involvement means or how it affects the character and goals of the movement, in part because their involvement has been authorised by Marcos and presumably the rest of the EZLN. The EZLN benefits from an increase in publicity, protection and support brought about by an international support network. And international supporters, among other things, gain a cause with clearly articulated goals and values and a way to resist with various degrees of involvement, the forces of global neoliberal economic practices.

## **2. The Myth of the Noble Warriors and Helpless Victims**

The Zapatistas declared their movement a national movement from the outset, despite the fact that almost all of their demands were specifically aimed at Indigenous rights. The 'declaration of war', for example did not once mention Indigenous people or Chiapas. At the beginning of the conflict, the Zapatistas were mainly counting on the Mexican people to bolster the movement. While the Zapatistas immediately gained substantial support among the Mexican people (Castells 1997), they also tapped into an international network and began to tailor their discourse accordingly (Lebot 1997). In March 1994 a statement released at the end of the dialogues with the government was addressed not only to 'the people of Mexico' but also to 'the peoples and governments of the world' and the 'national and international press'. The statement lists thirty-four demands of which fifteen focussed on the needs of Indians and six specifically on Chiapas (Womack 1999:269). The focus on Indigenous rights in this and subsequent writings garnered support for the movement among national and international Indigenous rights advocates.

The often-repeated tale of the conversion of the urban guerrillas to the ways of the Indigenous people of Chiapas speaks to ideals about the authenticity of the movement; it asserts that the people of Chiapas, and not outsiders, are in charge of the movement and that Indigenous communities are therefore not being appropriated to further the political agenda of urban intellectuals or foreigners, which was a widespread dismissive assessment. Versions of the story can be found online in the form of fictional tales, scholarly papers, general analysis and explanation and communiqués and letters from Marcos. The EZLN, according to Marcos and others, evolved from a few students and intellectuals who had gone into the mountains with the authoritarian intention to lead the people to liberation in an army of the people. The EZLN was

forced to accept that the people and not the army commanders should have the final say. Their ideological and organisational frameworks had little meaning or relevance to the Indigenous people they aimed to recruit. In fact, these people disapproved of hierarchical command structures. They wanted flat, decentralised designs that emphasised consultation at the community level. Consequently, the EZLN began to adopt the characteristics of Indigenous social organisations.

In the words of Marcos:

They...taught me how to walk, which is done in a certain manner, as they say. To walk in the highlands, to learn how to live there, to identify animals, to hunt them, to dress them, which is to say, to prepare them for the kitchen, which is done in a certain way...And to make myself part of the highlands...I think that once I had learned that, I was accepted in the guerrilla group. Not when I was a teacher, when I came to give class, but when I made myself part of them.

(Nugent 2000:299)

The transformation of Marcos – from authoritarian outsider to brother in the struggle – like his claim to represent a universal struggle authorises the involvement of supporters all over the world; that is, as long as they make this mental transformation from leader to participant, from coloniser to community member. Of course, the distinction among various forms of participation and conceptions of the movement is not that clear. One of the most enduring myths of the movement is the romanticisation of Indigenous people; they are portrayed as inherently democratic, as noble (virtually non-violent) warriors, and as passive victims who have been grossly neglected and abused by their government. This type of romanticisation or stereotyping of the other is understood by many to be simply another form of colonisation. Fanon calls it the 'final liquidation...the digestion of natives' (1963); Albert Memmi calls it 'identity appropriation' or the repackaging and promotion of native perspectives to facilitate their incorporation into the dominant culture

(2000); Said calls it 'orientalism,' whereby ideas about the East are invented for the Western imagination (1978).

The romanticisation of Indigenous people in Chiapas is most apparent in the photographs posted on various websites. Some illustrate written content and some are for sale. Most of the images are what Susan Sontag calls 'concerned' photography: images of smiling barefoot children in tattered clothing; women making tortillas or spooning out portions of beans to eager, thin, but smiling children; men and women stoically farming dry or steep or empty fields; ancient looking men and women with dignified, pensive expressions – images familiar to Western media consumers as depictions of the seriousness of the subject matter. Other photos illustrate the 'racier' side of Chiapas: noble masked EZLN guerillas with their guns and combat boots, marching down a dirt road, hanging around camp, peering through the holes in their ski masks, Marcos smoking his pipe looking contemplative and worn. Often these photographs serve to illustrate essays that are similarly intimate but depersonalising. The website *Life among Maya*,<sup>27</sup> for example, contains three short essays illustrated with photographs taken in Chiapas. To access the first essay, readers click on its title, 'City of Dreams', which is positioned next to a photograph of two little girls standing among weavings at a market, captioned simply 'Weaving in the Great Market'. The photograph is taken from above; the girls smile up at the camera with big eyes, wearing bright and ragged clothes. The text of the essay includes two more photographs, one of a brightly-dressed woman with a baby on her back, captioned 'A Mayan woman and her son stroll to market'. The second features a woman sitting among piles of clothing and blankets she is trying to sell. The essay begins:

San Christobal de las Casas.  
City of weavers.  
City of dreams.

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<sup>27</sup> Accessed [http://www.communinet.org/News\\_Journal/mayindex.html](http://www.communinet.org/News_Journal/mayindex.html)

A dream straight from the novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.  
A city of images spilling from the murals of Diego Rivera.  
A city above the clouds.  
City of colour.  
City of the Maya.  
Colonial Spain in the mountains of Chiapas, most Southern state of Mexico. Narrow cobblestone streets, shimmering at dawn, washed with bucket and tree branches in the way they have been cleaned for five centuries.  
Evenings glowing with the ribboned dresses of the Indigenous women as they come down from the mountains to squat by their braziers of red embers on the street corners around the zocalo, selling fresh, hot spicy roasted corn on the cob to passers by.

City of little girls, with their intricately woven wares, cornering the gringo tourists walking past the shops along the Real Guadeloupe or sitting on the park benches overlooking the great yellow and red cathedral. Swarming around them like a flock of purple finches...

At the other end of the square, a loud, pro-Zapatista rally is underway. The campesinos in their white hats earnestly listening to promises of land reform.

The other essays featured on this site similarly view Chiapas from the perspective of an outsider and romanticise the sights, smells, and especially the crafts of the quaint yet dignified 'other'. On several sites you can buy merchandise made by Indigenous peasants in Chiapas. One site, [weaverswork.com](http://weaverswork.com), sells weaving from Chiapas and explains the cultural significance of this craft:

Mayan women weave on backstrap looms similar to those used over 2,000 years ago. Many women weave most of their families clothing, as well as the cloth in which they wrap tortillas, the staff of life in Mayan communities. Weaving designs celebrate earth's sacredness and strive to maintain a balance between natural and supernatural sacred beings. Weavings speak eloquently of flowers, trees, animals, birds, people and sacred beings. A weaver's hand perpetuates the symbols of her culture. A woman's family proudly wears her weavings to show respect for their ancestral ways and solidarity with other members of their township.<sup>28</sup>

Although attempting to honour Indigenous traditions, descriptions like these portray them instead as quaint relics of a bygone era. Another website, *Chiapas: The People, the Land, the Struggle*,<sup>29</sup> created by Scott Sady features

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<sup>28</sup> Accessed June 2 1999.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.chiapaspeople.html> Accessed April 7 1998.

photographs he took while working as an AP photographer in Mexico. The site opens with an image of EZLN troops marching down a dirt road led by two soldiers on horseback. One of the troops is holding a Mexican flag. The site asks users to choose the category of photograph they want to view: Culture, Politics, Tourism, etc. Under culture there is a photograph of a man in a white hat looking down with his back turned to the camera. The caption reads:

A Tzotzil man stands facing the setting sun in his cornfield in the Chiapas highland community of San Andres Larrainzar. For the Mayans, their relationship with their Gods, and with the land, are very strong and necessary. There is a communal culture, and a way of life that has existed for thousands of years, relatively unchanged. But for how long can they hold out against the 21<sup>st</sup> century? For how long will they want to? Will sights like this be able to be seen by my children?

Here again we see the myth of an authentic and untouched culture on the brink of extinction and the romanticisation of, among other things, Mayan perceptions of God and land and their communal and democratic culture. The myth of the Indigenous as ultimate victim is also manifest in postings on various listservs that express support. In response to a post by someone introducing himself to the group as Blackfoot on ChiapasL, another group member posted:

I'm new to this group too, I hope we could all do something together, and Blackfoot, whatever support your people need, count me in, I believe that every human being deserves the right to practice their beliefs. Peace, justice and liberty to all.

Simply because he calls himself Blackfoot, this poster is presumed to be engaged in a struggle in support of his 'group' and is presumed to need the help of this poster and others like him.

This romanticisation is not separate from the discourse of the EZLN but rather fuelled by it. While it is orientalist, in the sense that it essentialises the other, it is also part of the international and largely Western-generated discourse that

has put the EZLN on the map. By grounding the movement in history and celebrating Mexico as a country with a large population of Indigenous people who have suffered more than 500 years of oppression, by demanding autonomy for these communities and a nationalism that accommodates diversity, and by characterising Indigenous communities in Chiapas as democratic, peaceful, victimised and pure, the EZLN are inviting the world to consider these Indigenous communities as representations of the issues the EZLN are fighting to resolve. Indeed, they are depending on this romanticisation to rally support. There is surprisingly little discussion online about the appropriation of the image and identity of the Indigenous as an icon for the struggle in Chiapas and related struggles throughout the world. Like Marcos' unapologetic identity as a non-Indian, the EZLN-sanctioned myth of Indigenous victims and noble warriors is used to encourage support for the Indigenous communities whose identities are being appropriated.

### **3. The Myth of the Neoliberal Beast**

Perhaps the most elaborate and far-reaching myth or theme of the Zapatista movement is the notion that neoliberalism, and those who support it, are the perpetrators of all corruption and injustice throughout the world. There are many sites dedicated almost solely to this topic, such as all the websites related to the various *encuentros* - gatherings that bring together anti-neoliberalist activists from all over the world - which have taken place in recent years. For example, the website *Initiatives against Neoliberalism* was created as a spin-off of first, the European continental *encuentro* held in Spring 1996 in Berlin and second, the intercontinental *encuentro* held in Chiapas at the end of July 1996. It contains a variety of documents focused on the analysis of and struggles against neoliberalism on the one hand, and the construction of a global network on the other.

Other websites touch on neoliberalism in the context of more specific subjects. *Mujeres Zapatistas*, for example, is focussed on the role of women in the Zapatista movement but includes material with a strong anti-neoliberal message. A critique of neoliberalism permeates almost all the Zapatista-related online discourse, even when seemingly unrelated: for example SIPAZ emphasises finding peaceful solutions to the conflict but has a decidedly anti-neoliberal undercurrent that is manifest in writings on the economic injustices that plague the people of Chiapas. Concern over the perceived consequences of neoliberalism in various locations unites disparate groups around the Zapatista cause. Since January 1994 the Zapatistas have played a key role in organising international meetings to provide an answer to the problems of neoliberalism. Participants at these conferences began to create global networks to challenge neoliberal policies and offer viable alternatives. Groups are not drawn together because they share an alternative economic theory, but rather to advocate a remedy for the victims that neoliberal economic practices leave in their wake (Cleaver 1998b).

In the realm of anti-neoliberalism activists, neoliberalism is often described as a specifically Latin American term. The introduction to *Zapatistas in Cyberspace* defines neoliberalism as 'the Latin American term for pro-market, pro-business, and anti-worker/peasant policies'. In a glossary of terms in the online book, *Zapatistas! Documents of the Mexican Revolution* (1995), neoliberalism is defined specifically in relation to Mexico as 'The political ideology of the PRI; a free-market, anti-state approach to economics and international relations, it encourages privatisation of state enterprise, reduction of state subsidies and fewer constraints on business' (Autonomedia 1994:342). The Zapatista related material online uses the term neoliberalism to refer to the economic injustices they are fighting against. The introduction of this term into everyday language by thousands of grassroots groups and

NGOs not only provides these groups with a common point of reference but also gives a complex concept a colloquial meaning.

An *encuentro* in Chiapas at the end of July 1996 and organised online, brought together over three thousand grassroots activists and intellectuals from forty two countries to discuss strategies for resisting the spread of neoliberalist policies on a global scale (Cleaver 1998a, Castells 1997, Womack 1999). Cleaver recalls, 'When I went to the first encounter I expected to go out and say 'neoliberalism is bad' but I didn't have to because people were already there to resist the WTO and IMF, and other institutions of global capitalism, not just particular capitalistic practices' (Cleaver 2000a). One of the results of the *encuentros* was the formation of Peoples Global Action, a decentralised network fighting neoliberalism. It is worth briefly discussing this network here as a significant example of the interesection between activists in the North and South.

## **Making the Road While Walking Together: People's Global Action**

People's Global Action (PGA) was formed in February, 1998 out of an idea originally floated at the Zapatista-organised 'Second Intercontinental Encounter against Neoliberalism and for Humanity' in Spain in 1997. The role of the PGA in the 'anti-globalisation' movement has, in the words of the group responsible for producing its fifth English-language bulletin, '[d]ue to its diffuse and fluid nature...remained obscure' (*PGA Bulletin*, 1998 p.4.). This is at least partly because, as one slogan within the same publication reads, 'You are the People's Global Action' (*ibid.*, p.27).

Despite this emphasis upon the radically decentralised nature of PGA, the contacts/resources listed note that there are a number of groups 'that have been key movers in the PGA'. Among other groups, this list includes Reclaim

the Streets (UK), the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Cacarica (Communities in Return to Carica, Self-determination, Life and Dignity!) of Colombia, the Karnataka State Farmers' Association and the National Alliance of People's Movements of India, Ya Basta! of Italy, and the Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform of Sri Lanka (ibid. pp.30-31.). In short, PGA comprises the same kind of groups that took part in the Zapatista-inspired *encuentros*: 'activists from diverse groups and movements around the world...environmentalists, workers, the unemployed, Indigenous peoples, trade unions, peasant groups, women's networks, the landless, students, peace activists and many more...'

Apart from the diversity of its (very loose) 'membership', the other important aspect of the PGA is that it places emphasis on direct action and autonomous struggle. It is a network that is hostile to 'mediation' of any sort. According to one writer, the formation of PGA meant that '[f]or the first time ever the world's grassroots movements were beginning to talk and share experiences without the mediation of the media or [NGOs]' (ibid.,p.7). These international events show that the movement, without a centralised organisation, is capable of successfully carrying out complex, locally- based and collaborative projects.

The articulation of anti-neoliberalism is closely related to alternative communication, since the corporate-owned media outlets are seen to be part of the neoliberalist system. A strong emphasis on freedom of the media and information is common throughout Zapatista-related discourse and is an essential component of the wider global justice movement. Many websites and texts are accompanied by an 'anti-copyright' statement giving anyone permission to reproduce and distribute the material. The topic of neoliberalism comes up often on Usenet groups in the context of serious debates as well as requests for information of expressions of solidarity. In 1996, one Chiapas95

poster suggested that neoliberalism was taking a more humane turn as evidenced by new 'assessment practices' such as 'weighted' gross domestic produce indices, in which the income of the lowest fifth of the population is given greater weight in the total income than is that of the upper three fifths, in order to assess whether basic needs are being met. A second poster responded:

Beware those who measure 'welfare' in dollar terms, no matter how they do it. Note the institutions you mention: 'the World Bank', the 'UNDP' and the 'US government'. These are the institutions that manage the world for business and against the rest of us. Developing a critique of Gross Domestic Product, of Gross National product, etc., must involve a refusal of the basic notion of measuring everything according to single measure-money. All such aggregation in monetary terms is nefarious, no matter how it is done. The wide diversity of human cultural values is destroyed in this process and the almighty dollar becomes the measure of everything.<sup>30</sup>

This discussion thread went on for days, covering a variety of topics such as unemployment, rampant consumption and Keynesian economics, and including both 'pro' and 'anti' neoliberal arguments.

The Internet not only provides a place to find information and to critique, but also has provided a tool for organising worldwide simultaneous actions against neoliberalism. Probably one of the first and best known examples of this in practice was the anti-capitalist protest that took place worldwide on June 18 (J18) 1999.

The internationally distributed 'call to action' for J18 describes it in the following terms:

Activists from diverse groups and movements around the world are discussing, networking and organising around the world for an international day of action aimed at the heart of the global economy: the financial centres, banking districts and multinational corporate power bases. Environmentalists, workers, the unemployed, Indigenous peoples, trade unionists, peasant groups, women's networks, the landless,

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<sup>30</sup> Accessed: <http://www.ecoutexas.edu/faculty/Cleaver/chiapas95.html>

students, peace activists and many more are working together in recognition of the global capitalist system, based on the exploitation of people and the planet for the profit of a few, is at the very root of our social and ecological troubles. The June 18<sup>th</sup> occupation and transformation of financial districts, simultaneously across the globe, will be a contribution to and practical example of the process of making connections and building alternatives to the present social order.<sup>31</sup>

In Australia, 'J18' may perhaps be best remembered for the fact that it was on this day that the then Federal Opposition Leader, Kim Beazley, was 'pied' at an APEC meeting in Melbourne.<sup>32</sup> Internationally, J18 involved several million people in a range of actions in approximately 40 countries, most notably in London where between 10 and 30,000 protestors assembled in 'the city' – the banking and financial heart of Europe; and in Koln (Cologne), Germany where a similar number of people gathered to protest a meeting of the G8.<sup>33</sup> Among other activities, activists in London distributed 30,000 copies of a spoof newspaper 'Evading Standards' (so named after the conservative *Evening Standard*) which boldly declared a 'Global Market Meltdown'; distributed thousands of different coloured masks used to disguise the identity

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<sup>31</sup> 'J18' was actually preceded on May 16 1998 by a related series of protests timed to coincide with the G8 Summit in Birmingham, England and the WTO's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. Solidarity demonstrations/parties also occurred in over 20 other countries, including a street party involving 3000 people in Sydney, Australia and another in Prague, Czech Republic involving a similar number of people. In the opinion of one journalist, the Prague action was seen by many in Prague as a reflection of '...the growing frustration of some young Czechs who feel that in its rush to embrace the free market economy, their society has lost sight of its humanist values'. This feeling of frustration may have well contributed to the militancy of anti-IMF/World Bank protests ('S26') over two years later: Nick Cobbing, *Squall*, no.106, Summer 1998, p.28. For further details see: 'A Brief History of Global Resistance', *The Big Issue*, no. 106, 28 August – 5 September 2000, pp. 19-20; *PGA Bulletin*.

<sup>32</sup> This assault – for which the alleged assailant was not, in the end, charged, prompted a columnist in the Melbourne *Herald Sun* to assert the pie-thrower's membership in the Biotic Baking Brigade – 'an international group of anti-capitalist anarchists, or something', a group, responsible for similar assaults on Microsoft's Bill Gates and economist Milton Friedman (Bob Hart, 'AAMI man's claim to fame', *Herald Sun*, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1999, p.20). Interviewed on radio, one member of the group, 'Agent Pecan', commented that 'Well really the only thing that you need to be a member of the [BBB] is a vision of a better world [and] a pie'. Agent Pecan was less lucky that the man who pied Beazley; he was fined \$70,000 and spent two months in jail after pie-ing the Mayor of San Francisco'. *It's the Left*, Jim, *op. cit.*...

<sup>33</sup> Countries listed as being the site of actions in the *PGA Bulletin* are: Argentina, Netherlands, Pakistan, Portugal, Scotland, Senegal, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Uruguay, United States, Wales and Zimbabwe. Other countries listed on the j18 website are: Austria, the Basque country, Catalonia, Columbia, Finland, Greece, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Sweden and Thailand.

of protestors;<sup>34</sup> engaged in a 'Critical Mass' <sup>35</sup> cycle ride in the morning and, later in the day, (temporarily) occupied the London International Financial Futures Exchange (LIFFE) building; forced the closure of Lloyd's, the Bank of England, the Stock Exchange and numerous other financial and banking institutions; and partly destroyed a McDonald's restaurant and a Mercedes car dealership.<sup>36</sup>

Elsewhere the actions undertaken by dissenting groups ranged from dumping dead wombats at Melbourne's Stock Exchange to protest the logging of Australia's forests; a march involving some 10,000 people and a blockade of Shell offices in Port Harcourt, Nigeria; a trade union rally in Pakistan, which featured the re-emergence of the leadership of the APFTUTU union federation also 'wearing masks and veils' after being (temporarily) forced underground by government repression; and a riot in Eugene, Oregon, USA by a group of anarchists later held responsible for the 'trashing' of downtown Seattle on November 30 later that year. <sup>37</sup>

J18 was in fact timed to coincide with the 1999 meeting of the G8 in a reprise of similar protests that occurred in May the previous year, a link which the internationally distributed 'call to action', translated into seven languages and distributed to over 2000 groups worldwide by post and email, makes very clear:

In 1998, protests, demonstrations and actions took place across the world in opposition to ...policies [designed to encourage the idea that 'the promotion of economic globalisation, "free" trade and corporate dominance is the only way'], many coordinated locally, through international networks. 1999 will see these coordinations increase'.

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<sup>34</sup> And so increased protestors' chances of engaging in various activities without being identified by the authorities; an unconscious tribute perhaps, to the Zapatistas' (in)famous use of balaclavas to disguise their identities from Mexican authorities.

<sup>35</sup> See Critical Mass (1998), What is Critical Mass? [Online] <http://www.critical-mass.org> [2000, November 6] for more.

<sup>36</sup> For these and other details of J18 in London see <http://www.j18.org>

<sup>37</sup> For a somewhat fanciful account of this group and its connection to N30, see RJ Smith, 'Chaos Theories' *Spin*, March 2000, pp. 112-118.

Naturally, both the links between the groups responsible for organising such events as J18, as well as the nature of the groups themselves, have been subject to speculation, ranging from the comical to the sinister.

The myth or theme of the 'neoliberal beast' unites disparate groups throughout the world against a perceived common enemy and sustains hope that with the defeat of, or alteration to, neoliberalist policies and practices, change will come. It rallies people newly empowered through their online involvement to voice their opposition to neoliberalism – a message that the Zapatista cause and the Internet seem to bolster.

While not winning the exclusive rights to represent themselves, the Zapatistas have tapped into an international global justice network that uses the Internet to both publicise the Zapatista cause and invite politically sympathetic activists to share the discourse and extend the reach of the movement. The Zapatista network of support and the material circulated online, which includes scholarly studies, information and mobilisation of protest and alternative media reports by international supporters and observers, contribute to the meaning of the movement, just as the Zapatistas do to the Northern global justice movement. Far from tainting the movement or making it less authentic, these outside influences firmly situate the Zapatista movement in the context of global politics. Most importantly, Marcos believes that international activists offer the people of Chiapas protection. He says:

For the communities [in Chiapas] you have to understand that the contact with 'international Zapatismo' represents especially a protection that allows them to resist. This protection is more effective than the EZLN, the civilian organisations or National Zapatismo, because in the logic of the Mexican neoliberalism, the international image is an enormous stake. There is a kind of tacit accord: people from abroad find here this point of support, this recall they need to regain their spirit and the communities get the support that allows them to survive.

(LeBot 1997)

This tacit agreement also involves constructing a discursive space where common issues can be articulated. Use of these terms on a global level not only calls attention to the struggle in Chiapas but also highlights struggles all over the world. As the Zapatistas show, the depiction of the global justice movement as 'white', 'Northern' and 'middle class' is false. In answering this criticism we will now turn to a very different struggle against the same enemy, the struggle against the Narmada dam in India.

## Chapter Four

### **Naming the Intolerable: Critiques of Development and Neoliberal Globalisation from the Everyday Experience of Indian Global Justice Activists**

**Why is this called development? These huge dams which will probably follow the path of 191 incomplete big dams out of the 246 begun during the last seven five year plans, why should Tribals sacrifice their land in vain? Who says that this is progress? That there is development crushing the poor here and there, depriving the already marginalised and destroying non-replaceable land, forests and even waters. All of this is meant to better the lot of the population? Who says this? Not the masses or the farmers, or even the villagers from the drought stricken areas of Kutch and Saurashtra or those who want a quick and manageable solution and not a promise of water supply years away. It is only the alliance of politicians and bureaucrats and the almighty landowners who call this progress and development. The people of Narmada don't want this kind of development. They want to be able to live their lives in peace, free to wander the hills and forests and free from this irrational exploitation in the name of progress.**

(Paktar, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

**Yes, we will feel disappointed, we will feel bad, but we have to fight, we cannot give up. This is injustice that we have to sacrifice our ways of life, our ancestral lands, just because the government wants us to. We are willing to continue fighting, because this fight is for truth and justice. Our voices have been muted for centuries but we are not willing to keep quiet now or ever. If we don't fight, how will the government and the others know that we care so deeply for our land, our river, our forests and our people?**

(Jaisinghbhai Tadvi, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

It is clear that global justice resistance is not solely situated in the North or undertaken largely by 'middle class white college students' (Amos 2000; Patel 2000) as such commentators frequently claim. A 'Third World' analysis of neoliberalism and development deserve significant attention in any examination of a global movement. This chapter extends the argument that the global justice movement is indeed a global movement comprised of voices from both the North and the South. Whilst often overlooked and rarely

receiving the same amount of media and scholarly attention, these Southern movements are part of the same phenomenon discussed in previous chapters and have much in common with their Northern-based counterparts. At the most general level, these common traits centre on narratives of development and neoliberal globalisation and critiques of flawed development models and the transnational structures of power that have fostered and maintained these crises, despite popular opposition. This convergence is no accident since transnational coalition building has facilitated information-sharing fora (such as the World Social Forum and the People's Global Action Convergences) in which common analytical frameworks and critical commentaries have been explored and elaborated. Indeed these issues represent the basic outline of this common analytical narrative and the structure of the discussion to follow.

Another characteristic also linking Northern and Southern activists is not just their critiques of neoliberal globalisation and development, but also ways of organizing and resisting. As already indicated in Chapter One, Susan George points out that many Southern-based activists have operated for some time on a decentralised and participatory model, similar to the one practised currently by Northern activists (1989:4). Differences obviously lie in the experience of neoliberal globalisation between Northern and Southern activists. Whereas the philosophy of the Northern-based global justice activists (explored in Chapter Two), centres on critiques of capitalism and corporate globalisation, the analysis from activists in the global South - in this case India, is based on a lived experience of neoliberal globalisation and development. Inappropriate development often becomes the focus of their critique and resistance.

Another notable difference observed by James Davis and Paul Rowley is that:

In the South demonstrations are usually directed at the immediate effects of a specific neoliberal policy, such as the privatisation of water in Bolivia or the raising of prices in Nigeria. In the North, demonstrations typically target the entire project of capitalist globalisation, and consequently appear to operate on a higher level of physical abstraction than the 'primal outbursts' of the South.

(2002:28)

The discussion below of the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA) movement in India hopes to undermine such a 'mind/body duality' (ibid.), by demonstrating the potential global unity of the movement. It indicates that simultaneously local and global movements all over the world that are rising from the ashes of inappropriate development and neoliberalism, many of which operated prior to the events of Seattle. As has been demonstrated at the World Social Forums, an international network does exist that 'insists on giving common meaning to the seemingly fragmented struggles' (ibid.) occurring throughout the world.

Nearly seven years before activists took to the streets in Washington DC to demand an end to the World Bank and the IMF, Indian activists, in one of the first of these kinds of victories, managed to pressure the World Bank to withdraw from the Sardar Sarovar dams project (Roy 1999:56). This indicates that, prior to Seattle, a new formation of politics was developing in the South, incorporating many of the strategies and critiques that are now used within the global justice movement. Like the global justice movement and movements such as the Zapatistas, the NBA and the fight against the Sardar Sarovar dam have come to represent far more than the fight for one river (Roy, 1999:9). It also has become a debate that has 'captured the popular imagination' (Roy, 1999:10) and, as Arundhanti Roy points out, 'that's what raised the stakes and changed the complexion of the battle' (ibid.). In ways similar to the labelling of Northern activists, the Narmada struggle has been portrayed as a 'war between modern, rational, progressive forces of 'development', a sort of neo-Luddite impulse, an irrational, emotional 'anti-

development' resistance fuelled by an arcadian, pre-industrial dream' (Roy,1999:11). However, like the Northern movement that preceded it, the battle against the damming of the Narmada began to raise doubts about an entire political system and the very nature of democracy, and likewise has been answered 'unambiguously and in bitter, brutal ways' (ibid.).

Before examining the strategies, goals and obstacles faced by a global movement against neoliberalism, it is necessary to explore the basic analytic discourses that global South activists use to orient to the social problems of neoliberalism and development. The movement, organisations and activists included here have articulated various narratives about development in their region which they have derived from original research, personal experience, anecdotal testimonies, academic studies and some official data. Due to limited regulatory and monitoring agencies in many locations, it has been incumbent upon activists and local organisations to construct their own research agendas, to listen to the local expertise of community residents and to enlist the help of outside writers and researchers when needed. Hence, much of the information available has been provided by activists and local movement organisations.

As an activist residing in India, the significance of the NBA had become apparent to me, and I was interested in its different features, its emergence, growth, successes, methods for mobilising support and strategies for achieving its goals. When I went to the Summit of the Americas protest in Quebec City in 2001 to undertake research for this thesis, I became aware of the striking links and similarities between Southern and Northern global justice movements, and how frequently they are overlooked when I had the opportunity again to meet several of the NBA activists and attend their workshops at the counter summit in Quebec. Part of the data for the chapter

is based on unpublished fieldnotes from this period and more recent contacts with members of the NBA.

This chapter argues that, like the Zapatistas, the critiques and counter-narratives of development and neoliberalism are embodied in the strategies of local communities and movements in the South. The *Narmada Bachao Andolan* has emerged in response to inappropriate development discourse and strategy, which they view as being destructive and intolerant of divergent ways of life. The NBA is part of a history of Southern-based global movements and one of the precursors of the current global justice movement defending the rights of local populations to the use and control of resources and resisting outside control over their economies, societies and lives. These movements challenge the centralising and extractive nature of dominant development discourse and aim to replace it with people-centred democratic and decentralised counter-discourses. In the past seventeen years of its struggle, the NBA has produced substantial documentation of the human and environmental damage that the dams project would invoke.

Backed by this documentation, the movement has launched a sustained critique of the development discourse. It has also provided alternatives, both to the Narmada Valley Project and to the development discourse. Despite having no services and few resources, the villagers and activists of the NBA display a strong moral economy in the struggle to protect not merely their land, but their legal rights and security as well as their collective identity in the face of foreign encroachments. The movement's resistance discourse focuses on the people, aims to fulfil their needs and wants, and celebrates their diverse production systems, knowledge systems and cultures. This counter-discourse represents the 'growing assertions of marginal populations for greater economic and political control over their lives' (Kothari 1995:422).

The case of the NBA is a lived case of various themes that many activists in the South have discussed and critiqued. The events and the resistance of the NBA to inappropriate development is merely one case of opposition to Western models of globalisation. What follows is an extended analysis by Indian activists of the everyday effects of living within these aspects of neoliberalism. The discourse that Indian activists use to understand power in the region, cohering loosely in a critique of neoliberalism, have found their extension in many diverse movements throughout the world. The contours and directions of these strategies allow for a more thorough discussion of discourse by Southern activists. We now turn to this critique and, to use Spivak's words, the 'affirmative deconstruction' (1988:16) activists have made of the many lived realities of neoliberalism and development.

### **'Koi Nahin Hatega, Bandh Nahin Benaga': We Will Drown but We Will Not Move**

When I spoke last to Narianbhai Tadvi, the *sarpanch*<sup>38</sup> (leader) of the former Manibeli village in Maharashtra India, he had been to prison fifteen times in the last seven years. A few times he was roused from his sleep and dragged to the police station; at other times he was picked up whilst demonstrating at demonstrations. As he sat outside his home overlooking the Narmada River and surrounding hills and forests, he talked about his 'crime':

*I grew up here by the side of this river. The Narmada is like a mother and the forests like a father. My people have lived in this village and on this land, for many generations. One day we heard on the radio that the government was going to build a dam on this river and our village would be submerged. No one consulted us on the building of the dam and no one asked us if we wanted to move. Government officials sent us a letter asking us to come and take compensation for our lands and fields. They undervalued our lands and fields and gave us only 50 percent of that compensation. They also gave us land in Parveta (Gujarat) which had dry*

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<sup>38</sup> In every Indian village, major decisions are taken by five men who are known as the *panchas* (*panch* means five and the *panchas* are five leaders) and they together form a *panchayat* (the formal village level government). The *sarpanch* is the individual who leads the *panchayat*. Traditionally the *panchas* were the village elders, but now in various regions of India, the *panchas* are democratically elected and make major decisions within the village.

*tree stumps and large boulders. When we complained the government officials and police started harassing us. The police would come to our house and take our wood. They would also beat us and take us to jail. When the water level started rising we vowed not to leave our house and land. The police asked us to leave and when we didn't, they pulled us out of our houses and arrested us. We have lost everything in this fight, but we won't give up. Twelve times I have been to jail. But we know this government does not want to listen to us. We are mere tribals and the government is treating us like monkeys. Since no one cares what happens to us, we have decided to stay here in our village and we will sacrifice our lives when the waters rise. We will not leave our homes, our village, and our river. We have grown by the side of the river and there we will remain. This is not suicide. The government wants to kill us and has drowned everything we owned. Ours is a Gandhian struggle and this is the only way we know how to end it. How long can we survive like this – pushed and treated like animals?*

(Narianbhai Tadvi, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes, 1995)

Narianbhai's words are echoed by others in Manibeli and other villages in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh that have and will be submerged by the Narmada river once it is dammed. For more than a decade now, the Narmada River and valley have been at the centre of a major controversy both within and outside India. On one side are arrayed the state governments of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra and the central government of India. They are seeking to tap the river's potential for water and power through a series of 3000 major and minor dams. These dams make up the world's largest river valley project – the Narmada Valley Project. Opposing these dams is a section of the population to be displaced by the project. This struggle to save the Narmada Valley is one of the most prominent social movements in India to have emerged in recent years.

Spearheaded by the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA) the movement has sought to bring to the attention of the Indian government, World Bank and foreign investors the plight of the people in the valley who are being brutally displaced from their homelands and for whom no adequate resettlement or rehabilitation is being provided. The NBA has also painstakingly identified the flaws in the rationale for the monstrous dam, which promises to displace

hundreds of thousands of people and submerge hundreds of kilometres of the richly forested valley, for very dubious and questionable 'benefits' to be realised by the people of Gujarat. The NBA's efforts to bring attention to the plight of the Narmada valley have proved successful, to the extent that the construction of large dams the world over has now come under serious question. The NBA members and activists, villagers of the Narmada Valley in three states - Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh - oppose the dam project for its high environmental and human costs. This anti-dam movement contends that the dams will destroy thousands of acres of fertile agricultural and forestland, displace over one million people and have other huge environmental and human costs.

For over seventeen years the movement has agitated for an end to the project and has suggested alternatives to it. These alternatives combine small-scale localised projects and a different strategy of land and water management to meet the water and power needs of the regions and the people. Initially, the movement tried to get better compensation and rehabilitation packages for the one million people to be displaced by Narmada. However, in 1988 the NBA found that the states could not rehabilitate such a huge section of the displaced people because they did not have adequate land or resources. Moreover, the dams would submerge hundreds of thousands of acres of agricultural and forest lands and have several ill-effects on the environment. After a careful study and analysis by Narmada villagers, environmentalists, activists and social workers, the NBA built its opposition to the Narmada project, calling it a symbol of destructive development. The NBA's slogan of '*Koi Nahin Hatega, Bandh Nahin Benaga*' (We will drown but we will not move), depicts its focus that the Indigenous groups and other villagers will not move to make way for this destruction (NBA 1995b:4).

The controversy over whether to dam or not has become essentially a controversy over development – its goals, processes, practices and strategies. To the Indian state managers and bureaucrats that support the NVP, the dam's project is a crucial strategy to usher in development which is equated with economic growth and prosperity (Mehta 1989; Raj 1995). To the anti-dam movement, the NVP is a symbol of 'destructive development' that creates immense damage to the country's population and its environment (NBA 1995b:2).

In the past two decades the same sentiments have been shared by others in various Indian regions that have formed social movements to protect their way of life, their livelihood and the environment. The *Narmada Bachao Andolan* is not an isolated movement but is part of a rich history of social movements in India. Other movements that have also generated international interest include the *Chipko Andolan* (Hugging the Trees Movement) and *Terri Bandh Virodi Sangarshan Simiti* (Stop the Tehri Dam Project) in Uttar Pradesh, the movement against the Baliapal and Bhogarai nuclear testing grounds in Orissa, the movement against the Kaiga nuclear plant in Karnataka, the campaign against the silent valley industrial project in Kerala, the struggle against the Koel Karo dam in Bihar, and the *Gramin Mahila Shramik Unnayam Samiti* (Rural Women's Advancement Society) formed to reclaim wasteland in Bankura District in Madhya Pradesh.

These social movements all have a common denominator: all have emerged in response to neoliberal forms of globalisation and development and are part of the same global justice movement that manifested itself on the streets of Seattle. Those negatively affected by it self-consciously view globalisation and development as destructive and intolerant of divergent ways of life. Each of these social movements struggles against a particular product of globalisation and are all united in fighting against the ill effects of the

mainstream development and for global justice. According to Vandana Shiva all of these movements challenge the 'dispossession of the local people of their rights, their resources and their knowledge' (1985:382).<sup>39</sup>

It is difficult to evaluate the impact of the NBA's alternatives. The worst possible scenario is that the struggle will be ongoing and only momentarily halt the project. The Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) has been already half completed. By the late 1990s the dam water had already submerged many villages. The Gujarat government has evicted all of the villagers in the low-lying areas and forced them into resettlement zones. Activists have joined the residents in remaining villages in yet another waiting game. The protests and demonstrations continue, forcing the country to acknowledge their existence and challenging the government to change its policies.

However, the NBA's struggle has not been without results. Even though a large focus of the NBA's struggle focuses upon having government institutions be accountable to existing laws and agreements, there is an emergent long-term vision based in a common critical discourse about the restructuring of development in the hemisphere. Given that the NVP represents an extension of neoliberal hegemony in India and beyond, it has become a focal point for many activists' critique of development. Indeed, because it has galvanised such a diversity of opposition movements throughout the world, it has had a formative influence on the discourse of activists as they resist a globalisation from above.

Through its struggle, the NBA has built up support both within India and abroad and has greatly influenced the emergence of recent global justice protests. In fact, the NBA's greatest success, whereby the World Bank

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<sup>39</sup> Vandana Shiva has become a figurehead of the global justice movement, speaking at the World Economic Forum and its alternatives. Shiva is often cited by Northern global justice activists.

withdrew its funding in 1993, has become inspirational to many activists now campaigning against the World Bank. The World Bank's experience with the NBA, a rural-based Third World social movement, led it to change its funding processes. As a result of the Narmada movement, the bank held an institutional review of nine of its projects in India and another eleven worldwide (Udall 1995:220).

Other developments in India as a result of the movement's efforts are as follows: the creation of an independent panel by the World Bank to investigate complaints and grievances by local communities opposed to World Bank funding; and the appointment of an independent panel by the Indian government to review the SSP leading to a crucial rethinking and redrafting of the government's rehabilitation policy. However, one of the most significant impacts of the NBA, not only within India but also evident on the streets of Seattle and Washington, is the linking of the entire debate over displacement with development and neoliberalism. In the past many movements have focused on the rights of people to better compensation and rehabilitation, but the NBA began the significant struggle for the rights of people not to be displaced by development.

The NBA's effort to create alliances with other social movements to muster a large and significant force against development and neoliberalism is another significant development. By linking up with other organisations and struggles, the NBA expresses common issues through a united front, which alliance members hope will act as a deterrent to any government contemplating a mega-development project. Alliance building is evident in the myriad of groups that take part in each global justice mobilisation and is what gives the movement its unique character. These coalitions each rooted in their own local struggle, are a powerful force when they link up with others opposing

neoliberalism, and could yet produce a dramatic change in dominant development discourse.

This counter-discourse of development represents a growing trend amongst social movements in the North and South. This approach does not seek development alternatives but what Rahnema (1986:43) calls 'alternatives TO development', alternatives to the entire paradigm of development. As discussed in Chapter Two, it rejects the processes and practices by which institutions and their experts select and label target populations, often from distant locations, and adopt macro-policies and mega-projects in order to solve these problems. In many ways, the global justice movement is a movement of resistance to development as a 'regime of representation' whereby the Third World and its societies are constructed and represented as undeveloped entities, and scrutinised, labelled and intervened upon in the name of modernity and development.

The NBA's resistance to development has much in common with its Northern counterparts. Both are a search for new and empowered identities through a reconstruction and promotion of local communities, cultures, knowledge and value systems. Both place 'the people' at the centre and promote community autonomy. They also celebrate diversity, allowing for communities to define their life projects in various ways and to form localised, pluralistic, participatory programs and movements to achieve these projects.

Through new communication technologies, increasingly transnational economics, global ecological processes and more mobile diasporas, social movements have begun to regard transnational political and cultural collaboration as paramount. Many concur with Paktar who argues that transnational organising is 'the only thing that makes sense', since it is the best leverage against transnational corporations and multilateral agencies and

since it replaces an imperial transnational culture with one that respects a radical global inclusiveness. Also, the sheer severity of global social/environmental problems necessitate coalitional resource-sharing and strategic assistance wherever possible.

Further, Paktar highlights how transnational coalition building gives local movements greater legitimacy as transnational actors, consequently ensuring a wider inclusiveness of strategies and political voices (Paktar, personal interview 2002). This strategy of international coalition building has been embraced to a significant degree in the campaign against the Free Trade Area of the Americas. A Zapatista inspired *consulta* or civil-society sponsored referendum on the FTAA is already underway with many countries planning to undergo this process (Rueben 2000). During the recent mass mobilisation against the FTAA in Quito, Ecuador, a number of examples of small-scale initiatives emerged which demonstrated the promise of cross-border cooperation, as Justin Rueben explains:

...a significant percentage of the funding for the mobilization itself came from global justice activists in North America and Europe. Many of these groups have embraced the notion that, in addition to protesting at home, they should also be supporting the struggles of communities on the "front lines" of corporate globalisation, and in Quito, they put their money where their mouth is. Many global justice activists also realised that vibrant and visible protests in Quito would help them by dispelling the persistent charge that opposing free trade is somehow imperialist, that people in poor countries are begging for free trade, and only selfish trade unionists, angry anarchists, and misguided students stand in the way.

Dozens of groups throughout the hemisphere organised solidarity demonstrations timed to coincide with the Quito protests, including a 10,000 strong student strike in Quebec. Meanwhile, in Quito, solidarity took shape in hundreds of daily interactions. Under the auspices of Indymedia Ecuador, alternative journalists from Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, Canada, the United States and Europe collaborated seamlessly to spread the word about the mobilization. International activists participated in dozens of FTAA workshops in rural communities throughout Ecuador, shocking locals with tales of resistance to U.S. imperialism inside the U.S. itself. In the process, poor farmers from the high Andes and Indigenous leaders from the Amazon were surprised to find how much they had in common with anarchists from New York and radical puppet makers from Oregon. And vice versa...The lesson was clear: we are stronger when we work across borders.

(Rueben 2000)

As Rueben continues to point out, this is not a new lesson. But the spread of supranational trade regimes like the FTAA, the rapid integration of financial markets, and the growing hegemony of transnational corporations have led many activists to the conclusion that effective international action strategies are more urgent than ever.

Hence, many of the large mobilisations we witness today have emerged from national and transnational networks that regard coalition-building as a necessary reflection of the global eco-system in which non-sustainable conditions anywhere produce ecological devastation everywhere. Many organisers of global justice protests have been part of a growing consensus that nationally-based endeavours for many organisations have become futile and obsolete. With an ostensibly practical agenda to address immediate crises of development, these movements are shaping a radically democratic transnational solidarity or network, extending citizenship to the hemispheric level and resisting the contradictions of neoliberalism.

Indian activists such as Paktar, Vandana Shiva and Arundhati Roy have worked extensively to broaden the networks of the Narmada movement into global networks by meeting with activists in nations affected by multilateral institutions and capital mobility, including the North and the South. In Paktar's words 'transnational corporations know no borders' and therefore activists should not either (Paktar, personal interview 2002). The substance of these collaborations is information sharing, opposition research and, recently, coalitional action strategies. For Paktar, it is only through these bonds of solidarity and education that significant leverage can be used against increasingly mobile and exploitative transnational corporations, by developing grassroots campaigns and people's movements. Thus, through the coalitional inter-movement ties forged by activists such as those in the NBA, a deepening consciousness of global citizenship has been developed,

as indicated by the broad array of organisations and people's movements represented at global justice mobilisations.

In this practice of coalition there is a unique openness towards solidarity that seeks difference in unity by strategically intermingling various political sectors - churches, workers, environmentalists and trade unions. This coalitional endeavour is one of 'give and take' and of actively interlocking agendas, and is a consequence of flexible contributions to collective goals of democracy and corporate accountability. Not only do these coalitions provide stronger resistance to common dilemmas, but many activists such as Paktar claim it is this solidarity that sustains individual commitment in the face of repression: 'If the government imprisons us, so be it. But you will be here struggling in unity. Truth will be defended. This is what supports us now and in the future' (Paktar, personal interview 2002).

One interesting characteristic of these coalitional exchanges is that they have been pursued by organisations composed of a higher proportion of people of colour, women, rank and file members of unions and environmental organisations. This is in clear contrast to the more established international unions and environmental groups, which have tended to limit transnational networking to the organisational strata of directors and officers who traditionally have been homogenous in their identity politics. Coalition-building thus possesses a greater degree of democratic participation through which rank and file members are involved in cross border education and agenda setting. In addition, the formation of transnational coalitions may include greater heterogeneity and have closer ties to feminist, anti-racist and youth politics. This widens the base of transnational coalitions now and in the future as it restructures and expands political agendas towards greater democratisation, decentralisation of power, anti-imperial critique, social movement unionism and environmental justice (Kidder and McGinn, 1995:2).

Whilst this shift toward a less hierarchical or centralised transnational movement organisation is argued by Kidder and McGinn to be not necessarily more democratic since a lack of authority and structure can, they argue, evade accountability (1995:3), the flexible inclusion of marginalised interests and grassroots activists is a step beyond the often imperial forms of transnationalism with which the left has been complicit.

The assertion that global justice mobilisations are the product of 'white middle class university students' negates the reality of transnational coalitional building which brings together people of different interests and identities, as they often begin to speak not merely across borders but across the boundaries of race, gender and class. As they do so, there is greater acclimation to the needs and concerns of others and an acceptance of difference, not as a point of conflict but as a point of educating and expanding concern.

Referencing these themes of strategic alliances and difference in unity Patkar stated in an address at Quebec: 'All you are part of the puzzle, in your workplace, company, union and community. Each of you is a piece in this puzzle. If one piece is missing it will not be complete. Each part is not only necessary, but also needed' (2001, fieldnotes). Each movement has a strategic role in the unfolding opposition to neoliberalism but none can survive, much less be effective, if all do not commit their knowledge and actions to struggle.

In the effort to build coalitions, the Narmada movement and many others have realised the strategic possibilities of dynamic and flexible networks, which can respond to immediate crises and develop long-term transnational agendas for democracy. In doing so they have participated in the construction of public spaces in which standards for our global economy may

be redefined and thereby create new roles for transnational citizens as guardians of basic human rights. This process has involved organisational linkages, strategic resource allocation and extensive information-sharing, but these would not be effective in even the most minimal way if coalition building did not also transform the identities and worldviews of its participants. Here, formerly nationalist, ideological or narrow issue-driven identities have expanded to embrace a diverse range of claims and analyses of the common dilemmas facing communities living in a neoliberal capitalist economy. Borrowing from the Narmada movement's unique ability to allow local and transnational action, coalition-building has often benefited from an intimate familiarity with both cultural hybridity and the violence of imperialism. Indeed, this setting has enabled many frustrations with global injustice and neo-imperialism to be focused towards cross-border collaboration and substantive solutions.

Unlike reactionary movements of religious fundamentalism, economic protectionism, or racial/ethnic nationalists that have responded to the crises of globalisation by essentialising local traditions and positing some external corruption (Castells and Kiselyova, 1996; Amin, 1997:101), global justice activists, from India to the streets of Seattle, have refused any absolutist identity politics and have worked towards democratic transnational action and coalitions. Movements like Narmada have paved the way for a global justice movement unique in its broad culture of solidarity, that has educated, politicised and unified a diversity of people who have often regarded themselves as objects fragmented by various political oppressions.

Through the local/global organising facilitated by movements such as the NBA and their support organisations, transnational opposition to corporate power is developing a broad range of strategies. The discussion of the NBA reveals the history and possibilities of grassroots movements against

neoliberalism and development. These efforts are only just starting to have an impact on activists in the North, and without doubt, will take many more years of coalition-building and networking to be able to place limits on, much less restructure the growth of neoliberal development. But the theories and practices of a diverse and growing anti-corporate movement are taking a definite shape, and the commitment of these activists to the realisation of a radically democratic process reveals the outlines of new alternatives. As they develop and the general political and economic crises of neoliberalism mount, these strategies may begin to have more and more common formative opposition to current economic structures, pressuring for sustainable environment conditions, non exploitative wages that are not dependent upon location, healthy/safe workplaces, gender equality, and greater mutual accountability between local and global political processes. But in advance of these larger goals, or those of transnational governance, the NBA and grassroots movements like it have begun the difficult process of building dialogue into consensus. As coalitional action agendas develop between activists in the North and South and a new internationalism takes shape, these local movements are shouldering much of the burden of mobilizing state, union and community resources in effective and complementary ways. Only through the oppositional identities and cultures of resistance resting in local communities can any global justice be realised.

In order to understand how the NBA has influenced and entered the imaginations of Northern activists, it is necessary to provide a short history of the movement.

### ***Hamara gaon mein bamara raj!* Our Rule in Our Villages!**

The NBA emerged in 1985 as a people's movement against the dam project on the river Narmada. Initially, between 1984 and 1988, organised opposition

to dams was directed towards the lack of resettlement and rehabilitation policy that would provide compensation and other benefits to those who would be displaced by the project. The government had not created any policy, nor had it informed residents of the valley regarding the imminent project or the effect it would have on them. Anil Patel, the leader of a Gujarat based non-government organisation, ARCH (Action Research in Community Development and Health), described the situation when members of his organisation first came to the Narmada valley to work among the people in 1980:

The tribals knew nothing about the project and their imminent displacement. The landowners were served land acquisition notices, but they knew little about their entitlements. They knew little about the place they were going to be resettled. The administrative set-up for the resettlement and rehabilitation was in a pitiable condition. The administration was informed by a smug belief that, as in all major irrigation schemes in Gujarat and elsewhere in India, the project affected people would just have to move, accepting whatever was offered to them. The indifference and casualness, no doubt, derived its inspiration and strength from the top echelons of the administration and political leadership. A minister in charge was quoted, saying that the government didn't have to move a finger to resettle the tribals, the tribals would leave their habitat like rats from their holes when the water would rise.

( Patel 1995:182)

Medha Paktar the NBA's most visible member and a well-known activist in the global justice movement faced the same situation when she visited the Narmada Valley in 1985. The people to be affected by the project had been informed by the state that the dam was going to be built and they would have to move. But when Paktar, a social worker, began working among the villages she found that people were against the project (Paktar, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995).

Paktar, Patel and other activists began searching for information on the state's rehabilitation and resettlement policy and found that the three states which would be dammed - Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh - had no plans for rehabilitation, nor records of the number of people to be

displaced. The activists conveyed their concerns over this lack of policy to the state governments, and to the World Bank after it decided to sanction loans for the dam project in 1985 (Patel 1995:182, Roy 1999:34). The Bank had agreed to give loans despite the fact that the project had yet to get clearance from India's Department of Environment and Forests (Udall 1995:201). In 1986 representatives from several villages in Maharashtra, along with activists such as Patel, formed the *Narmada Dharnagrast Samiti* (Committee for Narmada Affected People) and decided not to move or accept any rehabilitation package from the government until they had answers to their questions. The committee began to organise mass rallies of those to be affected by the building of the dams and canals in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. These rallies served to direct attention towards their demands for proper rehabilitation and to motivate the villagers. They also served as forums where issues were discussed and plans made for future actions (NBA 1995b: 1). In 1989, groups of people in the valley in the three states decided to strengthen their opposition to the dam by joining together to form an umbrella organisation. Thus, the *Narmada Ghati Nav Nirman Samiti* ('Committee for a New Life in the Narmada Valley) in Madhya Pradesh, The *Narmada Dharnagrast Samiti* ('Committee for Narmada Dam-Affected People) in Maharashtra, and the *Narmada Asargrasthra Samiti* (Committee for People Affected by the Narmada Dam) in Gujarat decided to form the NBA.

Apart from these groups, as an umbrella organisation the NBA also drew support from human rights groups, economists, environmentalists, academics and other individuals. The main features of the new organisation which make it particularly relevant to this study is that it is operated by Gandhian non-violent resistance techniques, grassroots membership and a bottom-up concept of planning and development. NBA member Sanghavi describes the focus of the movement:

*The message of the Narmada Bachao Andolan is different. We stand for a different perspective. We say the community has the right over resources and to make decisions. Everyone should have the opportunity for rational and equitable choice. Some people say that what the PAPs [project affected people] need is only good rehabilitation, so we should do that. But we say we should explain to people different choices. They have the ultimate right to make their choice, in this case, whether they move or stay.*

*We are saying that...don't start with an inverted choice, let the people make their own choices. The government sees the people as a mass and takes it for granted. The government says it is creating the dams project in public interest. We are challenging this notion of public interest, this is the interest of which public? And second, who should decide what is in this so-called public interest? Anything comes out of the collector's mouth and it's called public interest. Any clerk makes some streets and slums removed and it is called public interest. We are asking, who are you to decide what is in our interest?*

(Sanghavi, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

In order to allow the people in the valley to make their own choices and decide their own future, the NBA created a decentralised and democratic decision-making structure and process, which allowed all members, villagers and social workers and activists to be involved as equal partners in a movement to protect the lives and living conditions of the people in the valley. Together, these members decide what the movement should do and how it should achieve its objectives. These decisions are made in committees and in informal and formal meetings held in the valley and elsewhere. Every village involved in the movement has a committee, which includes all the inhabitants. In addition to these village level committees, members meet at informal and formal NBA meetings and at different demonstrations. In these committees and other forums there was constant discussion among all members, which kept the movement vibrant and allowed the decision-making process to be decentralised. According to Paktar at the time the eight full-time activists/community workers of the movement participated in the decision-making process and also acted as lobbyists and liaison between the villagers and the policy-makers in the three states at the centre (Paktar, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995).

Through discussions at various forums, NBA members decided to use non-violent protest techniques, which had Gandhian roots, to further their cause. One such method was *gaon bandhi* (closing the village), a non-violent, non-cooperation movement the NBA began at each village from 1988 onwards. When government officials, engineers for the dams and police would try to enter the village to survey the land, villagers would block their way and prevent them from entering. Sanghavi describes one encounter when a state-level minister visited one of the villages to be submerged:

*The minister came with his group, there were policemen everywhere. The minister approached the village and was stopped by a group of villagers. They asked him 'Minister sahib [Sir], so you have an appointment to come and see us in this village?' The Minister said no, he did not have an appointment. Then the villagers told him to come back with an appointment. They said, 'when we come to your city, to your office, to talk to you and tell you of our plight, and ask you for help and support, your secretary asks if we have an appointment to see you. You don't care that we have come from very far, travelled many days just to talk to you. So we don't care either. You cannot enter our village without our permission'.*

(Sanghavi, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

Other protest methods such as *gheraos* (surrounding an official or building), sit-ins, rallies, marches or fasts<sup>40</sup> have also resulted from discussion between members (NBA 1995b: 4). In 1991, members devised a different protest method expressed through a new slogan *Doobenge par hatenge nahin* (we will drown but we will not move). Through this slogan the movement made it clear that its members would drown in the rising waters rather than give up their home and land. The movement called it a 'program of *satyagraha*' (a fight for truth), issued not as a threat to the government but as a test of its

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<sup>40</sup> Some of the NBA's protest strategies include the Harsaid rally in Madhya Pradesh in 1989, the Jan Vikas Sangharsh Yatra (or the Long March) from Rajkot to Gujarat Ferkuwa at the Gujarat-Maharashtra border in 1990-1991, the Manibeli *satyagraha* in 1991, and the Narmada *satyagraha* of 1994. Members have fasted for days during one confrontation in 1991 they forced authorities to review the project and stop construction of the dams. During each of these fasts, rallies and demonstrations, people gathered together, explained their stance against the dams, exhorted others to join in their struggle and asked policy-makers to stop building the dam and review its costs and benefits (NBA 1995:3; Padmanabhan 1993:85; 1994:125). At their rallies and protests, members also showed their commitment to non violence, by gathering peacefully, walking with their hands tied behind their backs and refraining from violence, even when provoked by the police and supporters of the dams (Bharucha 1993:3; Menon 1993:1; Padte 1994:4).

own commitment (NBA 1995b:3). The commitment of activists to this program of *satyagraha* is expressed eloquently in this piece by Arundhati Roy:

On Christmas Day in 1990, six thousand men and women walked over one hundred kilometres, carrying their provisions and their bedding, accompanying a seven-member sacrificial squad that had resolved to lay down its lives for the river. They were stopped at Ferwuka on the Gujarat border by battalions of armed police and crowds of people from the city of Bardoa, many of whom were hired, some of whom perhaps genuinely believed that the Sardar Sarovar was 'Gujarat's life line'. It was a telling confrontation. Middle class urban India vs. a rural, predominantly Adivasi, army.<sup>41</sup> The marching people demanded they be allowed to cross the border and walk to the dam site. The police refused them passage. To stress their commitment to non-violence, each villager had his or her hands bound together. One by one, they defied the battalions of police. They were beaten, arrested and dragged into waiting trucks in which they were driven off and dumped some miles way, in the wilderness. They just walked back and began all over again.

(Roy 1999:47)

Like the Northern global justice movement that has followed them, these protest strategies are part of the movement's struggle to achieve its goals. They are also ways to try and raise awareness not just among policy-makers, but also among the public. The movement wants policy-makers and the Indian populace to hold dialogues with the people in the valley and review the dams project. In addition, the movement seeks a halt to the construction of the dams project while the Indian people as a whole decide on a course of further action:

Can any dialogue and reviews that go simultaneously with the attempt to push the project to the point of irreversibility, threatening the existence of people in the valley, be called just and justifiable? If flooding is the only thing that the rulers and the country have to offer, let us accept their verdict, is what the people have to say. Even if there is one single being that decides to stay in the valley and refuses to submit to such irrational exploitation, we will be with him till the last, is what activists and supporters pledge. No matter where the flooding takes place, whether this is monsoon or later, we will be there. And we know that as the movement spreads slowly but steadily, from the valley and the hills into the hearts of urban Indians, they will not just continue to watch us, but will join the struggle sooner or later. There is only one choice, that of life or death.

(Paktar 1991:23)

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<sup>41</sup> Adivasi is a term used for the Indigenous people of India.

## **A Discourse of *Vinashkari Vikas* or Destructive Development**

The experience of the Narmada Valley Project, its planning processes and its' harmful impact on the local Indigenous population and environment, has led the NBA movement to critique not only the project but the dominant development discourse that informs it. Activists argue that if the movement does not fight what it sees as the rapacious, extractive, centralising and authoritarian nature of the discourse it will continue to lead to the continued development of destructive projects.

NBA activists contend that their opposition to the development discourse is based on three of its main features. First, the discourse erodes and destroys the economies and societies of local populations, directly through projects and indirectly by negating the diversity of the local population's 'system of production and system of meaning' (Kothari 1995:442). This discourse also views the local population as objects of the development process and deprives them of any control over the decision-making in the planning process. Development problems are constructed and solutions configured by external agencies. The local populations and their knowledge systems are seen as primitive and unworthy of any role in the development process. Finally, the discourse gives primacy to the official 'expert' – the engineer, the economist, the consultant – whose knowledge is taken as the objective and scientific truth. This leads to unequal and hierarchical power relations between these experts and local populations. The mainstream development model constructs the policy-makers as subjects with the power and control to make decisions, whilst Indigenous and non-Indigenous villagers are objects, without the power to make the decisions affecting their lives.

This flawed development discourse, activists from the North and South argue, has led to widespread displacement and marginalisation of large sections of

the Indian populace. It has also led to a development planning approach and process that is insensitive to the diversity of human social systems, living conditions and cultures. This discourse, members claim, looks outward, accepting strategies adopted by Western countries to achieve the living standards of the west. The discourse is so embedded in the minds of Indian policy makers that any alternative is branded as a remnant of a primitive past. So when a movement emerges to speak for the people negatively affected by such development projects, projects that Nehru once described as 'the temples of modern India' (Roy 1999:15), policy-makers brand it as 'anti-national', a 'minority point of view' or 'deviancy'.

In the NBA case, activists were identified as *rakshasas* (demons) creating disturbances in the *yagna* (holy ceremony) to achieve development. The government claimed activists were 'throwing bones in the holy fire'<sup>42</sup> and Gujarat columnists constantly referred to the activists as 'mad dogs' (Sanghavi, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995). Coupled with this process is the practice of denigrating Indigenous systems and local populations. This discourse, NBA members argue does not see any merit in the subsistence needs-based production systems, knowledge systems and living conditions of the local populations. NBA members suggest that the undervaluing of Indigenous communities and knowledge is made possible by stereotypes of Indigenous people and living conditions that are prevalent within development discourse. Devrambhai, an Indigenous person, said that outsiders often think that 'tribals are poor, uneducated simpletons, akin to monkeys and apes' (Devrambhai, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995). Lyla Mehta, a researcher studying Indigenous societies, argues that 'we have already colonised the tribal in our minds. He wears a *langoti* (loincloth) and is primitive. She is half-naked, wild and stupid. A simple and sustainable

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<sup>42</sup> A *yagna* is a religious ceremony performed before a holy fire. It is held for any number of reasons. Only items considered auspicious and holy are used such as rice, milk, ghee, flowers and coconut. Hence throwing bones in the fire would be considered an extremely disrespectful and inappropriate act.

lifestyle is considered to be backward. Now we want to colonise their lands and forests' (Mehta, 1993a:5). Moreover, whilst policy elites undervalue Indigenous people and their societies, they also hold a dim view of most local groups at the grassroots. 'The most often heard remark in government circles is *logon ko kya aata hai* [what do the people know?]' (Sanghavi, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995).

It has therefore been comparatively easy for the government and project officials to move the Indigenous populations to make way for the dams because they are economically and politically powerless. 'Had it not been *adivasti* but lands of *shahus*, *patils* and *patels* [rich landowners], it would not be so easy to build a dam and move people (Sanghavi, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995).

The undervaluing of people at the grassroots and their lack of economic and political power make it possible for policy makers to exclude them from the planning and decision-making processes of all development projects. In the case of the Narmada Valley Project (NVP), from 1950 to 1979 the central and state governments discussed, debated and decided the entire project, including the location, numbers and design of the dams, distribution of power and water benefits, and setting up of institutions to initiate, manage and control the construction of the dams without any participation from the one million people who would be displaced by the dam.

*That is one of the major problems with the development model and planning process of modern India – it is democratic only in name. The entire planning process is centralised, authoritarian and undemocratic. Decisions are made at the top and imposed on people without any thought to whether they want it or not. Through this movement we want to change this process. We are not against the state; we do not want to break the country. All we want to do is remind the government that it has a responsibility to the people – towards social justice and the sustainable use of resources.*

(Paktar, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

According to the NBA, India's development discourse suffers from an 'inverted logic' whereby those who have detailed knowledge about the ecosystem in a particular area and who have lived and experienced life there are branded as 'primitive and backward' whilst others with remote knowledge are considered 'experts':

*Government officials listen to the 'experts' because they think that only the experts with scientific knowledge can resolve problems. It is almost unthinkable for them to accept that an adivasi, who knows every plant and animal by name and can tell you its uses, and can tell you how the different elements of land, water, and forests are connected, can provide answers.*

(Ramjibhai, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

This failure, according to the NBA, results from the fact that mainstream development models and planning processes do not take into account the real needs of people and communities, nor do they invite them to participate in the process. Instead they pauperise large sections of the populace by denying them control over their lives. As Sanghavi argues:

*Within development, there is always the problem of utilisation and sharing of resources. It is a question of vaapar aani vaatap – how to use resources and how to share them. What most tribal people face is the question of use and control. In the name of development, the government not only wrenches away their right to use resources, but also control over these resources.*

(Sanghavi, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

The NBA aims to restore this control to the Indigenous groups and communities at the grassroots, through a bottom-up people centred alternative to development that would struggle to end the development practices which displace, impoverish and marginalise people at the grassroots (NBA, 1995b: 13), as reflected in this statement by villagers of Manibeli village:

*Don't think we are people caught in the past, living a life that is almost unreal. We are happy here amongst our forests and close to our river. We want a good life for ourselves and our families, children and grandchildren. We want good land, water, houses, roads, schools, health*

*services, but we want them on our terms. The government says move and you will get all these facilities at the new place. We say we want it here in our village. We want control over our resources and our lives. We are not cattle to be driven away at the government's bidding, we are humans and we demand the right to make decisions and make the changes that will bring us benefits.*

(Statements from a group radio interview with villagers, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

## **An Alternative World to Development and Neoliberal Globalisation**

In the discourse of resistance explored by the NBA, the Narmada valley villagers and the state managers are constructed as two different types of subjects with particular identities and positions. By creating these subject identities and their positions, an alternative world is produced. In this world, as the one envisaged by global justice activists of the North (see chapters 2 and 3) particular principles, practices, processes, strategies and institutions are made possible. These strategies have been inspirational and to some extent appropriated by the Northern global justice movement. Echoing many of the sentiments expressed by Northern global justice activists, such as 'a new world is possible', the NBA's alternative world is one in which people are in control and can make choices about their lives, because the discourse constructs them as knowledgeable subjects with the power of agency.

Like their Northern counterparts Indian activists are engaged in a new reformation of politics. One of the central ways in which development and globalisation are challenged is through the renaming of villagers of the Narmada Valley as 'wise and intelligent' and 'knowledgeable'. They 'can inform you of everything there is to know about the land, the forests, the trees, the rivers in their areas'. This practice indicates subjects who have intimate knowledge about their community, its society, economy, culture, ecosystem and resources. They, and not the outsiders, are the experts. Through their daily-lived experience within their community they know what their needs are

and how to fulfil them. Moreover, since in most Indian villages families tend to live on their ancestral lands for generations, knowledge about the land and the community is passed on from generation to generation, and this knowledge represents the collective wisdom of the community. It is generated after a long process of learning and gives to the people the ability to survive. As one villager said:

*Why does the government think we do not know anything? We know which crops are to be grown in which season and in which soil. We know the different varieties of fish that are in the river. We know all the trees and herbs in our forest. We know the animals and the birds that roam around us, even the insects. Does the government know all this?*

(Statements made by villagers during a group interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

These and other kinds of knowledge possessed by the Narmada valley villagers are not valued within the discourse of development, which constitutes their knowledge as archaic and traditional, with no place in building a modern, industrial economy. But in local contexts this knowledge is regarded as 'life-giving' wisdom which allows local communities to survive and flourish. As Bamroo argues:

In their context they [Narmada valley villagers] are better educated than you or I. Sure they do not understand much of the gadgetry of our age. Neither do we. They know the palliative properties of woods, oils, barks, leaves, stones and minerals. It is not a secret stored in a floppy to access at some future date. They are fused with the elements. They are not savages and they are noble. The people of Manibeli build their own homes, bake their own terracotta roof tiles and grain bins, make cloth, grow crops, fashion vessels out of wood and mud, make wine, good percussion music and decorate their homes with murals. They even manage without the ubiquitous safety match, so wasteful of timber. They make fire by striking flint against the floss of a silk cotton tree.

(Bamroo 1992:4)

## **People as Rational Subjects**

Other attributes and capabilities linked to the Narmada valley villagers constitute the villagers as subjects who have a conservative and careful

attitude towards change. Villagers and activists consider themselves cautious, rational and willing to accept change only 'when it is beneficial and useful'. Within mainstream development this conservative attitude to change is interpreted as the stubborn acts of recalcitrant children. In the case of the Narmada Valley Project, opposition by the villagers to the project and to their resettlement is constituted as illogical, is caused by laziness, and an inability to recognise the merits of the project and the prospect of better living conditions (Government of Gujarat 1995:37). In contrast, villagers argue that they exhibit conservative attitudes to change when they are faced with unfamiliar processes and change over which they have no control. This is one aspect of the way they protect themselves and their communities from different kinds of innovations and interventions. As villager Noorjibhai argued:

*How can we accept everything new as good? The government says they will do this for us and do that for us. But there is no guarantee that the government will keep its word. And why should we listen to the government's words? We can figure out ourselves whether this project is good for us or not.*

(Noorjibhai, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

Villagers claim that they examine these changes carefully, weigh the costs and benefits to those changes in their lives and accept them only when they are perceived to be useful. Hence, according to the NBA, the resistance of Narmada valley villagers to the NVP should not be constituted as illegal. Rather, it should be understood as a rational response, produced by a weighing of the costs and benefits that showed the project to be extremely harmful to societies and their interests. As one NBA member said: 'We tried to see how the dams would help us, but it will not. We have to leave our ancestral lands, our families, our kin and kith to live in a tin shack on a resettlement site. Why should we be forced to do that?' (Narainbhai Tadvi, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995).

## 'The Narmada is our Mother': People as Environmental Protectors

This description is closely connected to practices that constitute the villagers as subjects who are 'deeply attached to their lands' and 'protective of their environment'. The Narmada valley villagers view their environment and natural resources as life-givers and as important parts of their society and culture. Humans and nature are seen as being intimately connected to each other such that the welfare of communities depends on the surrounding ecosystem. Since ninety five percent of families in the Narmada valley villages depend on agricultural land for their subsistence, they are extremely attached to their land (Government of Gujarat, 1995:41). Moreover, since these lands are passed on from father to son through several generations, the lands are viewed as links to their ancestors. As Bahva Mahalia writes in a letter to the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh:

To you officials and people of the town, our land looks hilly and inhospitable, but we are very satisfied with living in this area on the bank of the Narmada with our lands and forests. We have lived here for generations. On this land did our ancestors clear the forest, worship gods, improve the soil, domesticate animals and settle villages. It is that very land that we till now...our agriculture prospers here. We earn by tilling the earth. Even with only the rains we live by what we grow.

(Mahalia 1994:2)

The Narmada valley villagers are also attached to the surrounding forests of the Satpura and Vindhya ranges, and contend that life away from the forests and river is problematic:

*We had so much there [in our former village]. We built our houses from the wood from the forest. In the hills we got fodder for our animals...We used to eat herbs and leaves from the forest if we did not have a good harvest. It used to be so nice to wander in the cool shade of the trees. Here [resettlement site] it gets so hot. There are few trees and no hills. No cool breeze from the river. We used to love to swim and fish in the river...Here we have to pay for everything.*

(Shivanta, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995)

The forests and river are also part of local culture and religion. They figure in communities' myths and tales as god-like figures who can wreak havoc on the communities if they are not propitiated. The Narmada River is revered as a goddess both by Indigenous people, especially the Bhils, and by the Hindus. Jugga Bhil, for example, told me that 'Narmada is our mother. We [the Bhils] are created from her. We think of her water as holy, she purifies our sins' (Personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995).

The NBA's counter-discourse recognises these deep links between the villagers and their environment, and thus constitutes villagers as subjects with intimate connections to the environment. These connections form the basis of the NBA's demand that villagers should have primary control over natural resources within the region. In contrast, within the dominant discourse of development, these links are negated. The state is constituted as the rightful owner of the natural resources, and the resources themselves are constituted as assets to be tapped to create economic growth and material prosperity.

## **People Living a Simple and Sustainable Life**

In the dominant development discourse critiqued by activists, the Narmada valley villagers are constructed as 'poor' and 'backward' subjects in need of modern facilities. But in the alternative discourse offered by activists, they are constituted as subjects with a 'sustainable lifestyle', 'living a life that is a beacon of good taste and simplicity'. NBA members contend that Indigenous and non-Indigenous villagers in the Narmada valley choose to live a life that is 'uncluttered with material possessions'. They live in austerity and frugality not because they are poor, but because they have no need for more than that which satisfies their basic needs. Most Indigenous societies are subsistence, needs-based societies. They produce and consume enough just to satisfy their basic needs. Moreover they produce everything they need

through their own efforts (Dhuru, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995).

The above examples are ways that the NBA challenges development, through constituting the Narmada villagers as a particular kind of subject – a subject that is knowledgeable about the community and its needs and considers the community as paramount, accepts changes only when it benefits the community, views the environment as intrinsically linked to human life, and lives in simple and sustainable conditions. The coherence between the descriptions indicates an alternative discourse that sees people as knowledgeable and community based subjects. In contrast, the characterisation of the promoters of this neoliberal development – referred to by Indian activists as state managers: policy-makers, World Bank bureaucrats, officials and police - view the villagers as objects, and therefore constitute a very different kind of subject.

In sum, the activists voices expressed above amount to a wealth of 'damning' evidence against, and an indicting critique of, the many contradictions of neoliberal development in India. Clearly, the wealth and prosperity of development promised by the government of India has not been realised by the villagers in the Narmada region. Despite billions of dollars in investment in large development projects over the last few decades, the extensive growth of the region has not resulted in improved living standards for the majority, democratic governance, or a healthy and thriving environment. Instead, these have been mortgaged for a 'deferred development' that, for most, appears ever more distant and unattainable without significant restructuring. Despite different domains of interest and divergent tactics of the activists mentioned in this chapter, it is clear that there is widespread agreement about these basic dilemmas and their most general causes. But in contrast to their Northern counterparts, these activists

focus their critiques on political autocracy and corruption, predatory and unaccountable corporate profiteering, and anti-democratic violations of human rights and dignity. Thus, by way of conclusion to this examination of Southern activists' narratives of neoliberalism and its crises, it is necessary to discuss briefly the alternatives offered by the NBA.

## **People Centred Alternatives**

The NBA's alternative to development starts with the people at the level of their communities', and asks them to identify their needs and problems. Activists contend that the NBA itself is a result of this approach as it emerged in response to people's specific local needs. Threatened with displacement by the NVP, villagers in the Narmada valley expressed their desire to protect their traditional ways of life. To them 'the dams project was not the harbinger of development but a destroyer of our communities and our ways' (Shankarbai, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995). They began to question the necessity of the project and protest against their displacement. Their voices were joined by social activists such as Medha Paktar, and together they began the movement against the dams' project.

Paktar's association with the movement began in 1985 when she went to the villages, talked to the people and heard their concerns. Based on her experience, she contends that outsiders such as community workers, researchers and activists can be truly involved in a struggle only after listening to the people and understanding their concerns. 'Who else can express the wishes and desires of the people better than the people?' she asks. 'Who else can feel the pain of being separated from their land, environment, family and friends?' (Personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995).

The practice of listening to and learning from the people is supported by theorists such as Escobar (1989, 1995), Esteva (1985, 1991), Fals-Borda (1985), Rahnema (1986, 1988, 1990), Shiva (1985, 1988, 1991) and Verhelst (1992), and more recently the Zapatistas. Rahnema (1986) contends that the first step to 'finding alternatives to development' (43) should be to listen to the people and join their grassroots movements and networks. The movement assumes that when one listens to the people, one recognises that each community is different and may have different needs. These differences reflect the diversity of local social conditions, cultures, beliefs and knowledge systems.

What this means, crucially, is that development can mean different things to different communities. For instance, to the villagers of Kothi in Gujarat development means strong houses, *pucca* (concrete) roads, a modern education for their children, a television and a vehicle (personal interviews with villagers, unpublished fieldnotes 1995). But to the villagers of Manibeli in Maharashtra, it means a continuance of traditional living systems, society and culture, subsistence needs- based farming on the banks of the Narmada, using resources from the surrounding forests and living with close-knit, extended families amidst members of their own community (personal interviews with villagers from Manibeli, Maharashtra, November 20-22 1995). The differences in these two views of development reflect the differences in local histories and situations of the two communities.

Similar to the strategies employed by the Zapatistas, the NBA's resistance discourse argues that for all people to identify collectively their communities' needs the planning processes should be democratic and decentralised. The importance of people's participation is emphasised within the alternative discourse and is made possible because their knowledge, techniques and capacity for organisation and innovation are recognised and form the basis of their diverse life projects.

The NBA acknowledges that it may be harder in some communities than others to involve all groups in the decision-making process. NBA members struggled with this problem in their own quest to unite people from three different states and a myriad of communities to fight for their common goals against the NVP. The resolution they arrived at involved 'creating a decision making structure that involved all groups and allowed them to decide what actions the movement should take. The structure came from our discussions and it helped everyone to be involved in every facet of the movement' (Sanghvi, personal interview, unpublished fieldnotes 1995). To decentralise and democratise this decision-making process, the movement has developed a local infrastructure. Every village to be submerged by the dam waters has one committee which includes all adult villagers. From this committee two villagers participate in a district level committee which meets once a fortnight. A third representative from each village meets with representatives from other villages every two weeks. There are also constant discussions between all members at informal meetings, protests and programs. At all of these forums people are invited to share their opinions about the movement's actions and future. This keeps the movement vibrant and allows it to remain decentralised.

Like the Zapatistas, and the spokescouncil model used in the North, decisions are made after every person and village has contributed their point of view (NBA 1995b: 3). Members argue that this widespread participation is important to the movement because 'it brings a remarkable diversity of opinion to the Andolan' (Paktar, 1995:1664). For instance, in 1990 when the movement had to decide how to respond to a government decision to begin re-submergence of the villages in the valley, 'countless meetings' (Paktar 1995:164) were convened formally and informally:

Some people suggested that we should commence legal action, others suggested we should lobby politicians, both state legislators and parliamentarians, and still others felt that we really must close down the

complete valley, come what may, violently, or non violently. Some others suggested that we should not close down the dialogues and that we must continue talking to the officials and only this could bring resolution. A few would also say that there was too much focus on the World Bank.

(Paktar 1995: 163)

After much discussion, the movement decided on a village level, non-cooperation program combined with mass actions on the street with the full force of villagers. Village representatives returned to their villagers to mobilise others. Community workers and activists took the message back from the villages into urban centres for further discussion of logistics, lobbied governments and legislators and organised mass actions (Paktar 1995:164). The program ended successfully when the movement was assured by the state and central governments that the submergence of villages would be stopped and the project reviewed.

The NBA is also participatory and democratic in that it involves two groups which have been the weakest and most oppressed in Indian society – Indigenous groups and women. The Indigenous groups have been involved with the movement since its genesis. In fact, it was their questions and concerns that led to the emergence of the movement initially. Because of their involvement, Dharmadhikary argues that 'the NBA is *their* movement' (personal interview, November 17 1995, Baroda, Gujarat). Many claim that it is Indigenous groups and women who are the majority of the NBA's membership and are the most vital force of the movement. Their involvement is crucial to the movement because when weak and oppressed groups are excluded, the movement argues, it makes a 'mockery of the democracy, justice and fairness in the development process' (Paktar, speech,<sup>43</sup> September 21 1995, Bombay, India).

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<sup>43</sup> Speech at the conference on 'Development, Displacement and Rehabilitation' jointly organised by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), September 20-22 1995, Bombay.

## **Reviving Indigenous Knowledge**

Like the Zapatistas, the NBA's counter-discourse of resistance rests on the belief that, when a bottom-up approach to decision-making is followed, it leads to programs that are different from development programs. As discussed previously in the chapter, within dominant development discourse state managers set the goals and targets and each community is expected to follow the same goals. In contrast, the NBA contends that different communities identify needs and goals which are tied to their local context, histories and conditions and hence are unique. This calls for solutions, programs and strategies to also be localised.

The communities' Indigenous knowledge has been used to assist in creating localised, participatory programs. The importance of these Indigenous techniques has been recognised by the NBA, theorists and activists. Fals-Borda (1985), for example, argues that grassroots movements represent a 'rediscovering of traditional knowledge' (66). Social movements such as the NBA are a response by the common people who want to have their knowledge systematised, objectified by their own collectivities and advanced consciously by their own sages, while being aware of other knowledge so that their wisdom is seen and respected as scientific as any other' (Fals-Borda 1985:66). In fact, this Indigenous knowledge is at the 'heart of subsistence societies' (Rahnema 1998:119) and has assisted them in surviving for centuries. Shiva (1985) argues similarly that such 'Indigenous knowledge and techniques are 'alternative sciences' and represent people's right to counter-expertise' (65). Since they have helped communities to live and survive for centuries, 'decision-makers need to develop a respect for these other sciences and these other scientists. In this recognition of their insights, wisdom and time tested experience lies the only hope for growth of

alternative sciences that ensure survival instead of threatening it' (Shiva, 1985:65).

As important as the democratisation of the processes of decision-making, the task of implementation is made easier when alternative programs are based on Indigenous knowledge. These programs often utilise resources that are readily available in the local environment and depend on local people's participation. Thus, a program that aims to improve agricultural yields can do so more easily if it utilises Indigenous seed varieties appropriate for local soil conditions and available within the community. The task of implementing such a program is harder, however, when it requires resources or assistance from outside the community. This outside assistance can create external dependence and open the community to outside pressures. This can be prevented, according to the NBA, if assistance is provided by groups and individuals that support the right of all communities to decide their own development and not impose external goals.

To create a network of assistance, the NBA began a movement to bring together grassroots communities in India and elsewhere called the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), which consists of nearly 400 social movements and groups (NBA 1995a: 16). The aim of the network is to allow a free flow of information and assistance between communities to help them solve their problems locally. The network fosters a sense that no grassroots movement struggles alone; there are others who stand by it. Furthermore, such free flow of information and assistance will, it is thought, also diffuse the discourse of people-centred alternatives to other communities and have an impact on the entire political system.

Any movement for alternative development cannot succeed if it remains limited to its own struggle. Only by spreading its message to the rest of the country and by uniting with other movements that have different issues but are working in the same direction, can it have an impact on today's political system.

(NBA 1995a: 14)

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Unlike their Northern counterparts Indian activists focus their critiques on inappropriate development, political autocracy and corruption, predatory and unaccountable corporate profiteering and anti-democratic violations of human rights and dignity. Thus, by way of conclusion to this examination of Southern activists' narratives of neoliberal development and its crises, it is necessary to discuss how these counter-narratives theorise the political-economic projects of neoliberalism.

The activists cited in this chapter express radically democratic ethics of strategising and mobilisation in which the participation of villagers and Indigenous people is regarded as a primary condition for movement success. Much like the Zapatistas, their model is one of grassroots democracy in which communities in need use organisations for their own ends, rather than instrumental models in which organisers use communities to serve outside interests. Indeed, the strategic goal of a democratic public space is identical to the means of popular participation. Hence there is a common critique of more bureaucratic, professionalised and hierarchical government and social movement models, not only as an unprincipled evasion of democratic process, but also as strategically contradictory and ineffective since they do not attend to local knowledge. These 'new social movement' tendencies suggest a partial answer to some of the questions raised early in this thesis regarding whether or not the global justice movement emulates new or old social movement forms.

In contrast to global justice activists in the North, one frequent point for critiques of neoliberalism in India is that of the government, whether it be federal, state or local. This is so because many movement participants

become politicised, active and critical of development agendas through their confrontations with government officials, especially over the responsibilities government has to maintain human rights, environmental health and a decent standard of living for its people. This is particularly politicising for those who recognise the obvious contradictions between, on the one hand, cultures that historically have favoured protectionism and independence from foreign influence and, on the other, the alliances the government has forged with foreign investors and institutions, despite the consequent immiseration of its own citizens.

The significance of this is not lost on activists who, at the geographic 'ground zero' of neoliberalism, recognise that the state, however disempowered it may be remains at least a potential apparatus of democratic governance, balanced development and wealth distribution. Beyond mere appeals to corporate good will or public service, Indian activists have argued that the state is a significant force in the transition to hemispheric or global processes of democratic participation, sustainability and equitable development. Thus, discussions of public participation, human rights and basic living conditions are oriented towards a broader agenda of democratisation, in which various levels of government represent alternative development agendas within transnational economic policy. This focus on state institutions is qualified by an awareness of the many transnational economic processes that supersede national or local government, and thus necessitate other targets of social change, such as global corporations and an international community of states and NGOs. In theorising these political and economic forces, many have resorted to an anti-imperial discourse that has affinities with many post-colonial discussions of global power.

Clearly, the mutually reinforcing problems of economic dependency, uneven development, and a repressive state remain as central dilemmas given

bureaucratic fears of foreign divestment. These government fears of capital flight from Indian markets have not been unwarranted in the light of withdrawals of speculative capital that followed the well-known EZLN uprising in Mexico, and the February 1995 memo of Chase Manhattan Bank putting the Mexican government on notice: 'While Chiapas, in our opinion, does not pose a fundamental threat to Mexican political stability, it is perceived to be so by many in the investment community. The government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and security policy' (Hawkes 1996: 189; Oppenheimer 1996: 224). Similarly within India the formative influence of foreign capital has conspired with authoritarian traditions to create grave human rights dilemmas and no enforcement of law.

The written works of many activists have raised specific concerns that the unregulated development of projects such as the NVP not only makes multilateral organisations less accountable to national or local populations but places downward pressure on labour and environmental standards globally. As if the tragedies currently faced by Indian citizens are not enough to raise global concerns, inappropriate development projects in India ultimately exemplify how, under capitalism, poor economic conditions anywhere can create dismal living conditions everywhere (Sklair 1989:18). This is not unlike the fears expressed by many Northern activists who have argued, like Brecher and Costello, that the globe faces an immanent 'race to the bottom' or 'downward levelling' at the hands of free trade (1994:4).

It is not only activists who recognise that few of the predicted benefits of neoliberal development have been realised, especially for the majority of the poor. Instead of being the basis for spill-over effects in the formation of rural infrastructure and technological advancements, World bank-funded projects have created a relatively isolated enclave economy for the profitability of

transnational capital but not for the general economic welfare or political economy of the Indian people (Barry, Browne and Sims 1995:87). This form of development may bring a rise in Gross Domestic Product, but has failed to alleviate poverty even slightly. Therefore, even though the NBA is mainly focused upon having government and multilateral institutions made accountable to existing laws and agreements, there is an emergent long-term vision based in a common critical discourse about the continuation of development and investment regimes in the hemisphere. Given that the NVP represents an extension of neoliberal hegemony in India and beyond, it has become a focal point for the movement's critique of development. Because the project galvanised such a diversity of opposition movements throughout the world it has had a formative influence on the discourse that activists articulate as they resist a globalisation from above.

Activists recognise that despite the promises and prophecies issued by the World Bank and the Indian government for better living conditions and increased environmental standards, and despite the economic rhetoric of mutual benefit and generalised prosperity, this is pure ideological obfuscation and economic fantasy. In a 1990s' global version of 'trickle down' economics, Narmada and its accompanying battery of politics have yielded nothing but contradictions.

Whilst the above points are echoed by activists throughout the South, a few take them to their logical conclusion by suggesting that the current situation may be haunted by the spectre of popular revolution:

*The way I see it, on a personal level, is that history has a way of coming around. You saw the same things right before independence when you had the company stores, and the imperial corporations. Who knows, in some cases it has already led to revolution, like in Chiapas and other places where people are not going to stick around and see their land privatised...taken away from farmers and citizens and given to banks, oil and heavy industry.*

(Paktar, personal interview 2000)

This comment seems to point to 'imperialism' or (neo) colonialism as a means of describing the absurdity of neoliberal development in this region, where repressive states and exploitative foreign capital interact to make debilitating poverty, stifling repression and displacement everyday experiences. Many activists such as Paktar and Shiva therefore regard the term 'imperialism' not as an atavistic label of premodern colonialism but as a term equally applicable, if modified, to the current era of transnational corporate dominance and its client governments. As Williams and Chrisman argue, 'The political and economic culture of the twentieth century represents the ironic coincidence of the dismantling of colonialism and the continued globalising spread of imperialism' (Paktar 1994:1).

The region is a site of difference on several dimensions of power-gender, class, environment and nationality, which have been mobilised by transnational capital and state bureaucracies to shape conditions of extreme profitability, exploitation, and displacement and, with them, a global polarisation of wealth. The force with which this has been secured has been trenchant, severely constraining political opportunities for significant change. Escobar's commentary on the hegemony of modernisation discourse is relevant to neoliberalism: 'Reality in sum, has been colonised by development discourse, and those who were dissatisfied with the state of affairs had to struggle for bits and pieces of freedom within it, in the hope that in the process a different reality could be constructed' (1995:5). Clearly, these words reveal a common indictment of corporate-led globalisation and state complicity in the destruction of the Indian political economy, culture and environment. In confronting these anti-democratic and resolute structures of authority, they articulate sentiments of despair, cynicism, and alienation – products of a war-weary scepticism of immediate change and an acknowledgement of the existential absurdity of such immiserated conditions.

Yet, there are cracks in the edifice of neoliberalism. Paktar's hopeful predictions regarding revolutionary change in India, Narainbhai Tadvi's resolute proclamation not to 'leave our homes, our village, our river' and the solidarity displayed by many villagers who sought accountability from the World Bank regarding dam - building, these are only three cases that exemplify an emergent base of opposition to an encroaching neoliberal imperialism. Coming full circle to reconsider the Narmada dam and the people who live along it, it is clear that, if many activists possess Gramsci's 'pessimism of the intellect', they also share his 'optimism of the will' (1991:175) – a hope and a faith in the abilities of the poor to empower themselves and resist becoming mere objects of neoliberal experiments.

Yet, if we are to thoroughly appreciate the strides that global justice activists have made towards a decentralisation of wealth and power, it is necessary to explore one last dominant mainstream view of the movement, namely that it has been eclipsed by the events of September 11 2001.

## Chapter Five

### Premature Obituaries: The Global Justice Movement After September 11

**Part of the deep mourning I feel is for the global justice movements as they were before those planes crashed into the Twin Towers: steadily growing in scope and influence, increasingly occupying a central place on the global stage. We were blown off that stage on September 11, and the context for our ongoing activism is now utterly transformed.**

(L.A. Kauffman, Free Radical #19, September 17 2001)

**...History is not over. Nor were the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> the start of a qualitatively new period of history, rather, we believe the opposite is true. Everything changed so all could remain the same. These actions marked a return to, not a departure from a familiar terrain of engagement. The world is again being engineered towards an unsustainable dualism of competing fundamentalisms, both of which must be opposed resolutely and openly, locally and globally, but with thought and patience. Without such opposition collective memory fades and we might find ourselves once again working towards the end of the world as opposed to the end of the world of the spectacle.**

(Shifting Ground Collective, 2002)

In September 2001 I was due to fly to New York to take part in the protests against the IMF and the World Bank in Washington. I was to join a group of New York activists to take part in a group they had named the Masquerade Project. The activists who had created the project had been bothered that, with all the focus on defending themselves against the extreme police repression of previous protests, the focus on aesthetics had been forgotten and that the global justice movements' most powerful weapons – ridicule, theatre and humour - had been lost. Fighting for global justice had become an extreme sport with a tough edged street quality. Such was the level of police repression, that you wouldn't even consider turning up to a protest without the activist 'uniform' of gas mask, helmet, raincoats and padding, and the death of 23-year-old activist Carlo Giuliani who was killed at the protests in Genoa weighed on many activists' minds. Thus, the Masquerade

Project was formed. The aim was simple. Buy and distribute hundreds of free gas masks to those attending the Washington protests. But first, decorate them in bright colours, with sparkles, tinsel, and diamante, transforming them into symbols of the creativity, diversity, resilience and ingenuity of the global justice movement.

In the days that followed the World Trade Centre and Pentagon attacks, I received emails and calls from American activists. Initially they spoke of the horror, mixed with exhaustion of attending quickly called meetings, handing out leaflets for peace rallies, developing and pasting up posters, all in a city where toxic smoke covered the sky, papers and news headlines yelled *War!*, where Muslims were being threatened and 'missing' posters were literally everywhere. And then there were the boxes of gas masks that sat in activist's apartments. They pulled off all the decorations and took them to Ground Zero, the same place where days before they had been meeting to plan a shutdown of the financial district in November to coincide with the WTO meeting in Qatar.

It would be an understatement to say that the events of September 11 initially altered the political landscape for global justice activists. The day is viewed as a 'watershed by many' (Hawthorne 2002:341). In such a climate many of the debates within the global justice movement were suddenly eclipsed (Yuen 2002:4). In the days after '9-11', a demonisation of global justice activists occurred. One of the greatest symbols of global capitalism had been blown off the world stage. Not only did activists have to deal with 'anguish and fear common to society at large, but they also [found] themselves the targets of criminalisation of dissent not seen since McCarthyism' (Yuen 2002:4). As Simon Cooper wrote, 'To state it bluntly, the principle of democracy said to be under siege from terrorism itself is rapidly being undermined in the United States. Since the attacks the already narrow space in US politics for liberal or

dissenting thought has been further reduced through various devices' (2001:31). Cooper here is not only referring to the lack of critical scrutiny by the mainstream media of the actions of the US government but also the work of conservative thinkers who in the days that followed, used the tragedy to attack the left and to demonise 'anti-globalisation' activists. Accusations abounded in the mainstream media. For instance, surely it must have been masterminded by an anti-capitalist activist? After all, were they not also enemies of Western civilisation, wanting to turn back the clock to some golden age? Did they not also want to halt the forces of modernity? Is it not a movement, as was suggested by *New Republic* editor Peter Beinart (2001), united by a hatred of the United States? Beinart's article indicted everyone from the French-farmer and activist Jose Bove, to authors Michael Hardt and Toni Negri for 'creating the conditions which led to terrorism' (Cooper 2001:31).

Paradoxically, the same pundits who were so quick to dismiss global justice activists as a 'kooky crowd', a 'circus' a 'motley crew' or as 'misguided youth living out an authentic Sixties rebellion', were quick to proclaim the movement as dead, in tatters, or just 'so yesterday'. Many opponents used the symbolism of the September 11 events to argue that 'young activists playing at guerrilla war' now have a real war on their hands and don't know what to do (cited in Klein 2001). As Naomi Klein pointed out in her article 'Protesting in the Post-WTC Age', these comments were nothing new and 'had been declared with ritualistic regularity after every mass demonstration: our strategies apparently discredited, our coalitions divided, our arguments misguided' (2001: 2).

Irrespective of what many conclude, there is an acknowledgement that the events of Seattle signified a growing presence and activism of international social movements, unprecedented in world history. Mike Bygrave of *The*

Observer who depicted the protests that followed in Genoa as the 'defining agenda of the new century and the most sweeping rebellion since the Sixties' predicted that and notes that questions of this movement seemed unstoppable:

Where is it now? What changed after 11 September? Now the movement has all but vanished from the bulletins and the headlines, has it been dumped in the dustbin of history along with other failed slogans such as Solidarity with the Striking Miners or All Power to the Soviets? Was its brief stretch in the spotlight - two years from surfacing in Seattle to its apotheosis at Genoa - simply a passing fad, and its youthful, mainly middle-class army of protesters yesterday's children?

In radically different ways, the battle of Seattle and those of '9-11' as it is now called mark two epoch-making moments. The events of September 11 clearly provided insights into both the possibilities and limitations of the global justice movement indicating, amongst other things, the recognition of the emergence of a radically democratic and coalitional movement against neoliberalism. Indeed, despite the many external and internal factors inhibiting on movement successes post-September 11, in my view the global justice movement remains a representation of a powerful articulation of old and new movement forms, and an expanding, potentially revolutionary basis for transnational opposition to the colonising regime of neoliberalism.

As I have previously noted, prior to the events of September 11 the politics of contesting neoliberalism were rife with transformative potential, but were clearly restricted by a number of factors. The era of neoliberal development is one with high stakes since transnational capital and state institutions have sought to make it a model of modernisation and liberalisation for the entire world. Thus, as many places in the South have become sites of new imperial powers and social crises, the concomitant growth of the apparatuses of neoliberal development has been defended zealously. One overarching theme that I have attempted to develop through the previous chapters is that the global justice movement has rested on more than mere geographic

borders. The movement exists at an intersection between imperium and periphery and between new and old social movements. It is also situated at the boundaries between sustainability and destruction, between repressive homogenisation and heterogeneous coalitional solidarity, and between neoliberal and radically democratic globalisation.

Another aim of this thesis has been to highlight the social and cultural meaning of the movement both to commentators and its participants. While previous chapters have examined a range of criticisms of the global justice movement, here I will explore the global justice movement post '9-11' and the often-repeated assertion that it has been annihilated. I will argue that not only has the movement survived and prevailed, but in so doing has returned to its vision, imagination, compassion and courage and remains as relevant as ever.

## **The End of Spectacle?**

At this point it is worth briefly exploring some of the prevailing theoretical opinions on the significance of 9-11. A common theme emerging from writings addressing 9-11 is the question of 'whether it has changed anything'. Whilst it has been asserted that the 'era of globalisation is over' (Gray 2001), Tom Nairn in his article 'Globalisation and the Unchosen' provides a compelling argument against the re-emergence of the power of the nation state. Nairn claims that what 9-11 seems to have accomplished is 'heightened consciousness of globalisation' (2002:46). Whilst he acknowledges that this 'is a difficult concept to pin down' (ibid.), he raises the important question of why 'almost everybody involved in or aware of the September 11 events [felt] that everything was changed or would somehow be different', (2002:55). Nairn suggests that one reason for this perception of everything having 'changed utterly' (ibid.) may be that everything had

already changed, except for consciousness which 'was lagging behind' (ibid.). If this is the case, it would be reasonable to argue that indeed the advent of neoliberalism has had a greater impact than the aftermath of 9-11. Whilst the events of the War on Terror and the invasion of Iraq have led some to claim the end of globalisation, it would now appear evident that it certainly 'cannot be undone' (Curtis, 2002:59).

Referring specifically to the global justice movement, several authors writing prior to September 11 note that the protests at Genoa marked the turning point in the global justice movement (Starhawk 2001, De Angelis 2001), and that this was a point in which protest against neoliberalism 'became a life or death struggle in the First World as it always has been in the Third World' (Starhawk 2001:128).

In the post-September 11 context, the debate between John Lloyd and Mark Curtis in *The Ecologist* about whether the 'anti-corporate globalisation movement is a finished force' (2002:20) poses some interesting questions. Lloyd agrees that 9-11 was 'not an event which completely transformed the movements' landscape', claiming that it already had large 'organisational, intellectual, even moral problems before it' but asserts that the consequences of 9-11 have 'made these more visible' (ibid.). But as Curtis notes, although Lloyd makes significant claims about the movements' demise, he provides little evidence of this. He also writes from the apparent assumption that the movement is solely Northern-based, speaking only about Southern movements in the context of demands for freer trade, and in warning that change must come not from global movements but from 'the governments and people of the developing and developed worlds' (ibid.).

Curtis notes in his response that one of the few things that has changed since 9-11 is the prospect for greater development of the global justice movement

because, he writes, 'the most notable feature of the post-11 September world is how much it resembles the pre-11 September world' (2002). Curtis argues three main points in outlining this resemblance. Firstly, he notes that with the increasing control of TNCs over nations' domestic policy-making, communities are inserted into more deregulated and competitive economies where transgressions of just labour and environmental standards result. He adds that 'much public debate has correctly noted that these levels of poverty and inequality ultimately contribute to greater insecurity' (2002). Secondly, he remarks that everyday life for many citizens of the world has come to possess an existentially absurd character, with a profound hopelessness and an anguished desperation deriving from the stark contradictions between modernising fantasies of prosperity and the lived realities of immiseration, with the growing belief that protest through the political system is ineffective. Lastly, he comments that there is a 'burgeoning of civil society activism' (Curtis 2002) in much of the world. This confers with the premise of this thesis that the movement which emerged post-Seattle merely reflected the 'core issues' that had been resisted by Third World activists for decades.

If the *global* nature of the global justice movement is acknowledged, there is little basis for the claims that it has ceased to exist. Moreover, as I shall also argue, the prospects for global coalitions have never been greater. The global constituency of the movement ensures its survival; viewing it solely as a Northern-based movement gives weight to the announcements of its demise. On the contrary, in the face of countless obstacles, the movement has found ways to articulate its commitment to peace and justice and against terrorism of all kinds. This has been a challenging project, as Yuen describes:

The anti-globalisation movement must now face a complexity that which appears to be simple (good vs. evil, civilization vs. barbarism) while previously its task was to simplify that which appeared to be complex (the WTO, neoliberalism, economics). This project is necessary, since the prospects of the movement - and the global majorities that it represents - being reduced once again to spectatorship while history is decided by

equally ruthless and dystopic contending forces, is too awful to contemplate. Only a principled global social movement, committed to direct democracy and bearing compassion and intelligence in equal measure, can oppose the hijacking of anti-imperialist causes by right wing movements.

(Yuen 2002:4)

Rather than understanding the events of September 11 as the end of a movement, I will argue that it instead represents a moment when the 'activist understanding of civil society' (Kaldor 2003:149) came of age, and when those who understood civil society began to view it not as something solely 'Western' but as a truly global struggle. It is possible now to see the emergence of a transnational citizenship, with the events of September 11 prompting many activists to view their counterparts across borders as fellow citizens with common histories and responsibilities of mutual support, demonstrated for example by the attendance of 50,000 people - 30,000 of whom were from Latin America (Kaldor 2003:102) at the World Social Forum.

I will now examine the responses of activists in both the North and South to the events of September 11 2001. The scope, texture and reach of responses to and analyses of September 11 are rich in lessons for those in the global justice movement. These interviews to follow took place immediately after the events of September 11 up until June 2003. I re-contacted activists and organisers across the United States and, with the question: 'What is the state of global justice organising now?' I aimed to interview as broad a cross-section of the global justice movement as possible. The respondents ranged from direct action organisers and prison justice activists to labour union members, immigrants and culturally diverse young people, queer activists and community organisers.

## Reactions to Global Justice Organising post-September 11: 'the moment we are in'

Russ Davis, a labour organiser with Massachusetts 'Jobs with Justice', said a week after September 11, 'The labour movement's pulling out, students will go off to form a new anti-war movement, and community-based groups will go back to local organizing. I don't know if there is a movement now' (Personal interview, 2001). The AFL-CIO and some member unions had previously joined forces with other wings of the global justice movement and had been planning to participate in the autumn IMF-World Bank protests. They pulled out, but reaffirmed their commitment to long-term collaboration on the global economy. Service unions became preoccupied with disaster relief and with supporting their New York members who had lost jobs. In the medium term, all unions had to deal with the recession:

*Labour is focusing on the recession. There are already a quarter million layoffs. There is little space for discussing the war within unions.*

(Fred Azcarate, Jobs with Justice, personal interview 2001)

*In three or four weeks the recession will supplant terrorism as a national issue.*

(Tim Costello, Campaign on Contingent Work, Boston, personal interview 2001)

*Work on state-level issues like the budget hasn't been affected much. But work on national issues like Fast Track, Social Security privatisation, and the mobilization for global justice is pretty derailed. We were trying to get people moving in North Carolina for the first time [on global justice issues]. Now that didn't go anywhere.*

(Cathy Howell, AFL-CIO NC and SC, personal interview 2001)

Opposition to the war was linked to the assault on low-income communities by youth and communities of colour. Strong coalitions led by African-Americans and Latinos helped frame the issues, choose the tactics and re-focus the nascent anti-war efforts into an urban peace movement. There is no way this could have happened without the long-term institution building that had developed a base of active leadership, and a global and local analysis. Young people, especially young people of colour, did not

necessarily identify with the traditional symbols of the U.S. peace movement and created new ways to express opposition to the war through art, culture, and dialogue. Many white youth on the other hand threw themselves into creating an anti-war movement, or an anti-war-anti-racist movement. The immediate effect of this was that it took some of the youth base away from anti-corporate and globalisation campaigns. Some white young people took on 'double duty', adding anti-war work to their global or labour activism. Students continued anti-sweatshop campaigns, living wage campaigns, and other campus-based economic justice campaigns which brought them together with organised labour and, potentially, community-based organisations.

Several themes emerged from religious communities: the majority of those interviewed relayed stories of anti-war pastors clashing with their congregations. Rev. Dr. A.J. Pointer said, 'Those people who are openly haters need to be dealt with in America' (personal interview 2002). Many provided anecdotes about mosques opening their doors for educational events, September 11 making this a unique opportunity to educate people about the basics of the religion. People of faith came together to give solace and support to their communities. However, as Lousie Cainkar from the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Chicago, remarked, many Arab-Americans experienced a heightened discrimination post 9-11.

*Clearly Arab-Americans are being victimized and attacked here in Chicago. They are afraid. They won't go to an anti-war rally or anything like that. It is a time when they must sit back and let others work because they are so scrutinized right now. Anyone can be picked up and held for anything. It has paralysed our ability to campaign and work on local issues.*

(Cainkar, personal interview 2001)

Community groups reacted in different ways to 9-11. 'People are still getting kicked out of their houses and people are still getting kicked off welfare,' said Galen Tyler of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (personal interview 2002).

Some activists paused, adjusted, and moved on. Depending on which issues people were focused on, their work had to adjust in different ways. 'Many [of our staff] are poor and working class, they have people in the military, there are issues that have to be taken care of' said Si Kahn of Grassroots Leadership in Charlotte (personal interview 2002).

Many local organisations led by people of colour were undermined by the fallout from 9-11. 'Every person of colour is at risk now' commented Rep. Byron Rushing (personal interview 2002). Funds earmarked for non-profit organisations were channelled toward New York and Washington, leaving local groups' budgets in doubt. An immigrant amnesty was on the political agenda because U.S. business needed immigrant labour, unions needed to organise them, and immigrant voters could swing an election. September 11 "set us back five to ten years" said several organisers. Activists of colour expressed their frustration at sudden concerns regarding community safety, as reflected in this quote by Kai Lumumba of Critical Resistance in New York.

*I am a little frustrated with the mainstreaming and sudden, popular interest in public safety, in the sense of vulnerability. That is really a middle class phenomenon to suddenly have a call for safety is a slap in the face. I have been terrorized for years. Two days after September 11, a fourteen-year-old kid got shot and killed on his bike. My partner is coming home, is he going to get shot? This stuff doesn't stop for us and it makes me angry. That is what I think of the political moment.*

(Lumumba, personal interview 2001)

New laws restricting immigrant rights hit this sector harder than any other. Immigrant day labourers were cheated of their wages, but were afraid to organise for fear of deportation. Some immigrant communities decided to protect themselves by expressing fervently that they were Americans. Mike Prokosch in Boston mentioned that two well-publicised polls found a majority of African-Americans supporting racial profiling of people from Middle Eastern background. These polls capitalised on legitimate fears in the Black community and were used to divide people of colour (personal interview

2001). Coalitions of young African-Americans and Latinos opposed the targeting of immigrants, but their partnerships with Middle Eastern and South Asian communities remained limited.

The Border patrol gained support post 9-11. As a consequence it became more aggressive and organising was challenged under these conditions. In border towns such as Laredo and El Paso, many workers from Mexico used to cross daily to work in U.S.-owned companies (at lower wages than U.S. workers). Since 9-11 they cannot cross as freely and often not at all. Thus, Mexican workers have lost their jobs and local U.S. businesses have been forced to either close down or hire U.S. workers at higher wages.

Scapegoating, harassment, verbal and physical abuse are nothing new for queer organisers, but it was mentioned that many worked much harder to make connections with low-income communities and communities of colour. Some organisers said that in order to defeat anti-gay legislation you need to have the support of communities of colour:

*September 11th has actually made it pretty clear that our organization [a multi-issue queer group] is not involved in the same communities as the white queer communities and made it clear who we want to be working with. It has strengthened [our] connections with low-income organizations and other social justice groups led by folks of colour.*

(Shawn Luby, NC Lambda Youth Network, Durham, personal interview 2002)

Activists described the swift, severe crackdown on prisoners, the most socially controlled population in the US. Many prisoners lost visitation rights and their mail was even more carefully searched. Inmates in one prison told Angela Davis that they fear all prisoners will be left alone to die slowly in their cells. Prison activists were worried about the effect of a stronger police state on people opposing racial profiling, unequal sentencing, and other forms of criminal injustice. 'I hear people saying everything is different now, but I see

that within prisons there is a lot that is not so different', said Gabriel Sayegh of Prisoner Within, Olympia.

Many environmentalists however, thought their work would grind to a halt. After a short recovery period their activists kept at their corporate targets, like CitiGroup and Staples. Many environmentalists' focus is to act bio-regionally, within their local area. As one activist said, 'trees are still going to get cut down,' and Congress is trying to use 'united we stand' sentiments to push through anti-environmental legislation like drilling in the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge.

Two days after President Bush's address to Congress, the militaries of Mexico and Central America met and declared a war against terrorism, with the priority target being 'ethnic groups'. The militarisation of Chiapas returned to its highest levels, while Indigenous and grassroots organisations were threatened in other countries. Sister movements in the global South did not pull back and were horrified that the U.S. globalisation movement would even consider it. 'They have always called us terrorists because we fight for land and bread,' said Berta Caceres of Honduras. From an Australian perspective, Susan Hawthorne wrote: 'The level of importance [September 11] is given tends to reflect where one stands in relation to the benefits of U.S. globalisation...How the attack was framed was also influenced by where the commentator was geographically and politically located. Those outside the U.S. sphere of influence drew parallels with other attacks and disasters, some of them U.S. based' (2002:341). This echoes the sentiments expressed by activists from the global South who see similarities between the World Trade Centre attacks and what they encounter regularly. This will be briefly explored below.

## **Views from the Global South**

A week after September 11 the citizens of India were asked by their Prime Minister to observe two minutes of silence in solidarity with the victims. 'Wherever you are, whatever you are doing the Prime Minister told [them], stop all activity and stand in silence' (Butalia, 2002:53). Urvashi Butalia, writing about her reaction to this, commented:

No matter how much I mourned these deaths, I could not bring myself to do this. More than 3000 people died in anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984. More than 2000 died in anti-Muslim riots in Bombay in 1993. More than 10,000 died in the final tally as a result of a gas leak in the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal in India. And this does not even touch the tip of the iceberg.

(Butalia 2002:53)

Butalia's comments reflect the major themes that have emerged from activists in the global South. These themes coalesce around two main points. The first is that on September 11 Americans experienced the kind of violence that people in the South have been experiencing for a long time (Mauldin 2002:1). In the aftermath, the citizens of the First World are learning about what many communities in the South have already experienced for years: the military component of corporate globalisation. As Shobani Thobani remarks, the policies of war are 'hell-bent on the West maintaining its resources. At whatever cost to the people' (2002:64). Thobani continues to argue that the new war on terrorism is in fact 'a very old fight of the West against the rest' (ibid.), and asks us to consider the language being used:

Calling the perpetrators evildoers, irrational, calling them the forces of darkness, uncivilized, intent on destroying civilization, intent on destroying democracy. They hate freedom, we are told. Every person of colour, and I would want to say also every Aboriginal person, will recognise the language. The language of us versus them, of civilization versus the forces of darkness, this language is rooted in the colonial legacy.

(Thobani 2002:65)

Secondly, while the events of September 11 and the U.S. response have made Northern global justice activists work a little harder, it has not caused leaders in the South to change what they're doing. In fact, some of them see hope for broadening and strengthening the global movement for justice in these times:

*I think it's made it a bit harder because people got tremendously distracted. In the United States you're still going through some sort of culture shock at this sense of being attacked.*

(Alejandro Bendana, Centro de Estudios Internacionales, Nicaragua, personal interview 2002)

*The media is not helping any by just focusing a lot on the issue of the attack and the war and the U.S., so that it's eclipsing other issues that are as important... The attacks of the right against the type of message we're trying to deliver has intensified in the last few months. They're lumping together everybody that's critical of government and U.S. policy, of course in a very self-serving way. In a way it has made our work a little more challenging these days.*

(Lidy Nacpil, Freedom from Debt Coalition, Philippines, personal interview 2002)

In a space subject to multiple colonial histories, desperate immiseration and rapid uneven development, there exists as much of an opportunity for coalition as there does for conflict. According to Abdo, the events of September 11 have allowed for the emergence of racist ideologies and Eurocentric Orientalism (Abdo 2002: 375), framing the debate in terms of 'our civilization, freedom, democracy and ways of life vis-à-vis their barbarism, inhumanity, low morality and style of life' (ibid.). Hence, as Abdo goes on to comment, 'the legitimation of announcing a crusade for hunting them, sniping them and smoking them out of their holes' (ibid.). Although there are frustrations and hostilities that seep through the fissures of profound difference, many Southern activists expressed this as an opportunity for new dialogues and endeavours of solidarity:

*It's easier now to be able to talk out loud and clear and look for linkages and bridges with the American people, because what has been happening with us for all these centuries, now it's just at their back yard. I*

*think [Americans] can now begin to see the interests of the multinational corporations... It's coming out very clearly that [they are] not in the interest of the ordinary citizens of the United States of America.*

(Wahu Kaara, Kenya Debt Relief Network, Kenya, personal interview 2002)

*Given the kind of terrifying events of September 11th and the kind of visual and emotional and intellectual shock... I am impressed at the number of people who are willing to call for peace against war. I'm also impressed at the number of people who are willing to say, I don't accept this nonsense about a war against terrorism.*

(Dennis Brutus, Jubilee South, South Africa/U.S. personal interview 2002)

Soon after the events of September 11, Arundhati Roy, in her article 'War is Peace', widely circulated on the Internet, wrote that 'nothing can excuse or justify an act of terrorism, whether it is committed by religious fundamentalists, private militia, people's resistance movements — or whether it's dressed up as a war of retribution by a recognised government. The bombing of Afghanistan is not revenge for New York and Washington. It is yet another act of terror against the people of the world. Each innocent person that is killed must be added to, not set off against, the grisly toll of civilians who died in New York and Washington' (2001:1). Roy was echoing the words of many Southern activists who were encouraging the West to recognise other and all forms of terrorism. For many activists, the debate about the kind of globalisation they want is not 'so yesterday'; in fact it has never been so urgent. In Roy's words, the events of September 11 'could have been signed by the ghosts of America's old wars' (ibid: 2). Many activists also reiterated that although the loss of life on September 11 was tragic, other forms of terrorism prevail in everyday forms in most of the developing world. Such commentators include Alejandro Bendana from Nicaragua and Beverly Keene Diogolo from Argentina:

*What's important to understand is that terrorism not only takes the form of planes flying into buildings full of civilians. It also takes the form of structural adjustment being imposed on countries, and destroying lives and livelihoods. This is institutionalised, systematized terrorism, economic terrorism.*

(Bendana, personal interview 2002)

*You know, September 11th was a very serious attack on human life. That same day the FAO released a report indicating that 35,615 children died from malnutrition and avoidable disease around the world. 35,000 on September 11th. But also on September 12th, September 13th, September 14th, September 15th, September 16th, September 17th. That's the kind of terrorism that we also want to be concerned about.*

(Diogolo, personal interview 2002)

Njoroge Njehu and Ambrose (2002:1) suggest that 'one possible outcome in examining the meaning of September 11 would be a puncturing of the myth of U.S. imperialism – a deeper sense in the U.S. that it is a country like any other and is not exempted from the anger and violence everywhere in evidence' (2002:3). They liken the events of September 11 to the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, comparable in that they both heralded a new era – a 'cold war marked by intense paranoia, massive waste of military technology, overblown claims of virtue and evil, the frequent refrain of patriotism and security as a cover for gross abuses of the governments' coercive and investigative powers and the gross abuses of the principles of democracy and justice' (2002:3).

In these terms 9-11 could be seen as the start of another 'cold war' at least in the way in which values and facts are distorted. An era has begun where the stated principles of the wealthy countries are even more blatantly at odds with their behaviour. Between the fall of the Berlin wall and 9-11 the distance between rhetoric and actual reality has been substantial, but the rhetoric at least provided an opportunity for opponents to expose the hypocrisy of the institutions which claim to assist impoverished people but in fact are prioritising and safeguarding the profits of corporations.

Adding to these sentiments, it was pointed out that the onslaught of neoliberalism both as an undistorted free market and a development practice is not only reshaping entire social formations but has also contributed to the deepening of many existing problems:

*While we were trying to trap terrorists, we've caught ourselves in that trap. The same corporations that rule our life finally are practicing the same thing here in the United States. The U.S. is experiencing the same loss of liberty; education is now going to be stratified. It's becoming exactly like back home. There's a saying in Ethiopia: if you dig a big hole for someone else to fall in, don't dig it too deep because you don't know who else will fall in too. I don't know if it will be easy for the U.S. to get itself out of the hole we've dug for ourselves.*

(Hanna Petros, Ustawi, Seattle/Ethiopia, personal interview 2002)

*Many Americans are beating the drums of war. They're saying that they're patriots. They're flying flags. They're wearing lapel pins. But what we really need America to do, the real patriots of this country need to take a hard look at what this country has done in terms of foreign policy. This country's support for dictators all over the world.*

(Mililani Trask, Indigenous Human Rights Caucus, Hawai'i, personal interview 2002)

Clearly, the above comments reveal a common indictment of corporate-led globalisation and its destruction of Third World political economies, cultures and environments. As Sunera Thobani reminds us, 'we are living in a period of escalating global interaction now on every front, on every level. And we have to recognise that this level and particular phase of globalisation is rooted in the colonisation of Aboriginal peoples and Third World peoples all over the world' (2002:64). In confronting these anti-democratic and resolute structures of authority, activists articulate sentiments of despair, cynicism and alienation:

*The point is that there has to be an awareness that the main culprit of most of the evil today, not the only one but the main is called corporate globalisation, in terms of how it harms human beings. And that corporate globalisation, we've discovered after September 11th, and the response to September 11th by the U.S., it also has a military component. So in that sense our educational work has to become broader because they can use bombs and bullets as they do in Afghanistan, but they can also use famine as an instrument of war too as the IMF does.*

(Alejandro Bendana, Centro de Estudios Internacionales, Nicaragua, personal interview 2002)

Yet, it is clear that many activists have faith in the abilities of the global justice movement to empower themselves and resist becoming mere objects of neoliberalism and war.

*Are we at a stage of despair or hope? For me I would say we are at a stage of being very hopeful because the social transformation forces are taking very, very progressive moves. Even where one has not been able to reach to organise, you still find that people, out of the demands of their daily life, are coming up with very innovative and creative alternatives to be able to engage with the status quo, sometimes very unconsciously. That is a good sign, which means when these forces link up, then the forces of the good way forward will reach a critical mass.*

(Wahu Kaara, Kenya Debt Relief Network, Kenya, personal interview 2002)

*After Seattle we won one victory after the other. It's very impressive. Seattle was the first one, but then A16 in Washington, the World Bank and IMF, we messed them up. We go to Prague, and they have to cancel the last day of the meetings. They only met for two days instead of three. We go to Quebec City and we take down the fence, the one thing that was the symbol of their power. We go to Genoa. They issue the cops with live ammunition to intimidate us, and we put 300,000 on the streets. So we were winning. From Seattle to Genoa and Durban, when the U.S. says you can't discuss slavery, we say too bad, go home. We're winning all the time. Except that we were winning too well, too much. And the time came for them to crack down, and so the crackdown comes. But of course September 11 is the pretext, but it was going to come anyway because we were just getting too strong all the time.*

(Dennis Brutus, Jubilee South, South Africa/US, personal interview 2002)

Despite such expressions of optimism, a general feeling remains across North and South that no amount of military action will stop terrorism without addressing the conditions that nourish and aggravate it. Most activists felt that the United States needs to undertake a serious re-examination of its values and policies with regard to the larger world. According to Petchetsky, 'It has to take responsibility for being in the world, including ways of sharing its wealth, resources and technology; democratising decisions about global trade, finance and security and assuring that access to global public goods like health care, housing, food, education, sanitation, water and freedom from racial and gender discrimination is given priority in international relations' (Petchetsky 2002:329). True security, Petchetsky writes, has to encompass all these aspects of well-being and has to be universal in its reach (ibid.),

something that comes out strongly in the writings of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish:

The best weapon to eradicate terrorism from the soul lies in the solidarity of the international world, in reducing the ever-increasing gap between North and South. And the most effective way to defend freedom is through fully recognising the meaning of justice.

(Cited in Petchetsky 2002: 329)

It is clear that the events of September 11 caused many global justice activists to ask whether there are alternative and humane ways out of the two 'unacceptable polarities' (Petchetsky 2002:316) now being presented: the 'war machine or the regime of holy terror' (ibid.). I propose that out of the ashes of September 11 a new kind of solidarity was reborn between Northern and Southern activists. This solidarity is based on a shared (although different) experience and, resistance to power. Kingsnorth notes that when this is understood, much else begins to 'fall into place' (2003:318). He asserts that it is then 'easier to see why this movement came first from the South, from the poor countries, those left behind by the system and its beneficiaries' (ibid.). He claims that it is power that is being used to 'exclude and to enclose' (ibid.) and cites the following examples:

In Chiapas, the Zapatistas declare autonomous zones, reclaiming their political and physical space from the clutches of Mexico's 'bad government'. The citizens of Cochabamba fight against the enclosure of their common water resources. Protestors in Genoa try to take back the streets that the Red Zone has enclosed. Sowetans reconnect their own electricity. The Reverend Billy wails in public about the theft of community space by chainstores. The MST scales the fences around enclosed land and claims it for the poor. The people of Boulder stake a claim to their streets on behalf of local traders. Everywhere, a struggle for power: everywhere a fight for space.

(Kingsnorth 2003:319)

If it is accepted that the common thread in the movement is struggle against power, then it can be understood how the movement can move in various forms according to the location and circumstances. No movement as global or with such a diversity of forces has existed before. No movement has ever

been led by the poor, the disenfranchised, the South without 'being hijacked by intellectual demagogues or party politicians' (Kingsnorth 2003:329) or, in the case of this chapter, the events of September 11.

## **When Horizons Meet Steps Come Together: Third World Organising**

In Maragua, a small community in Kenya, women are planting beans and bananas between coffee. As in other rural communities in the South, in Maragua during the period of 1986-1996 the IMF imposed a program that shifted the production of locally grown subsistence foods in favour of expanding coffee crops for export (Brownhill, 1996). The impact of these policies were immediate, as the decline in essential subsistence crops for the nourishment of the community inversely led to the escalation of poverty and malnourishment – not curtailed by the marginal profits accrued in the sale of coffee beans (Brownhill 1996). As women bore the brunt of these violent policies, they have resorted to different strategies for the basic survival and welfare of their families and communities (ibid.). Subsequently, the women of Maragua took drastic action and, despite severe restrictions, they planted beans and bananas between the coffee, and as a far more overt sign of protest, they also uprooted numerous coffee trees to be used as firewood for their families. Concurrent to growing coffee, therefore, women increased their production of subsistence crops on coffee plantations and strengthened their local informal trading networks as a result. To the dismay of the IMF and government, coffee production declined in the region but was not paralleled by the 'depletion' in living standards (Brownhill 1996). This was because the trading networks of women were lucrative, signifying their efforts to become more self-reliant and empowered despite the impact of globalisation to incorporate their labour into the global capitalist economy. According to Brownhill, by concentrating on local knowledge and using local resources in

an effort to strengthen and sustain their households, women in Maragua and elsewhere are laying the groundwork for new community responses to larger social and economic problems (Brownhill 1996).

The aggregate impact of their efforts, however, are not quantifiable nor are they well documented. Why this example is important in the context of my argument is that loosely organised, informal efforts like the Maragua rural women have not previously been taken into account as measurable indicators of resistance to globalisation, despite the enormity and intensity of their actions and the implications their struggles have had on their lives and livelihoods. Until events organised by the global justice movement, a discussion of which will follow, these 'localised everyday' forms of activism have been shadowed by the more formal, structured organisations operating in the wider sphere of civil society. The tendency to peripheralise these loosely structured subversive experiments against globalisation, in the end, has exposed some of the gaps, biases and unequal relationships between Northern and Southern activists. Their problematic exclusion has lent weight to the myth that Southern activists are somehow passive and submissive to the whims of globalisation because they fail to create large, formal mass movements that directly engage the state. The comment by the former Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, Stanley Fischer, is typical of this belief: 'The critics of globalisation come mostly from the rich countries' (cited in Kingsnorth 2003:209). The next section examines two case studies in an aim to demonstrate how Northern and Southern activists are organising together after 9-11 and will again indicate the falsity of this myth.

## An Incredibly Big Tent <sup>44</sup>

When the World Economic Forum met in February 2004, activists gathered simultaneously in Mumbai at the World Social Forum, a now regular event that parallels the WEF but brings together diverse social forces (Ramirez 2003:18) from the North and South, to develop an alternative economic vision of globalisation. Meeting in Mumbai were activists concerned about the effects of globalisation and neoliberalism and representatives of the peace movements that rallied against the war in Iraq, exposing the linkages between a new imperialism and wars and conflicts. As Maria Ramos writes:

'The peace movement has become quickly globalised in an and through the WSF during its four annual events. The first WSF was aimed at critiquing neo-liberal economics and exploring alternatives to corporate globalisation. With the attacks of the 11<sup>th</sup> September, however, and the US' shift to neo-conservative unilateralism, increasing militarism and play for global hegemony, debates have increasingly explored the links between neo-liberal globalisation and imperialism'.

(Ramos 2004: 38)

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe the World Social Forum as 'one of those positive myths that define our political compass, [a] representation of a new democratic cosmopolitanism, a new anti-capitalist transnationalism, a new intellectual nomadism, a great movement of the multitude' (2003:xvi). Naomi Klein has characterised the World Social forum as 'so opaque that it was nearly impossible to figure out how decisions were made' (Cited in Teivainen 2003:1). Similar remarks have been made by other activists attending the WSF events (Maria Ramos 2004:35). According to the WSF Charter of Principles, the forum 'does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants' (Teivainen 2003:1). This remains a debatable point. Nevertheless, this charter does not detract from the fact that the steadily increasing numbers of attendees at the WSF have often been

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<sup>44</sup> This title was inspired by the article 'An unimaginably big tent' By Edward Miliband *New Statesman* 2/3/2003, Vol. 132 Issue 4623, p16.

recorded in the press 'to indicate the success of such events' (Teivainen 2003:1).

This was the second time activists had gathered at the World Social Forum since the events of 9-11. When the World Economic Forum met in New York in February 2002 against a backdrop of public and police sensitivity to September 11, the demonstrations were 'surprisingly subdued' (Colwell 2002). The main focus of global justice activists critical of the WEF was a series of workshops and teach-ins. The noticeable change in the tactics of a movement well known for its confrontative direct action was partly blamed on the 'local media's hostility to potential violence and the police department's zero tolerance stance' (ibid.). By the second day of the demonstration the local media appeared taken back by the lack of confrontation and began mocking the activists whilst others accused the movement of being thrown 'off balance' (Hari 2002:23). What most media failed to realise at the time was that many activists from a wide range of groups were at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Coming together in Porto Alegre under the slogan 'Another World is Possible' were 100,000 global justice activists from 130 countries and 5000 organisations (Miliband 2003:16), who certainly were a contradiction to the proclamations that the movement post-September 11 had not known 'how to proceed' (Hari 2002:23). Hardt and Negri explain two aspects are most striking about the movements that come together at Porto Alegre. The first is that Porto Alegre 'appears as a nomad point, or rather a transitive space,' the second being that it takes the 'form of a common process...recognising and constructing what we have in common' (Hardt and Negri 2003:xvi).

Although it has been claimed that the movement 'mutated into an anti-war coalition, with the same speakers, activists and gurus focussing their energies

on opposing America's military responses' (Hari 2002:23) the World Social Forum stands as a testament to the fact that the themes of corporate power and alternatives to neoliberalism had not been forgotten, and in fact that the movement 'is robust enough to survive great shifts in world opinion without losing direction' (Hari 2002:23).

The World Social Forum was not the only gathering to bring together activists post-September 11. Four days after September 11, when it appeared that the movement was 'yet another casualty lying in the rubble of Ground Zero' (Hari 2002:23), a smaller number of activists, or 'terrorists' as the Bolivian government referred to them, were gathering in the Bolivian City of Cochabamba. These 'terrorists' belong to an international activist network known as People's Global Action<sup>45</sup> (Kingsnorth 2003:72). In order to discuss the events in Cochabamba further, it is important to briefly revisit the origins of PGA. Its birth was inspired by the Zapatistas (ibid.). Kingsnorth writes that 'at the end of the encuentro in Chiapas in 1996, the Zapatistas issued a call to create an intercontinental network of resistance, recognising differences and acknowledging similarities, which will strive to find itself in other resistances around the world. It would be a network of communication among all struggles and resistances against neoliberalism and for humanity' (2003:73). As mentioned before, it is not an organisation, but a 'method' (ibid.). Contrary to the structure of the World Social Forum, the PGA only consists of grassroots movements, no established NGOs or political parties. Additionally the PGA has a policy that 70 percent of participants at any international gathering must be from the global South, the result being that 'it is their concerns which largely set the agenda' (Kingsnorth 2003:76). Activists who are part of PGA oppose neoliberalism and are 'prepared to use non-violent civil disobedience to challenge it' (ibid.). Kingsnorth explains the effect this has had:

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<sup>45</sup> See also Chapter Three, page 149 for a further discussion on Peoples Global Action.

PGA took the new political forms, the new ideas about power and the new methods of making things happen that had come out of Chiapas and ran with them on a global scale. The result was events like Seattle, Prague, Genoa-and the global movements we have today. For it was PGA – not PGA alone, by any means, but certainly PGA in the role of inspiration and key player-which helped create the kind of 'take on big summit' action that came to define the first stage of the anti-globalisation movement.

(Kingsnorth 2003:74)

The challenge of the World Social Forum and PGA gathering is to mobilise people to set the ground for posing different sets of meanings and stakes, by resignifying and reconfiguring social and political power. Many acknowledge the difficulties in this process, Jai Sen noting that:

Given that the World Social Forum is meant to be an open plural process, embracing people of many different persuasions, we need to work to build an organisational process that is based on norms and principles that are openly and commonly defined, and not on gentlemanly or comradely behaviour between a few that cannot be questioned by others.

(Cited in Waterman 2003:1)

Whilst Waterman (2003) observes that the WSF struggles with a search for legitimacy, forward visions, relationships with trade unions, and issues around gender, class and race both of the activist gatherings question claims that the movement in the North is the 'most important segment of the movement' and that the participation by Southern activists is confined to 'getting the attention of heads of state and finance ministers' (Buttel 2003). On the contrary, they are powerful expressions of unsatisfied social needs and these international forums are linked to the contradictions, effects and weaknesses of transnational neoliberal policies (Wignraja 1993), with many Southern activists clear about their aims:

What we want is to create unheard of forms of collective intelligence – subaltern 'intelligent communities' capable of re-imagining the world and inventing alternative process of world-making based on internationalist principles... This amounts to reinventing the nature and dynamics of social emancipation.

(Cited in Waterman 2003)

Nawal El Sadaawi believes that the Social Forum 'tore the veil off the face of neo-liberal capitalism which dominates the world' (2003:1) and believes it to be:

...Not just an annual event...but a global movement, a continuous process to create an open space for free and equal exchange of thoughts and action. In terms of numbers it grew from 25,000 people in the first meeting 2001 to more than 100,000 this year. But it is not just the numbers that count. The Forum has created an alternative to capitalist globalisation. It has created a new hope, a new power which is playing a profound role in helping to free people all over the world from the shackles of despair and false consciousness propagated by the global media.

(Sadawi 2003:1)

The form of 'civil society' being practised by global justice activists 'expresses an evolving and radically democratic praxis that is rooted in the struggle of communities and groups world wide' (Sadawi 2003:1) and, as Chesters notes, 'it is anti-statist forms of organising' that shape this domain (2003). These factors, I argue, give the movement a resilience that demonstrates that, far from dying, it may in fact be coming of age (Hari, 2003:24).

## **Where Have All the Protestors Gone?**

There are numerous other events including the large-scale mobilisation of Latin American activists against the FTAA negotiations in Quito and the demonstrations recently held in Barcelona against the European Union that give a sense of global justice activism post 9-11. Additionally, Paul Kingsnorth notes that in the year following the September events 'a European Social Forum has been held in Italy, an African Social Forum in Ethiopia, and an Asian Social Forum in India. Mini forums have sprung up in Genoa, Monterey in Mexico, Buenos Aires in Argentina, Durban in South Africa, Beirut in Lebanon and Washington and New York' (2003:211). In India, people's movements have convened local social forums in many cities in the lead-up to the

Mumbai WSF. Each has addressed local, national and international issues, helping to foster a public culture of debate and discourse (Mitra Chenoy 2004: 1).

Although this strong evidence points to a continuing and vibrant global justice movement, it is necessary to further address the claim that the movement is dead. Clearly, the events of September 11 are being used to argue that the global justice movement no longer has a place in the world 'whose leaders have returned to the serenity of simple polarisation' (Shifting Ground Collective, 2001). The following comment by Bygrave reflects an overall assumption in many commentaries that the movement was eclipsed by the events in New York:

... Is it all the fault of the media? Have we turned our backs on a still-vibrant radical movement and a key issue in the modern world - distracted by the World Trade Centre attacks and wars on terror? Globalisation is still with us, after all. From the state of Africa to world food supplies, trade disputes to asylum-seekers, privatisation to the environment, globalisation roars ahead. But what's happened to the anti-globalisers?

(Bygrave 2002:1)

By contrast, after 9-11 Alejandro Bendana wrote that 'the obstacles are in the North and the opportunities are in the South, which is an important distinction to keep in mind' (cited in Mauldin 2002). The relevance of this quote lies in the challenge that it offers the movement's critics who continue to assert that the movement is solely situated in the North (Kingsnorth 2003:208). Once again, the focus and the perception of the movement as being entirely Northern-based leaves the global South invisible and its histories of dissent erased. This is a useful perception for those beneficiaries of neoliberalism who propagate this myth so widely.

It is important to remember in this context that the global justice movement did not just suddenly arise, fully formed from the protests in Seattle. Its roots

must be acknowledged as stretching back through a long history of direct action (Epstein 1991), the women's peace movement (Roseneil 1995), anti-disciplinary movements of the sixties (Stephens 1998) and the movements from the South, examples of which are developed in this thesis. Some observers, including Camilo Guevara, characterise events such as Seattle and other large protests in the North as 'irrelevant for the great majorities of the world' (cited in Teivainen 2003:1). Whilst not necessarily agreeing with this point Teivainen adds: 'It is undoubtedly true that in the poorer regions of the world a lot was going on long before Seattle; middle-class youth protesting in a European or North American city are much more attractive to global media networks than impoverished peasants campaigning against structural adjustment programs in the South' (ibid.).

This is not to dismiss the significant changes that have taken place in the North, including changes in tactics, questioning, analysis (Bygrave 2002:1) and the collapse of some of the fragile unity of the broad anti-globalisation coalitions formed during Seattle (Brecher, 2002:1). When as many protestors mobilised in Barcelona in 2002 as did in Genoa in 2001, the protestors were virtually ignored by the media (Bygrave 2002:1). Now that the United States and the officers of the World Bank and the IMF have begun to use their resources to reward countries such as Pakistan for cooperating with U.S. demands and denying funds to those which did not join the coalition (Njoroge & Ambrose 2002), such an atmosphere has required the global justice movement's organisational strategy to change. Dialogue with the IMF and World Bank - an exercise the global justice movement usually finds of limited value - has become pointless now that political imperatives have outweighed development and human priorities. Subsequently, mass mobilisations have become more difficult to organise as constitutional rights have become harder to access.

Undoubtedly, a number of activists do have changing political and personal priorities after September 11, involving a shift in political focus away from solely 'anti-globalisation' to anti-militarism and as Neale notes the inseparability of the two:

Two months after Genoa came September 11. The papers and the TV said that wrecked the anti-capitalist movement. What happened in Britain was that most people in the Globalise Resistance threw themselves into the anti-war movement. This was bigger than the anti-capitalist movement had been in Britain. On May Day 10,000 had demonstrated in London. Now 50,000 marched against the war in London in October, and 100,000 in early December. The crowds were young, mixed and full of workers.

(Neal 2002:259)

Activists have begun to place a greater emphasis on organising and educating on the local level, working to educate communities on the links between economic circumstances and the perverse structure of the global economy. This transformation was being commented on and written about prior to the events of 9-11. In writing about the May Day protests in May 2001, Naomi Klein wrote:

It is an article of faith in most activist circles that mass demonstrations are always positive: they build morale, display strength, and attract media attention. But what seems to be getting lost is that demonstrations themselves aren't a movement. They are only the flashy displays of everyday movements grounded in schools, workshops and neighbourhoods.

(Klein 2002:157)

Klein continued by noting that the 'powerful resistance movements are always deeply rooted in community and are accountable to those communities...there are moments to demonstrate, but perhaps more important, there are moments to build the connections that make demonstration something more than theatre. There are times when radicalism means standing up to the police and there are many more times when it means talking to your neighbour' (Klein 2002: 157-158).

Similarly, DeFilippis noted:

...The anti-globalization protestors have used an explicitly global form of organizing to transform the public debate about neo-liberalism and economic globalization. But the problem with the framework, and method of organizing, is that while capitalism is certainly global, and must be confronted as such, it is almost definitely local as well. And the exploitation and oppression that are part of neo-liberal globalization, and which provide the moral and intellectual justification for the protests, are primarily felt at the local level'.

(DeFilippis 2004:10)

Before 9-11 a new mood of impatience was taking hold in activists, whom 'for more than a year' (Klein 2002:243) had been discussing a shift in strategy to one based more on 'substance than on symbols' (Klein 2002:158). Activists were insisting that social and economic alternatives that address the roots of injustice be created. After September 11, Klein notes that the 'task became more clear: the challenge is to shift discourse around the vague notion of globalisation into a specific debate about democracy' (2002: 243).

The transformative impact of involvement in global justice protest that activists speak about (in Chapter Two) also means that it is inevitable that activists will at some stage seek new directions for political energies. The *possible* contraction of the global justice movement in the North does not mean an end to individual activism, with many choosing to work on campaigns focusing on militarism, racism, terrorist legislation and increase in police powers.

For women activists a 'new direction of political energies' has resulted in women returning to work on women's campaigns, particularly those focussing on militarism, Afghanistan and the war in Iraq. There is no doubt that women are among the 'leaders' of the global justice movement<sup>46</sup> nor the profound

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<sup>46</sup> Judy Rebick, in her article 'Lip Service: the anti-globalisation movement on gender politics', refers to Naomi Klein, Maude Barlow, Vandana Shiva, Starhawk and Susan George as some of the leaders of the anti-globalisation movement.

impacts that feminist critiques of power and patriarchy have had on organisation within the movement (Rebick 2002:1). Rebick cites both Naomi Klein and Jo Freeman, who both acknowledge that much of the deliberate 'structurelessness' in the global justice movement has emerged from feminist and women's social movements. Despite this, Rebick sites some unnerving examples of women's participation in the anti-globalisation movement, particularly a young activist in the black bloc who states:

Blocking up to become the Black Bloc is a great equalizer. With everyone looking the same - everyone's hair tucked away, our faces obscured by masks, I'm nothing less and nothing more than one entity moving with the whole. It's once the mask comes off, the problems begin. And it's no surprise that in public debates around violence/non-violence it's always two men yelling their heads off at each other, while women can't get a word in edge-wise. Sure, women are gaining popular ground in the movement, but some topics are still taboo for us. And with machismo still ruling the streets - especially during a riot - what women have to say often gets lost in the tear gas fog.

(Rebick 2002:1)

Such observations reflect ongoing tensions in the movement, where it has been noted that although many aspects of feminist culture have been embraced the movement has not integrated feminist politics within its core:

The irony for some women is that, on the one hand, the supporters and promoters of a globalized world economy are often also the ones who support the breaking of traditional patriarchal orders. On the other hand, some of those who oppose globalisation do so in the name of values and control systems that strongly oppress women. The challenge for women, therefore, is how to assert the need for both economic justice and gender justice in an increasingly globalized world, in which at the same time we witness the proliferation of diverse forms of moral conservatism that systematically target women's self-determination.

(Gita Sen cited in Rebick 2002:2)

One of the most obvious examples of this came with the invasion of Afghanistan, prompting some women activists to work solely on feminist solidarity issues. This predominantly emerged from the United States' claim that the bombing of Afghanistan would provide liberation for oppressed women. Women activists obviously noted the contradictions in the actions of

a nation with a history of corporate-led globalisation, which assisted fundamentalist regimes like the Taliban to emerge and seize power. In the past it has been Southern-based feminists who have understood the dangers of both neoliberalism and fundamentalism as 'many anti-feminist forces continue to draw strength from their opposition to neoliberalism' (Rebick 2002:3). Although 40 percent of participants at the 2002 World Social Forum were women, it would appear that the global justice movement still has significant steps to take in integrating a gender analysis into the movement:

The global women's movement is unquestionably a full participant in the 'movement of movements,' represented at gatherings like the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil last February. There, 60,000 people from all over the world - more than 40 percent of them women - met to discuss alternatives to neo-liberalism. One worldwide campaign, Speak Out Against Fundamentalism, uses big lips as its campaign symbol. Overall, however, there was little gender analysis or discussion of the impact of religious fundamentalism on women's lives in hundreds of seminars and workshops. Instead, women were more vocal in the corridors of the conference through demonstrations, theatre pieces and individual testimonials.

(Rebick 2002:3)

As neoliberalism and its after-effects become increasingly militarised, it is crucial that a combined critique of patriarchy and neoliberalism emerge. In the past women activists in the South have largely undertaken this. The need for Northern activists to work in conscious solidarity with activists throughout the globe has been acknowledged by many as both essential and critical. As the above interviews with Southern activists indicate, many have expressed that it is now easier to look for linkages with Northern activists because what has been happening in the South for centuries has occurred in their own 'backyard'. Likewise, many Northern activists have begun to recognise and acknowledge other forms of terrorism. It remains to be seen whether a wider analysis of gender and fundamentalism will develop as part of this recognition.

Evaluating the influence of global justice protest is fraught with difficulty not at least because it conjures up a cause/effect model of thinking, which is strategically problematic (Roseneil 1995:167). Moreover, as Roseneil points out:

Official histories, the rhetoric of political and mainstream discourses of international relations, in their state-oriented worldview, all overwhelmingly erase the existence of social movements and attribute geopolitical change to state actors and 'great men'. Peace movements in part have historically been subject to this treatment and women's peace movements more so, suffering erasure even from those who have sought to repossess the history of social movements'.

(Roseneil 1995:167)

Clearly the movement has disrupted many discourses which are central to the contemporary construction of both Northern and Southern social movements. The fact that one kind of activism has not been privileged and there is no single unified analysis of neoliberalism or how to deal with it remains frustrating to its critics. Instead, the ethos of global justice activism draws on previous activist practices from the North and South as well as anarchism to create a distinctive style of political action. As is evident by the premature obituaries of the movement, its critics fail to see that its longevity in fact rests upon its very adaptability and fluidity, its openness to change, and its ongoing reinvention by committed activists.

These premature claims based on the fact that there has not been 'another Seattle' overlook a critical factor - that demonstrations are not the movement, merely a manifestation of one part of it. As has been discussed, the movement is a 'movement of movements', and 'one of the greatest strengths of this model of organising is that it has proven extremely difficult to control, largely because it is so different from the organising principles of the institutions and corporations it targets' (Klein 2002:21). Inspired by many of the movements in the South which provide the most convincing responses to the 'international failure of representative democracy' (ibid), Northern activists

have been increasingly expanding upon their vision for a connected international network of local initiatives built on direct democracy.

A further point often overlooked is that a summative principle operating in the movement is the inseparability of means and ends. Many Northern activists interviewed for this thesis derive from anarchist/situationist traditions in which the reinvention of everyday life is considered a revolutionary act. They hold that the route to social change is as important as the desired goal, not just because the means determine the end but also because the present matters in and of itself. Thus, process is valued and seen as being as important as direct action. Unlike traditional left-wing politics, personal change and decentralised organising were not deferred until 'after the revolution' but fully acted upon. The notion of the inseparability of means and ends is in direct opposition to the hegemonic neoliberal discourse and by its very nature is a challenging project. An understanding of this contributes greatly to the comprehension that the movement not only is involved in large-scale protests but is also engaged in discussing and developing its own agenda and responses to neoliberalism, often via the forums discussed above. This ethos binds activists and struggles together across the globe. Loose enough to be stretched to breaking point, and manifesting a number of tensions, it is nonetheless embedded in the collective identity of the movement.

## **Making the Road Whilst Walking Together**

The global justice movement is inspired by demands to engage with all necessary liberations and therefore constantly has to negotiate between different understandings and definitions of liberation and struggle and the right of different politics to develop (Jordan 2002:141). It therefore assumes many different movements with no single drawing of all the threads together. Therefore, critique of the movement post 9-11 must include the continued

actions and opportunities to be found in the Southern representation of the movement. Failure to do so reflects a general ethnocentrism about social movements and activists in the South and negates the truly and significantly global nature of the movement. Several activists have written about the global/local nature of the movement post 9-11. In an article written after September 11, Klein writes that these connections between global and local are not often made:

Instead, we sometimes seem to have two activist solitudes. On the one hand, there are the international globalisation activists who seem to be fighting faraway issues, unconnected to people's day to day struggles. Because they don't represent the local realities of globalisation, they are too easily dismissed as misguided university students or professional activists. On the other hand, there are thousands of community-based organisations fighting daily struggles for survival, or for the preservation of the most elementary public services. Their campaigns are often dismissed as purely local, even insignificant...The only clear way forward is for these forces to now merge. - To get to this place we need to make room for the voices - coming from Chiapas, Porto Alegre, Kerala - showing us that it is possible to challenge imperialism while embracing plurality, progress and deep democracy.

(Klein 2002:245)

The Shifting Ground Collective also writes in a Post-September 11 context about the notion of the local and global and warns:

First, our movement of movements must not cede the global level of struggle, which has been amongst its most creative and courageous undertakings. Particularly as exhibited in the imagination shown by those who articulated conveyed and responded to calls such as those from Chiapas for the first Encuentro 'por Humanidad y contra el neoliberalismo' or from London for the first 'Carnival Against Capitalism'. This is the courage of those who have protected the idea of being 'against capitalism' and who have seen their spark ignite connections across continents. For too long exhortations to think global and act local served to deny this potential and effectively handed the control of the global to capital, which has always thought and acted globally.

Secondly, in a period where the liberal fantasy of human rights is demonstrable by their absence and revocability on whim, the only defence against anti-terrorism laws is the certainty of resistance by communities who 'harbour' activists. This is only to note the importance of belonging and appealing to a constituency of support in the places we live. This is the local at work, not some idealised notion of a domain outside of the reach of the global or somehow preserved as authentic,

but rather the idea that our ideas and actions are rooted in and connected to our neighbours whomever they may be.

(Shifting Ground 2002)

The process for global change mandates that pedagogical interactions centre the experiences of the oppressed. Those who are marginalised from the insidious assaults of the international neoliberal agenda are not passive objects but active knowledge –producers, whose lived realities and struggles for resistance have profound pedagogical implications for transformative change. In this period of neoliberal globalisation, they have carved new spaces for resistance and reclaimed old ones. Their paths to challenge and disrupt exploitative structures are manifested in multiple forms – from everyday forms of 'passive' protests and mass demonstrations to membership in large, formal and organised movements at national and international levels. There are indeed broad-based organisations that target the formal political process to advocate accountability and change, and even more informal sporadic and amorphous movements that seek to resist, challenge and subvert the global neoliberal agenda. People have opposed and will continue to oppose oppression and injustice individually or collectively, passively or actively, formally or informally, peacefully or violently – or a blend of a few or all of these. Some choose to actively engage the formal political process, while others disengage from it completely. Tripp (1994) captures this point by referring to the name of a local African women's group '*Togaya kye zinze*' which literally translates as 'do not discard a rolled up piece of paper', understood to mean to not dismiss what appears to be insignificant.

In the dominant representation of the global justice movement, the focus usually is on the North. According to Choudry the many struggles taking place in the South are connected to anti-imperialist, anti-colonial mass movements with long histories, but 'the voices heard most loudly and insistently in the international media and at most major international

gatherings opposing the neoliberal agenda and building alternatives are rarely those of grassroots community activists from the South, let alone the Indigenous Peoples in the countries of the Global North' (Choudry 2002:3). The claim then that the movement for global justice is finished post 9-11 is based on a view of formal, institutionalised, large-scale and Northern-based movements.

Conceptualisations of the struggle for global justice need to be broadened to fully appreciate the spectrum of the struggle for social change. Such an undertaking would result in positioning the multiple and competing frameworks to understand the resistance, and the creative, persistent ways in which marginalised and oppressed communities are challenging the prevailing hegemonic system. In other words, as Friere (1997) insists:

The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not 'marginals', are not living 'outside' society. They have always been 'inside' – inside the structure which made them 'beings for others'. The solution is not to 'integrate them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so they can become 'beings for themselves'.

(Friere 1997: 55)

In my view, Southern global justice activists have provided some of the most evolved and critical strategic contributions grounded in clear philosophies of political praxis, and which demonstrate the necessity for cross-border organising. It is obvious that although resistance is ever-present in the North, it is often foreclosed through limited or critical media coverage and state repression. These external limitations have had an insidious hegemonic effect on the Northern part of the movement. Whether these are discussed as hindrances or ultimately as areas of expansion, it is certain that the realisation of the global justice movement's ideals will occur only with redoubled efforts to consider these absences and to continue working globally.

Far from being over, the movement has become a beacon for activists North to South, in the construction of a 'globalisation from below' in which citizens, rather than neoliberal capital, are the transnational subjects. It is this radical democratic praxis, with its tactics of inclusion and coalition and its vision of environmental sustainability, gender equality and political-economic democracy, that has the ability to challenge the discourses of globalisation and create an alternative vision of 'what democracy can look like'.

## Conclusion

### The Unity of Many Determinations

**The protestors are simply too focussed on reality, and on facts and figures. There's an enormous number of experts at the greatest universities in the world, who have read all these books, who have read Adam Smith and everything since, to Milton Friedman, and these people have solid theoretical basis for knowing that things will lead to betterment. We have to find a way to convince perhaps not the protestors, but the protestors' children, to follow thinkers like Milton Friedman and Darwin and so on rather than what the protestors have been reared on - Trotsky and Robespierre, and Abbie Hoffman'.**

(Hulatberi cited in *The Yes Men* 2003: 246)

**Anti-globalisation activists understand that sympathetic and mutually beneficial global ties are good. But we want social and global ties to advance universal equity, solidarity, diversity, and self-management, not to subjugate ever-wider populations to an elite minority. We want to globalize equity not poverty, solidarity not anti-sociality, diversity not conformity, democracy not subordination, and ecological balance not suicidal rapaciousness.**

(Michael Albert cited in *Chesters* 2003)

If the many sites discussed in this thesis represent a 'laboratory' for a new form of neoliberal politics globally, then the power struggle between neoliberal development regimes and the global justice movement's vision of radical democracy may be the test case for more generalised conflicts in the future. Thus, the movement presents us with many lessons.

By way of overview, it may be best to address each chapter in turn. Chapter One addresses the mainstream assertion that the movement has no theoretical base and thus situates the study of the global justice movement within development discourse, drawing on post-colonialism, new social movement and globalisation from below theories. It serves as a reminder that today's crisis of development in the Third World occurs as part of a long history of transgressions, including the penetration of imperial interests, which have been the sites of much resistance. The chapter explores the theoretical

circumstances that have resulted in much of the South becoming sites of intensive exploitation, exhaustion and alienation with stark contradictions between modernising hopes of prosperity and the lived realities of immiseration. Further, much of this exploitation of labour has been predicated upon control of women's bodies and a gendered division of labour. The chapter suggests that modernisation and neoliberalism are a reinvocation of imperialist discourse, yielding vicious cycles of impoverishment, labour exploitation, displacement and environmental destruction in the pursuit of unfettered capitalist control of the global economy. Thus, whether it is the basic articulation of local day-to-day experiences of communities facing neoliberal development or the global analytical critiques of a new imperialism, Southern activists are developing an expansive subaltern critique of neoliberal models. Accompanying this critique are growing expectations for an alternative, more radically democratic globalisation, which has been the basis of inspiration for many global justice activists.

Drawing on the ethnographic data obtained by examining the everyday lives of Northern based activists and their resistance to neoliberalism, chapter two challenged claims that the movement lacks vision and strategy. Throughout the chapter activists expressed radically democratic ethics and visions of strategising and mobilisation, which suggests that activists are both thinking and acting locally and globally. Activists in this chapter criticised a global political economy and articulated its impacts at other special scales. They sought to work for social transformation in human relationships with each other but also in the world around them, with a desire to transform national, international and global structures and processes. The interviews demonstrate that many Northern activists want to build a strong coalition (and held strategies of doing this) among the plurality of struggles against neoliberalism, and want to build more than the 'temporary tactical alliances' that Fournier

(2002:191) argues emerge among movements resisting globalisation because of a common enemy (Starr 2000).

The announcement by some that the movement is new is discussed in chapter three. Many Northern activists refer to the Zapatistas as a point of inspiration and model their own activism on the Zapatistas' model of radical democracy, where a strategic goal of democratic public space is identical to the means of popular participation. This is predicated upon a populist respect for local and indigenous knowledge and a desire to represent marginalised voices. The empowerment provided by these efforts including testimonial volumes, documentary, photography and largely Internet sources has been disseminated only through a democratic pedagogy in which Northern activists and the Zapatistas collaborate to develop ties of solidarity and common discourses of critique. Whilst it is clear that these strategies are appropriate for organising against neoliberalism since a broad based mobilisation is required to contend with the concerted political and economic apparatuses of neoliberal development, this has resulted in complex relationships between Northern activists and the Zapatistas.

The fourth claim levelled at the global justice movement by mainstream commentators - that it is composed entirely of 'white middle class college students' is explored in chapter four. The chapter examines the Narmada movement in India, its critiques of development and the way it has thought locally but acted globally by forming widely popular coalitions for change. The Narmada movement has seen transnational networking to be strategically necessary to pressure for government regulatory enforcement of appropriate development and corporate standards throughout India, if not the world. However, equally important for long-term resistance to neoliberalism is the facilitation of grassroots ties of solidarity in which the legacies of nationalisms, imperial consciousness and the politics of

resentment can be overcome. As this is facilitated by the common interests of activists North and South and movement ideals of community-based dialogue across differences, the transnational character of the movement is expanding. Indeed, as is shown in both chapter four and five it is indeed possible to see the emergence of a transnational citizenship in which activists have begun to see their counterparts across borders as fellow citizens with common histories and responsibilities of mutual support. Through extensive efforts at coalition building, transnational or trans-issue conflicts are transformed into strategic ties of solidarity and a more global consciousness. Lastly, Namarda activists agree that whilst change must occur globally, both state institutions and transnational corporations must be targets of transformation, especially in a neoliberal model where capital-state relations are extensive and powerful.

In response to the final claim, that the movement has dissolved after the attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001 chapter five poses an answer. Beginning with interviews of activists in the United States and the global South it is clear that the movement has experienced changes and is tempered, in locations by political-economic repression and coalitional changes. However, just as importantly, strategic innovations, inter-movement dialogue and expressive social critique have also emerged from this conflict. This strategic collaboration and social solidarity have consolidated North-South activist relationships with activists acknowledging the critical realisation that many socially constructed differences are hegemonic articulations which perpetuate resentment, cynicism and ultimately greater disunity in the resistance to common oppressions. Chapter five discusses the profound debates regarding the dismissiveness of resistance by activists of the South, which enables mainstream critics to assert the death of the global justice movement. Insofar as this enforced invisibility derive from long legacies of hegemonic divisiveness these debates are in need of greater discussion and

mediation if the global justice movement is to find the necessary difference-in-unity for resisting neoliberalism. The broad strategies discussed in this thesis have been successful in transnational and global solidarity campaigns and days of action, but much work is to be done to make their resistance a more popular counter-hegemonic movement.

## **Future Dimensions**

The previous chapters have provided some answers to the research questions that have informed this study. Clearly, however, not each question is answered exhaustively and all could be the subject of further investigation. Yet, there are a few especially important dimensions of this project that beg for further elaboration if there is going to be a more complete understanding of the global justice movement and its relationship between Northern and Southern activists.

First, although this research addresses many of the dynamics of activists and many 'rank and file' participants were interviewed to help understand the issues<sup>47</sup> most of those whose words appear in this thesis (particularly in Chapter two) were well-known movement activists. This was imperative for the initial stages of research into the histories and strategic considerations of the movement. However, for greater community-based understandings of the popularity and effectiveness of the movement, subsequent research could seek a greater balance between those well-known activists and those who participate, but may not consider themselves as activists. This may yield both confirmations of movement intentions and critical points of expansion that activists can consider in future strategy.

Second, one major issue that requires more exploration is that of difference among participants in the movement. As stated in chapter two and four, race and ethnicity does not always involve explicit theorisation by many parts of the movement, with sometimes only indirect and subtle references and consideration being made. Although the research entailed some inquiry into these issues, future interviews could engage more extensive strategies of eliciting detailed commentary on aspects of diversity, particularly in terms of relationships between North and South. As Chesters notes: 'the key to understanding the [global justice movement] is not to be found amongst individual actors be they groups or organisations. We must instead focus our attention upon the processes of interaction *between* actors. If we are to reveal anything about how the [global justice movement] works, we must look to processes and to form, for it is within this hidden architecture that something of the dynamic strength of the [global justice movement] can be grasped (2003).

Third, with the exception of information included in Chapter five, very few of the interviews in this research focussed on gender. Although it is clear that different class-based, national and religious identities are over-determined by gender, these relationships within the movement require further investigation. In a number of interviews activists recognised these differences and cited specific tensions in terms of coalition building and inclusion, it is necessary to inquire further into the histories of these conflicts to understand their complexities and the overall effect on global justice organising.

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<sup>47</sup> This is particularly the case in chapter four where I draw on unpublished fieldnotes from 1995. With exception to interviews with Medha Paktar, the majority of comments in this chapter come from villagers.

It is no accident that 'new' social movements have emerged during the latest neoliberal phase of political and economic restructuring. New/old distinctions in the discussion of social movement history have been riddled with problems of a historical analysis and the many complexities of old and new social movement forms; however the social history of neoliberalism has not been without transforming consequences for the Left and as Burgmann notes 'lack of concerted intellectual resistance to globalisation has been a obvious feature of the globalising world order' (2003:327).

Late twentieth century social change included shifts towards post-Fordist economies, information technologies, postmodern culture, and U.S. foreign policy of aggressive capitalist expansionism. Additionally, Burgmann provides a compelling argument that the absence of critique on the part of the Left has been 'a source of systemic strength for neo-liberal globalisation' (2003:328). Meanwhile there has been simultaneous and non-coincidental collapse of the socialised state, a deligitimation of modern nationalisms and the growth of economic liberalisation via transnational capital. These changes, have of course, been facilitated by the emergence of a post-Cold War context in which state socialist policies have waned in the face of a hegemonic neoliberal regime of accumulation and its repressive New World Order debuted in dramatic fashion in the Gulf War.

Thus, in its varied forms there has been a general Northern tendency towards the appearance of 'new' movements that are less focussed on state ideology, macro political strategy, centralised mass organisations, or essentialist analyses of social crisis. Instead, they have been organised more around the inclusion of marginalised groups, identity or micropolitical claims, radically democratic civil societies, decentralised organisational forms, coalitional political praxis, and a distinct if varied anti-imperialism.

Certainly this general movement form has been in evidence in the global justice movement. Generally, activists have resisted state-based ideologies, since they recognise the limited power or interest state institutions have in changing neoliberal development. There is a general consensus amongst activists that the ends of sustainable and just forms of development must be achieved by the means of popular democratic pressure. Therefore, in the construction of a movement that is relevant and empowering it is necessary to address the wide range of problems and complexities that are experienced by many living under neoliberalism. This means there must be an ever expanding and anti-essentialist critique of the power and consequences of neoliberal development for local communities, including analyses of imperialist methods by which neoliberalism actively marginalises communities. Further, there are developing critiques of the ways in which social and environmental crises of the world are intertwined, giving voice to the vital conditions of existence upon which we all depend. Not unlike the Narmada movement or the Zapatistas, the global justice movement has focussed on the development of new public spaces and civil society in which local communities empower themselves to define political alternatives.

As activists in this thesis testify, strategically, the global justice movement is in a position to challenge the structure of capitalism and many activists would agree with the words of Laclau and Mouffe that 'every project for radical democracy implies a socialist dimension, as it is necessary to put an end to capitalist relations of production, which are at the root of numerous relations of subordination, but socialism is one of the components for radical democracy, not vice versa' (1985:178). This is because the more inclusive and participatory principles of radical democracy form a broader and more popular basis of social change. In sum, the global justice movement reveals both 'new tendencies' towards radically democratic, transnational and multicultural forms of development, while many remain committed to 'old'

class and state based visions for the empowerment of working people, resulting in a uniquely fertile politics of opposition to the over-determined opinions of neoliberalism.

This is most evident in the trans-issue dialogues that emerge from locally based movements, such as the Zapatistas and Namarda activists and strategic coalitions that, however constrained and nascent, are struggling to overcome class reductionism, single-issue essentialisms, and compromised liberal reformism. When these coalitions come together to discuss common dilemmas and strategic possibilities for collaboration, they represent an even greater potential for broad-based and effective transformation. This is so, not merely because there exists a radically democratic articulation of old and new movement forms, or coalitional openness, but also because the movement recognises the ever more extensive interpretation of the local and the global, working towards a more participatory vision of global citizenship.

As discussed throughout the thesis, the current period is one with increasing clientistic roles for national governments and no concurrent growth of transnational apparatuses for democratically regulating global capital. Therefore the efforts of transnational coalitions among local communities, particularly in those hot spots of globalisation and neoliberalism, represent unique and guiding influences for all peoples suffering from economic and social injustice. The global justice movement has been both immanently local and increasingly global in their coalition building, enabling the formation of flexibly strategic endeavours to pressure capital and states towards a rollback of neoliberal development and a redistributive transnationalism. Here, the term 'community' is of particular importance for the global justice movement as it signifies local neighbourhoods and the valuable cultural traditions many communities hold dear, yet also denotes an expanding circle of activists and citizens around the globe who experience similar dilemmas under an imperial neoliberal order.

By helping create an emergent global civil society in which people can discuss differences and commonalities in the search for collaborative solutions, they are slowly, but surely, defining a radical global citizenship. If citizenship may be understood not as an identification with a particular nation state, but as the collective responsibilities and public accountability one experiences with fellow members of a society; and if national social conditions under neoliberalism are undergoing some globalisation, then we can expect that citizenship is becoming more global as well. Indeed, global media, communication technologies, inter-state political forums, transnational NGOs and of course transnational corporations are constructing the possibility for normative, economic and political systems in which we are all common subjects.

However, the global justice movement is helping to define a global citizenship that possesses subaltern and resistive norms of radical democracy, economic justice and environmental health. Through increased global dialogue and strategic campaigns of solidarity, the movement is at the forefront of a growing oppositional consciousness against new geographic and corporate versions of imperial dependency, authoritarian governance and forced underdevelopment. Thus, in a context of limited structural opportunities for transformation, it not only struggles to make the global local by pressuring for the accountability of multilateral agencies and transnational, but work to make the local global by promoting trans-local coalitions in the name of globalisation from below. As this discourse of opposition is articulated in more developed and critical ways, the possibilities increase for realising a radical transnational democracy that can cross all borders.

Global justice activists create spaces of hope by disrupting the notions of inevitability associated with neoliberalism. They expose the devastating

consequences of a global capitalist system as the products of decisions rather than the 'forces' of the market: 'they are forcing those behind neoliberalism to step up their actions, to show the effects and decisions behind the faceless and distant "inevitable force of the market", and to reveal these "decisions" as, by definition, possibly otherwise' (Fournier 2002:199). Thus, the political practice of the global justice movement is more sophisticated than the term 'anti-globalisation' implies. Perhaps, though, the movement's real significance lies in the way it embodies utopianism, a daring to imagine alternative visions, to cultivate possibilities (Fournier 2002). The global justice movement represents an emergent, sustainable and transformative consciousness of resistance to the latest phase of imperialism. Through their visions and ideals, and the way they put them into practice, global justice activists develop alternative forms of social organisation and show that decisions are indeed 'possibly otherwise'.

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