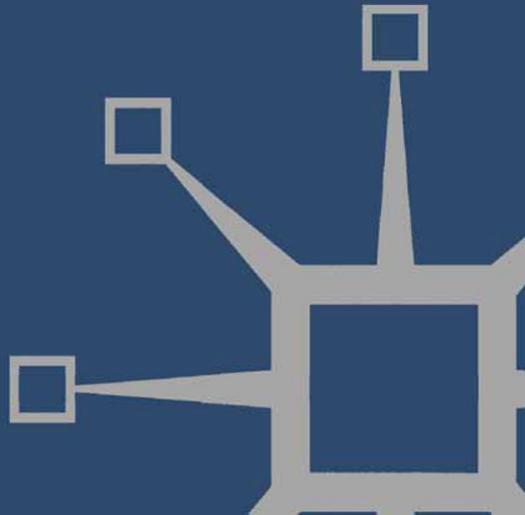


palgrave
macmillan

Social Movements in the Global South

Dispossession, Development and
Resistance

Edited by
Sara C. Motta
Alf Gunvald Nilsen



Social Movements in the Global South

Rethinking International Development Series

Series Editors: **Andy Sumner**, Fellow of the Vulnerability and Poverty Research Team, Institute of Development Studies, UK.

Ray Kiely, Professor of International Politics, Queen Mary University of London, UK.

Palgrave Macmillan is delighted to announce a new series dedicated to publishing cutting-edge titles that focus on the broad area of 'development'.

The core aims of the series are to present critical work that:

- is cross disciplinary;
- challenges orthodoxies;
- reconciles theoretical depth with empirical research;
- explores the frontiers of development studies in terms of 'development' in both North and South and global inter-connectedness;
- reflects on claims to knowledge and intervening in other peoples' lives.

Titles include:

Simon Feeny and Matthew Clarke
THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND BEYOND
International Assistance to the Asia-Pacific

Niamh Gaynor
TRANSFORMING PARTICIPATION?
The Politics of Development in Malawi and Ireland

Sue Kenny and Matthew Clarke (*editors*)
CHALLENGING CAPACITY BUILDING
Comparative Perspectives

Sara C. Motta and Alf Gunvald Nilsen (*editors*)
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH
Dispossession, Development and Resistance

Eric Rugraff, Diego Sánchez-Ancochea, Andy Sumner (*editors*)
TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY
Critical Perspectives

Jens Stilhoff Sørensen (*editor*)
CHALLENGING THE AID PARADIGM
Western Currents and Asian Alternatives

Andy Sumner and Meera Tiwari
AFTER 2015: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY AT A CROSSROADS

Rethinking International Development Series

Series Standing Order ISBN 978-0-230-53751-4 (hardback)
(*outside North America only*)

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and the ISBN quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

Social Movements in the Global South

Dispossession, Development and Resistance

Edited by

Sara C. Motta

Lecturer in Politics and Political Economy, University of Nottingham, UK

Alf Gunvald Nilsen

Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Sociology, University of Bergen, Norway

palgrave
macmillan



Introduction, selection and editorial matter © Sara C. Motta and Alf Gunvald Nilsen 2011

Individual chapters © contributors 2011

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2011 978-0-230-24349-1

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2011 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-31843-8 ISBN 978-0-230-30204-4 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9780230302044

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Social movements in the global south : dispossession, development and resistance / edited by Sara C. Motta, Alf Gunvald Nilsen.

p. cm. — (Rethinking international development series)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-349-31843-8

1. Social movements—Developing countries. 2. Neoliberalism—
Developing countries. I. Motta, Sara C., 1973— II. Nilsen, Alf Gunvald.

HN980.S587 2011

303.48'4091724—dc22

2011001650

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	viii
1 Social Movements and/in the Postcolonial: Dispossession, Development and Resistance in the Global South <i>Sara C. Motta and Alf Gunvald Nilsen</i>	1
Part I Struggles Against Dispossession: Social Movements and the State in the Global South	
2 Labour Protest and Hegemony in Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula <i>John Chalcraft</i>	35
3 Choice From No Choice; Rights for the Left? The State, Law and the Struggle Against Prepayment Water Meters in South Africa <i>Jackie Dugard</i>	59
4 Neoliberalism and Counter-Hegemony in the Global South: Reimagining the State <i>Mark Boden</i>	83
5 'Not Suspended in Mid-Air': Critical Reflections on Subaltern Encounters with the Indian State <i>Alf Gunvald Nilsen</i>	104
Part II Epistemologies of Resistance: Social Movements, Collective Learning and the Politics of Knowledge	
6 The University and the Landless Movement in Brazil: The Experience of Collective Knowledge Construction through Educational Projects in Rural Areas <i>Sandra Maria Gadelha de Carvalho and José Ernandi Mendes</i>	131
7 Generating Theory in the Bhopal Survivors' Movement <i>Suroopa Mukherjee, Eurig Scandrett, Tarunima Sen and Dharmesh Shah</i>	150

- 8 Notes Towards Prefigurative Epistemologies 178
Sara C. Motta
- 9 Beyond Differences? Exploring Methodological Dilemmas of
Activist Research in the Global South 200
Birke Otto and Philipp Terhorst

**Part III Against Neoliberalism and Beyond
Developmentalism? Social Movements and the
Postcolonial Development Project**

- 10 Three Actors, Two Geographies, One Philosophy:
The Straightjacket of Social Movements 227
Radha D'Souza
- 11 Fuelling the Flames of Dignity: From Rupture to Revolution in
Argentina 250
Marina Sitrin
- Index* 275

Preface

Sara and Alf would like to thank all the participants at the conference 'Social Movements and/in the Postcolonial: Dispossession, Development and Resistance in the Global South' for the spirit of comradely engagement that they helped to create at the University of Nottingham during the course of three June days in 2008. The conference was made possible by a grant from the School of Politics and International Relations, for which we are grateful. We would also like to thank Sue Simpson, whose administrative expertise, friendly help and hard work held the conference together. To the contributors of this book – many of whom participated in the conference that inspired the volume in the first place – we owe a great thanks for their patient work on their respective chapters and for their appreciation of the imperative of making social movement research relevant to those on the frontlines of the struggles that are currently moulding our collective futures. Finally, we would like to thank Renée Takken, Alexander Joel Jones and everyone at Palgrave for their efforts in bringing this book to fruition.

Sara would like to thank her colleagues at the Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice for their imagination, openness and commitment to bridging the borders between theory and practice, activism and academia and the university and the community. She would like to thank the network of friends and activists in Nottingham and Venezuela who with great determination and courage struggle in their everyday lives and practices to create worlds beyond capitalism, particularly Mercedes, Mariela and Nora of the CTUs La Vega, and Andrew Robinson, nomad intellectual and activist, Ben and Dom of the Nottingham Free School and Camille Herreman, *mi hermana*, for politicising the private as part of our struggles. Finally, she would like to thank her daughters, Sujei and Jaiya, for accompanying her with patience and understanding in what can be difficult struggles.

Alf would like to thank erstwhile colleagues at the Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice for intellectual comradeship during his tenure at the School of Politics and International Relations. The conference upon which this volume is based took place in the immediate aftermath of a campaign in which many students and staff across the University of Nottingham stood up in defence of academic freedom and civil liberties, and protested an incipient climate of fear and repression both within and beyond the academy. This was an inspirational experience and a catalysing moment in a process of resistance that is still ongoing and expanding. Alf wishes to thank his comrades in this campaign – good people who understand that favouring freedom yet depreciating agitation is much like wanting crops without ploughing up the ground – for their unstinting solidarity and courage.

Notes on Contributors

Mark Boden was Fellow in Comparative Politics from 2007 to 2009 in the Government Department of the London School of Economics. Currently he teaches politics in an independent sixth form college in London.

John Chalcraft is Reader in the History and Politics of Empire/Imperialism in the Government Department at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK. Previous posts include a Research Fellowship at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge and a Lectureship at the University of Edinburgh. He obtained his PhD in History from NYU in 2001. His research focuses on history from below and popular politics in the Middle East, with special reference to Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and more recently the Gulf. He is particularly interested in the modern history of labour migrants, crafts and service workers, guilds and popular protest. His work also tackles broader issues of hegemony, counter-hegemony, subaltern studies and post-materialist labour history. He has two single-author books: *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories* (2004) and *The Invisible Cage: Syrian migrant workers in Lebanon* (2009). He also co-edited a volume with Yaseen Noorani, *Counterhegemony in the Colony and Postcolony* (2007). He is currently conducting research on migration politics in the Gulf as well as undertaking an ESRC-funded research project entitled 'Popular Politics in the Making of the Middle East'.

Radha D'Souza is Reader in Law at the School of Law, University of Westminster in London. Her research interests include global and social justice, social movements, law and development, colonialism and imperialism, socio-legal studies in the 'Third World' and water conflicts. She practised as a barrister at the High Court of Mumbai, India. Radha is a social justice activist, writer and commentator. She has lived and worked in India and Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Jackie Dugard is Executive Director of the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI). Prior to co-founding SERI (in January 2010), Jackie was a Senior Researcher at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg between 2004 and 2009. Her areas of expertise are socio-economic rights, socio-legal studies and access to basic services and justice for the poor. Recent publications include: (2009)

'Rights, Regulation and Resistance: The Phiri Water Rights Campaign', *South African Journal on Human Rights*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 593–611; (2009) 'Courts and the Poor in South Africa: A Critique of Systemic Judicial Failures to Advance Transformative Justice', *South African Journal on Human Rights*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 214–38; and (2008) 'Power to the People?: A Rights-Based Analysis of South Africa's Electricity Policy Framework', in D. Macdonald (ed.), *Electric Capitalism: Recolonizing Africa on the Power Grid*, pp. 264–87 (Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council).

Sandra Maria Gadelha de Carvalho is Associate Professor at the State University of Ceará (UECE). She holds a PhD in Education from the Brazilian Federal University of Ceará (UFC). She convenes modules in adult education, pedagogy of Paulo Freire for Youth and Adult Education (EJA) and Sociology of Education in the Pedagogy course at the Faculty of Philosophy Dom Aureliano Matos (FAFIDAM). She directs the Laboratory of Rural Education (Lecampo) in which she develops research on adult education in rural settlements. She coordinated the Schooling Project II and currently coordinates the project 'One More Step in Rural Education' for the elementary schooling of youth and adults in rural settlements. Both projects are part of the National Programme of Land Reform Education (PRONERA).

José Ernandi Mendes is Associate Professor at the State University of Ceará (UECE). He holds a PhD in Education from the Brazilian Federal University of Ceará (UFC). He convenes modules in sociology of education, educational planning and curricular theory and practice at the Faculty of Philosophy Dom Aureliano Matos (FAFIDAM). He coordinates the research project 'The Place of the Public School in Society: Policies, Practices and Representations' and the extension project: 'Teacher Training in the Rural Settlements of Ceará – the Earth Teaching Course as Part of the National Programme of Land Reform Education (PRONERA)'.

Sara C. Motta is Lecturer in Latin American and Comparative Politics at the School of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham. Her research focus is the politics of subaltern resistance, with particular reference to Latin America. She has written about the Latin American Third Way Governments of the Concertación in Chile and the Workers' Party in Brazil in relation to their role in stabilizing and normalizing neoliberal hegemony. A second strand of her research is focused on new forms of subaltern politics in the region, with particular reference to social movements in Argentina (unemployed movements), Venezuela (urban land movement) and Brazil (Landless Workers' Movement and Solidarity Economy Movement). This research has led her to explore the politics of knowledge and the linkages between knowledge, power and exclusion. Methodologically she is therefore interested in developing movement relevant research and participatory

research methods. As part of this she is also interested in the pedagogy of dissent, and the use of popular education and critical education in and outside of the university in the forging of struggles and practices of social justice.

Suroopa Mukherjee teaches literature at Delhi University. In 2002, her book *Bhopal Gas Tragedy*, a book for young people, was published; since then she has been involved with the social movement. She has written widely on various aspects of the tragedy. In 2003, she was a founding member and staff advisor of the student group We for Bhopal, Delhi University that was involved in bringing out a report and widely acclaimed video film *Closer to Reality* to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the disaster. From 2005 to 2008, she was a Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, doing full-time research on the women survivors of Bhopal. Her book *Surviving Bhopal: Dancing Bodies, Written Texts, Oral Testimonials of Women in the Wake of an Industrial Disaster* was published in April 2010. She writes fiction in her spare time.

Alf Gunvald Nilsen is Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Sociology, University of Bergen. His research interests cover social movement theory and research, critical development research and Marxist approaches in political economy. He is the author of *Dispossession and Resistance in India: The River and the Rage* 2010, and is currently involved in participatory research with Adivasi movements in Madhya Pradesh, India.

Birke Otto (Dipl., MA) studied Social and Cultural Sciences at the European University Frankfurt, Oder, Germany. Her research interests include discourse analytical and postcolonial approaches to North/South relations in international development. Currently, she is a PhD student at the Essex Business School, University of Essex, UK. Her research focuses on the relations between social movements, non-governmental organizations and other international actors in shaping water governance processes.

Eurig Scandrett is Lecturer in Sociology at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh and coordinator of postgraduate programmes in Social Justice. After an initial career in environmental science research, he spent 15 years in adult education and community development including eight years as Head of Community Action at Friends of the Earth Scotland. His research interests include adult and popular education and informal learning processes in environmental justice movements and campaign groups and liberation theology. He is coordinator of the Bhopal Survivors' Movement Study and edited *Bhopal Survivors Speak: Emergent Voices from a People's Movement* (2009). He is a Fellow of the Centre for Human Ecology.

Tarunima Sen is a Delhi-based researcher with an interest in the use of arts and discussion for community development. She is currently helping a firm adopt a village in India to set up its power and water facilities.

Dharmesh Shah is an environmental activist and researcher based out of Chennai, India. Dharmesh has been involved in raising awareness on environmental and animal rights issues since he was in school. As an environmental justice activist he has worked with communities living around municipal garbage dumps in Chennai demanding their right to a clean environment and questioning unsustainable systems of waste management. He has also been a long-time volunteer with the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal which is a network of organizations and activists working with the survivors of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy. Between 2007–08, Dharmesh worked with the Bhopal Survivors' Movement Study on which the book *Survivors Speak: Emergent Voices from a People's Movement* is based. He is currently working as the India coordinator of GAIA (Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance) which is an international coalition of activists and organizations working on issues of waste and climate.

Marina Sitrin is a writer, lawyer, teacher, student and dreamer. She is the editor of *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (2006; 2005, Spanish edition). A new and expanded version of *Horizontalism* is forthcoming entitled *Dreaming Without Limits: Horizontalism and Autonomy in Argentina*. Marina is co-editor of *Insurgent Democracies: Latin America's New Powers* (2011). Marina has spent the past year working in Cuba while writing a book on contemporary life there. Marina has a law degree from the City University of New York, and is a PhD candidate in Global Sociology at Stony Brook University where she received her Masters.

Philipp Terhorst (MSc Water and Environmental Management and PhD at Water, Engineering and Development Centre WEDC, Loughborough University) has worked extensively with social movements against water privatization, mainly in the Americas. Considering knowledge production as part of social action, he engages as research activist with transnational networks and local water movements. Combining research on water management reform and movement politics, his key interest lies in the role and capability of social movements in the development of alternatives to water privatization, commercialization and failing public (and community) services.



The Bhopal survivors' movement has empowered women (and united Muslims and Hindus at a time of heightened communal divisions) in their struggle for justice against multinational corporation Dow Chemicals and the Indian state.

1

Social Movements and/in the Postcolonial: Dispossession, Development and Resistance in the Global South

Sara C. Motta and Alf Gunvald Nilsen

Introduction

A new lie is sold to us as history. The lie about the defeat of hope, the lie about the defeat of dignity, the lie about the defeat of humanity. The mirror of power offers us equilibrium in the balance scale: the lie about the victory of cynicism, the lie about the victory of servitude, the lie about the victory of neoliberalism.¹

These are the defiant words of the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional (EZLN), the spearhead of the movement of indigenous peasants in the Chiapas highlands in southeast Mexico, espoused in the middle of the 1990s – a decade that had commenced with the assertion that with the near-total reign of free markets and liberal democracy, humanity had arrived at the end of history. Erupting in 1994, the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas was a crucial indicator that social forces were crystallizing in opposition to neoliberal hegemony, and that the locus of this process was the global South. Undoubtedly, it was in Latin America that popular challenges to neoliberalism were most visibly articulated: the 1990s witnessed the rise of a plethora of social movements seeking to move beyond developmentalism and neoliberalism in the region, and by the first decade of the 2000s, Latin America had become engulfed in the so-called ‘Pink Tide’ – the electoral success of political parties of different leftist hues, from Venezuela, via Bolivia and Ecuador, to Nicaragua. However, during the past three decades there has been an upsurge of popular resistance to neoliberal dispossession in other regions of the global South as well. India, South Africa and the Middle East are some of the cases represented in this book, but significant social movements also crystallized in much of East and South-East Asia towards the late 1990s.

The social movements that have emerged in the global South – mobilizing a wide range of subaltern groups, such as indigenous peoples, women, peasants, retrenched workers and shantytown dwellers – have in large part been a response to, and a rejection of, the extreme forms of dispossession, poverty and inequality that have flowed from the shift to neoliberalism in the region since the early 1980s. These movements, however, have not only rejected neoliberalism, but have in many cases also proceeded to envision and construct alternative forms of development and politics. This book is a collective effort to explore and elucidate the characteristics, dynamics and significance of contemporary social movements in the global South and the projects, practices and imaginaries they have articulated in relation to global neoliberal hegemony, and to raise the question of how these social movements can be said to be reinventing the direction and meaning of development and the political. The book develops analyses that move across the theoretical, conceptual and epistemological issues thrown up by such social movements and seeks to do so in a manner which is politically enabling and has the potential to contribute to the movements' strategic praxis. The diversity of the movements that the volume engages with is reflected by diversity of theoretical frameworks employed by the authors, which range from Marxian state theory, Gramsci's notion of hegemony, postcolonial critique, critical legal studies and conceptions of 'movement-relevant theory' (Bevington and Dixon, 2005) inspired by popular education.

The volume is structured around three key themes. Firstly, we explore the relationship between social movements, the state and law. Our focus is on the dynamics of popular struggles over recognition and rights in relation to the state, the role of law and judicial activism in struggles against privatization, the limits and potentialities of engaging with the capitalist state in struggles against dispossession, and the theoretical and strategic significance of attempts to construct a new, 'socialist' state. Secondly, we explore the process and epistemological politics of knowledge production by, for and about social movements. The part addresses the epistemological challenges that social movements level against epistemic privilege, the problematics inherent in the relationship between movements of the global South and researchers from the global North, experiences of movement-relevant research with non-literate subaltern women, and the construction of curriculum between university academics and movement intellectuals in the struggle for agrarian reform. Thirdly, we explore if and how social movements in the global South have managed to move beyond defensive forms of struggle against dispossession towards more offensive oppositional projects and processes. The part investigates how social movements encounter, relate to and politicize the postcolonial development project in ways which may prefigure alternative forms of development, and asks whether current theoretical frameworks are capable of

conceptualizing and contributing to the politics of social movements in the global South.

The movements that are the focal point of this book move on and in a particular terrain of domination and resistance that we shall refer to as the postcolonial. We conceive of the postcolonial as a 'field of force' (Thompson, 1978; Roseberry, 1994) that came into being with the advent of decolonization of the global South, in which dominant and subaltern groups are engaged in conflictual encounters over the forms, directions and meanings of development, and, crucially, which is simultaneously constitutive of and constituted by the dynamics of these struggles. More specifically, this book focuses on social movements that have emerged at a crucial conjuncture in the postcolonial, namely the transition from developmentalism – that is, state-led capitalist development – to neoliberalism. In the following we analyse the political economy of this conjuncture, the movement struggles that it emanated from and the movement struggles that it has given rise to more closely. We focus in particular on the differential positions of subaltern groups within developmentalism as a hegemonic project, the way in which these differential positions have given shape to forms of popular struggle in the transition to neoliberalism, the fault lines and contradictions inherent to the attempts to construct neoliberal hegemony that also shape subaltern resistance, and the character and dynamics of the resultant oppositional political projects and processes that seek to move beyond both developmentalism and neoliberalism.

Developmentalism and the postcolonial field of force

The political economy that initially structured the field of force that we refer to as the postcolonial was shaped by social movements that challenged the hegemony of dominant social groups and states across the world in the first half of the twentieth century.

In the advanced capitalist countries, the Great Depression of 1876–93 heralded the decline of liberal capitalism and the era that Hobsbawm (1995) appropriately referred to as 'the age of capital'. A significant factor in this decline was the intensification of labour militancy and the rise of political parties that represented the interests of the working classes in the arena of parliamentary politics. The result was the historical class compromise between capital and labour, manifest above all in the Keynesian welfare state (Wallerstein, 1990; Halperin, 2004). In Russia, in 1917, workers and peasants animated a communist revolution that laid to rest a decaying feudal empire. In the wake of the Second World War, the spread of communism gathered momentum as popular movements spearheaded revolutionary transformations in Eastern Europe and China. Eventually, what emerged was a historical alternative to capitalism and liberal democracy at a world-scale (Wallerstein, 1990; Hobsbawm, 1995).

Crucially, the world also changed along another axis during this period. European colonial rule, which had reached its zenith on the eve of the First World War, came in for a challenge from mass movements for national liberation. Until the First World War demands for national liberation in colonized countries had tended to be raised by native elites, often educated at the leading academic institutions of the colonial powers, who 'made little attempt to mobilize the mass of the population into the nationalist struggle' (Silver and Slater, 1999: 200). This changed in the interwar years as nationalist leaders sought to extend the scope of their struggle by integrating peasants and workers and by building political links between liberation movements. By the end of the Second World War the national liberation movements had come to constitute an anti-systemic force to be reckoned with at a global scale (Patel and McMichael, 2004).

The primary response to the national liberation movements was 'a major expansion of the Westphalia system' as decolonization brought national sovereignty and self-determination, first to South and South-East Asia, and then to Africa (Silver and Slater, 1999: 209). These newly independent nation-states came to constitute the Third World – a geopolitical entity united by a heritage of colonialism, a subordinate position in the world capitalist system, a commitment to geopolitical non-alignment and a strategy of 'national capitalist development' (Desai, 2004: 171; see also Berger, 1994, 2001, 2004; Prashad, 2009). Simultaneously, Latin America, which had become independent long before Africa and Asia, was witnessing the gradual emergence of new political projects that aimed to target the structural blockages to industrialization in the region. These blockages flowed from the persistence of the region's subordinate position in the global political economy and the reproduction of colonial patterns of landownership which reproduced subaltern disempowerment and impoverishment. National development became a rallying point for both elites and masses, eventually creating the context for revolution in countries such as Mexico and political reform in countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile (O'Donnell, 1973; Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; Collier and Collier, 1991; Morton, 2010).

The dawn of the postcolonial, then, was a historical conjuncture in which '[s]uccess for the world's anti-systemic movements now seemed for the first time within reach' (Wallerstein, 1990: 27). Yet, according to several analysts, it was the national liberation movements that gained the least in terms of advancing the interests and aspirations of subaltern groups and popular classes (Wallerstein, 1990; Silver and Slater, 1999). It is indeed true that 'the reform basket that was offered to workers in the South was far emptier than that offered to First World workers' (Silver, 2003: 157), particularly as many sectors of the working class were excluded from this compromise and its guarantees as they were not absorbed into the formal labour market and remained on the periphery of informality (Evans, 1995; Roberts, 2002;

Mohanty, 2003; Bates, 2005). However, the popular groundswell that propelled national liberation movements from the 1920s onwards did leave an imprint both on the political economy of the world capitalist system and state–society and state–market relationships in the states of the newly constituted Third World.

Firstly, the liberal doctrines that had moulded the global political economy of capitalism under British hegemony gave way to what John Ruggie has called ‘embedded liberalism’ – an international economic architecture manifested in the Bretton Woods system with its regulatory institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreements on Trade and Tariffs), the gold/dollar standard and fixed exchange rates. As Arrighi (1994: 71–2) has noted, this marked a shift away from ‘the nineteenth century system of private regulations [of world finance] based on and controlled by the London-centred cosmopolitan networks of *haute finance*’ towards a certain measure of governmental control ‘over the pace and direction of trade liberalization’. Relations of dependence were reproduced within this order as the global South remained in a subordinate position to the advanced capitalist countries. However, embedded liberalism did grant a certain space for the pursuit of national development strategies by allowing for economic policies that sought to protect home markets and support the growth of domestic industry through state intervention (Robinson, 1996; Kiely, 2007).² Crucially, this space was intrinsically related to the success of militant struggles for national liberation and development, and, notably, the communist revolution in China in 1949 which generated an awareness that ‘the longer national liberation struggles dragged on, the more likely they [were] to precipitate social revolutions’ (Silver and Slater, 1999: 208).

Secondly, as Wallerstein (1990) has pointed out, the integration of popular classes into the struggles for national liberation broadened the scope of anti-colonial nationalism to incorporate subaltern demands for social justice. These demands were addressed through the construction of an ‘accumulation strategy’ known as developmentalism, which was centred on state intervention as the motor of economic modernization, and a ‘hegemonic project’ (Jessop, 1990) which was sustained by the construction of ‘unstable equilibria’ (Gramsci, 1998) of compromise between postcolonial elites and the popular classes. Developmentalism had as its primary goal the promotion of agricultural modernization and the growth of national industry (McMichael and Reynolds, 1994; Kiely, 2007). At the centre of this accumulation strategy stood the developmental state as a ‘trustee’ (Cowen and Shenton, 1996) of the nation, which was responsible for formulating and implementing development strategies and mobilizing funds for modernizing initiatives (Evans, 1995; Chibber, 2003, 2005; Kohli, 2005).

The state–market relationships of this accumulation strategy were premised on the state fostering the development of an industrial bourgeoisie. Accumulation was therefore embedded within national territory; materially

and politically. The national economic sector was either placed in state hands or received substantial subsidies, and was protected by tariffs on imports and regulations restricting foreign direct investment and ownership of national industry. The bourgeoisie that flourished in this period shared the ideology of developmentalism and its conceptualization of the state as the key co-coordinator and guarantor of economic development and of the national space as the key site of accumulation (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979; Evans, 1979, 1995; Robinson, 1996, 2001; Kohli, 2005). This relationship granted a relative autonomy to the state in relation to the national bourgeoisie in its economic policy decision making fostering the conditions for a developmentalist alliance that included sections of the organized subaltern.

The developmental state was also therefore the pivot of the hegemonic projects that characterized this period, which tended to be based on the reconfiguration of state–society relationships around a compromise between popular classes and the elite groups that had come to occupy a dominant position in Third World states. It was a compromise where the developmental state provided services and benefits – for example, price subsidies, employment, housing and public utilities and services – to the urban working class and urban poor in exchange for political acquiescence (Walton and Seddon, 1994). This compromise bound together a ‘developmentalist alliance’ consisting of ‘commercial agriculture, state bureaucracy, national industrial capital, urban merchants, and the urban middle and working classes’ (ibid.: 46). Whilst it was ‘elite groups and their middle-class retainers’ who ‘reaped the greatest rewards of the new policy’, the ‘social wage guarantee’ offered by the developmental state did impact significantly on the everyday lives of subaltern groups in Third World cities. The services provided by the state came to constitute the basis of a ‘moral economy’ among the urban poor and working classes, in which ‘the developmental guarantees’ of the state came to be understood as ‘legitimate rights’ that popular classes were entitled to, and which were defining of ‘the rightful expectations of the urban poor and their obligations as citizens’ (ibid.: 46–8). At the heart of this was the formation of particular communities whose livelihoods and social reproduction were constituted as moments of developmentalist accumulation. Such places of accumulation were embedded in community structures of feeling comprised of shared experiences, histories and emotional repertoires which formed the basis of the militant particularisms (Williams, 1977; Harvey, 1996; Featherstone, 2005), in and against developmentalism, of organized labour and peasantry that characterized the dominant manifestations of subaltern politics during this period.

Importantly, not all subaltern groups were included within the ambit of developmentalism as a hegemonic project: the working class of the formal sector took precedence over the working class of the informal

sector, the urban poor took precedence over the rural poor, and, crucially, developmentalism was premised upon a particular gendered division of labour in which the domestic sphere was feminized and devalued and the public sphere of politics and labour were masculinized and valorized (Walton and Seddon, 1994; Janssens, 1998; Mohanty, 2003; Federici, 2004). This gendered division of labour enabled the construction of the proletarian subject whose body was alienated as a commodity (productive machine) or reproductive machine and whose mind was constructed as a sovereign subject to be controlled by rational elites or to be self-controlling so as to produce social stability (Harvey, 2000; Federici, 2004). Such internal divisions within the popular classes were often intertwined with racial and caste differentiations, particularly in the Andean region of Latin America, South Africa and India (Mohanty, 2003; Chatterjee, 2004; Mander and Tauli-Corpuz, 2006). The political disarticulation and exclusion of potential popular class subjects was reinforced by the fact that relationships between elites and subaltern groups that were peripheral to developmentalism were often oligarchic and traditional, and individual as opposed to collective, in character (Mamdani, 1996; Roberts, 2002; Frankel, 2005). The construction of such an internally divided and diverse proletarian subject formed the basis of militant particularisms of struggle but also alienated relationships of docility and political unpredictability.

These differentiated experiences of developmentalism came to shape the forms of resistance that developed during the transition to neoliberalism from the early 1980s onwards. As Motta (in this book) argues in relation to Venezuelan shantytown dwellers and Sitrin (in this book) in relation to the urban unemployed of Argentina, the politicization of these subaltern groups reflects the marginal position of the peripheral working class, and therefore also their lack of absorption of the moral economy of developmentalism and subjectivities of the organized popular classes. On the other hand, Scandrett et al. (in this book) show how Indian women sought to recast the subaltern subjectivities and the moral economy of developmentalism in the struggle over the Bhopal gas tragedy. Similar dynamics are suggested by Chalcraft's analysis (in this book) of labour protests in Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula, where workers rearticulated demands for state protection of rights and guarantees against the impact of neoliberal restructuring.

Developmentalism was a relative success in terms of maintaining a degree of social and political stability in Third World states for more than two decades after the Second World War – a period in which states in the global South witnessed growth rates that were 'historically unprecedented for these countries and in excess of that achieved by the developed countries in their period of industrialization' (Glyn et al., 1991: 41). However, from the late 1960s onwards, this would come under attack from the subaltern and in some cases elite forces (Chile being a prime example) as contradictions

between the demands of accumulation and demands for political participation and redistribution surfaced (O'Donnell, 1973; Cardoso and Faletto, 1979). The cross-class developmentalist alliance began to unravel as the intensification of industrialization required substantially greater amounts of foreign capital at a time when trade and financial deficits were augmenting, thus necessitating a curtailment of the guarantees to organized labour, particularly acute in parts of Latin America. However, this occurred at a conjuncture when the working classes, as a result of their institutionalization and articulation as a political force of the developmentalist alliance and increasing awareness of revolutionary alternatives such as in Cuba in 1959, were making demands for more not less inclusion and redistribution (O'Donnell, 1973; Cardoso and Falleto, 1979). In other cases the relatively exclusionary developmentalist alliance premised upon the continuation of oligarchic political and economic rule in Africa and Asia came under attack from the politicized subaltern. These conditions fractured the 'unstable equilibria' of developmentalism and thus the postcolonial field of force began to unravel. The social movements that this book investigates gradually crystallized as central forces of and in this process.

Developmentalism unravelling

The fault lines of exclusion from and inclusion in the equilibria of compromise that defined developmentalism became evident when the global South became embroiled in the great revolt of 1968, a revolt that 'cut across the tripartite division of the world system at the time – the West, the Communist bloc, and the Third World' (Wallerstein, 2006: 6; see also Katsiaficas, 1987; Arrighi et al., 1989). In the global South, this revolt assumed the form of an attack on 'the nationalism and institutionalized elite politics... of the first generation of independent Third World states' (Watts, 2000: 172).

In the Latin America region the revolt of the late 1960s manifested itself in a critique of the reproduction of exclusion and elite control in the initial stage of developmentalism. The focus of this critique was demands for either greater political participation and redistribution in the developmentalist alliance or for the transcendence of that accumulation strategy altogether, and a move towards national socialist development mediated by the popular classes and their representatives in the state (O'Donnell, 1973). This was manifested in the politicization of social movements and their gaining of state power, for example, in Chile with the election of the Unidad Popular government in 1970, in Argentina via the radicalization of the union movement, the development of a guerrilla left and radicalization of sections of the Peronist left, and in Brazil with the coming to power of Vargas uniting organized labour with urban movements. This coincided with, and was fostered by, an incipient fracturing of the developmentalist alliance, both from above and from below (O'Donnell, 1973, 1988; Schamis, 1991; Harvey, 2005).

New waves of popular radicalism was responded to by the USA and the region's political and economic elites by the formation of authoritarian coalitions. Country after country fell under military rule, and developmentalism took an increasingly exclusionary turn as the political and civil liberties of the organized sectors of the working classes were removed and left-wing forces were ideologically delegitimized, physically annihilated and politically eradicated. In Venezuela, one of the few countries that remained democratic, the minority organized working classes were co-opted into a populist alliance which was fostered by the use of oil rents to offset the balance of payment deficits and lack of foreign capital that other Latin American countries with larger organized working-class sectors experienced (Ellner and Tinker-Salas, 2005). As suggested by Motta (in this book) and Sitrin (in this book), this created a fragmented experience for the popular classes of Venezuela and Argentina of state-led development and state-led projects of socialist transformation, influencing the formation of anti-statist currents of popular politics and protest against neoliberalism in the 1990s. However Boden (in this book) points out that these experiences did not only lead to a rejection of state-led alternatives but also stimulated a reconsideration of the centralized models of developmentalism that dominated Latin America's experience between the 1940s and 1970s.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the revolt primarily assumed the form of a new wave of radical struggles for national liberation, primarily against the fledgling remnants of French imperialism in Algeria and the Portuguese empire in Angola and Mozambique, as well as struggles against white supremacy in South Africa and Zimbabwe (Luke, 1982). These movements were very much part of an arc of struggles for national liberation that yielded what Berger (2004: 19) has referred to as 'second-generation Bandung regimes' – that is, states that espoused 'a more radical, a more unambiguously socialist Third Worldism than the first generation Bandung regimes'. In North Africa and the Middle East, it was above all Muslim reform movements that expressed 'radical disaffection with the postcolonial state and the decrepit cronyism of peripheral capitalism' (Watts, 2000: 172; see also Harman, 1994; Hoogvelt, 2001). However, as Chalcraft (in this book) demonstrates, the articulation of counter-hegemony in Egypt revolved around demands for self-determination and socio-economic development uniting the urban working classes, migrant workers from Southern Europe and Syria and emergent nationalist middle classes. As he shows in relation to the Arab Peninsula these struggles were articulated in relation to the new revolutionary Arab nationalist tide, influenced by politicized Palestinian, Egyptian and Yemini migrants.

Asia was of course also a central arena for the global revolt of 1968. This was not only so due to the struggle for national liberation in Vietnam – a struggle that became a rallying point for movements worldwide – but also due to the emergence of new social movements in India, perhaps the

quintessential developmental state of the region. In the aftermath of independence in 1947, popular movements by and large remained quiescent and ceded their autonomy to 'the strong hand of the Nehruvian state' (Katzenstein and Ray, 2005: 14). This came to an end with the eruption of the Naxalite revolt – a guerrilla insurgency of marginal peasants and landless labourers, headed by the Communist Party of India – Marxist-Leninist (see Banerjee, 1984) – in West Bengal in 1967 (Vanaik, 1990; Omvedt, 1993; Kamat, 2002). During the decade that followed, India saw the emergence of movements that organized and mobilized subaltern groups that had remained peripheral both to the developmental state and the mainstream left-wing parties around a substantial critique of the exclusionary and exploitative dimensions of state-led capitalist development. These movements often championed alternatives to developmentalism centred on greater democratic participation, community control over resources, redistribution and recognition, and ecological sustainability (Omvedt, 1993). One such movement was the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA; Save the Narmada Movement), which contested the construction of large dams on the Narmada River in central India. The movement mobilized Adivasi subsistence peasants and caste Hindu farmers behind an oppositional project that demanded not only the cancellation of the dam projects but also the implementation of an alternative model of development in India. As Nilsen (in this book) and D'Souza (in this book) argue, the ultimate defeat of the NBA raises important strategic questions of how India's new social movements relate to the capitalist state (see also Basu, 1987; Vanaik, 1990).

However, towards the end of the 1970s it was becoming increasingly clear that it would not be the radicalized organizations of workers and peasants, the new social movements with their demands for empowerment of marginalized subaltern groups and decentralized development, or the second-generation Bandung regimes with their call for a New International Economic Order that were to win the day in the struggle over the future structuring of the postcolonial field of force. On the contrary, it was the designs of transnational elites for a radical disembedding of capital from state intervention and regulation that came to define the future direction of the political economy of development in the global South. The reasons for this were closely related to the decline of the golden age of capitalism in the advanced capitalist countries and the exhaustion of developmentalism as an accumulation strategy to overcome dependency in the global South.

In the late 1960s, the economies of the advanced capitalist countries started displaying clear signs of malaise after some two decades of strong growth: productivity and profitability dwindled, investment rates and consumer demand decreased. During the first half of the 1970s, increases in unemployment and inflation generated a crisis of 'stagflation'. This was followed by several fiscal crises in 1971 and 1973 that resulted in the abandonment of the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates (Armstrong

et al., 1991; Kiely, 2007). The effect of this was ‘to dis-embed financial capitalism from the embedded liberalism... of the post-war agreement’ (Kiely, 2007: 61). In contrast countries in the Global South were maintaining high growth rates (Walton and Seddon, 1994). However, it was above all the newly industrialized countries (NICs) of East Asia that benefited from high growth and influx of foreign direct investment (FDI), while African and Latin American economies were increasingly stagnating. Additionally, loans from private international banks were rapidly becoming the weapon of choice for states in the global South that sought to overcome economic stagnation (George, 1993; Corbridge, 1993; McMichael, 2004). This enabled a rapid build-up of large debts which offset stagnation in the short term. However in the medium term this incubated the conditions for a crisis of such magnitude that it would be the catalyst for developmentalism’s end.

In 1979, the ‘Volcker shock’ – the announcement of the chairman of the US Federal Reserve Bank that interest rates would be hiked dramatically – signalled a turn to restrictive fiscal and monetary policies in the advanced capitalist countries. These policies became part of a new political project pursued by elites in these countries in response to the combination of economic crisis with the emergence of militant student and workers’ struggles and the eruption of new social movements which posed ‘a clear political threat to economic elites and ruling classes everywhere’ (Harvey, 2005: 15). These elites had ‘to move decisively if they were to protect themselves from political and economic annihilation’ (ibid.: 15) and did so through the neoliberal counter-revolution – a counter-revolution which promoted restrictive monetary and fiscal policies, a curtailment of public spending on welfare programmes, tax reductions, privatization of public industries and services, and deregulation of commodity, labour and financial markets, and that was spearheaded by the conservative forces that won political power in the West in the early 1980s³ (Armstrong et al., 1991; Harvey, 2005).

When interest rates soared in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this impacted adversely on the global South. Not only did the cost of servicing debts skyrocket, but also the market contractions that followed led to a decline in both the terms of trade and demand for exports from the South. This of course further eroded the capacity for debt servicing. As global credit supplies dried up, further borrowing was simply not an option (Walton and Seddon, 1994). The Mexican government’s default on its debts in 1982 signalled the onset of an international debt crisis that opened a window of opportunity for the neoliberal revolution from above to articulate itself in the countries of the global South as the solution to the contradictions of developmentalism.

This was achieved through the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) administered by the World Bank and the IMF. In return for fresh loans and debt rescheduling, states in the global South had to adopt a series of neoliberal policies aimed at altering the structure of the economy: currencies

were devalued so as to improve the trade balance; public expenditure was downsized in order to reduce the need for external capital supplies; prices and commodity markets were deregulated through the removal of subsidies so as to enhance competition; wages were reduced to encourage influx of FDI; public sector companies and utilities were privatized to increase efficiency (McMichael, 2004; Kiely, 2007). However, the successful implementation of SAPs was predicated upon the constitution of a new coalition of transnational and national actors – a ‘historic bloc’ (Gramsci, 1998; Morton, 2007) consisting of supranational institutions, global capital, the most dynamic sectors of national industry and, in some cases, traditional elites – that was able to utilize state power to advance neoliberal policy agendas and disarticulate opposition to reform. This was typically achieved by pitting segments of the organized working class against each other and eroding community solidarities among subaltern groups more generally by offering selective strategies of monetary reward and political influence to some and meting out repression to others (Smith et al., 1994; Roberts, 2002; Ong, 2006; O’Reilly, 2010). The political mechanisms of reform often introduced new economics on the back of the reproduction and reinvention of ‘old’ politics of clientelism and corruption. As part of the building of this coalition regional and local political elites supported reforms in return for maintenance of their fiefdoms of control over the peasantry and informal sectors.

The new regime of neoliberal accumulation ‘eroded national economic management, and, by extension, the social contract that development states had with their citizens’ (McMichael, 2004: 140). State–society relationships were restructured in such a way as to promote what Robinson (1996) has called ‘polyarchy’ – or ‘low-intensity democracy’ – which is the political cornerstone of global neoliberal hegemony. This has been premised on the erosion of established institutional mechanisms for economic redistribution and political mediation, and consequently resulted in the disarticulation of the extant collective power of the popular classes. The new regime also restructured state-market relationships of developmentalism as the ability of states to formulate autonomous policy agendas for national development was undermined by the increased delinking of sectors of domestic capital from national territory (Robinson, 2001, 2004). As a result of this, organized subaltern groups experienced the decomposition of the socio-economic moorings, socio-political formations and the structures of feeling that had been the basis of the militant particularisms articulated in and against developmentalism. It also resulted in the increasing impoverishment and undercutting of the survival strategies of the informal subaltern which fell particularly heavily on the shoulders of women. In part, these processes silenced, individualized and commodified both organized and informal subaltern communities, thus merging their experiences of exclusion, disempowerment and

immiseration. However, the same processes also gave rise to new forms of popular protest.

Popular classes that had benefited from the social wage guarantees of developmentalism mobilized defensive attempts to rearticulate the militant particularisms of developmentalism and reclaim the rights and entitlements removed by neoliberalism. Between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, close to 150 'austerity protests' or 'IMF riots' took place in countries that had undergone SAPs. According to Walton and Seddon (1994), the pulse that energized these protests was a strong sense among the popular classes that the moral economy of the developmental state had been violated by neoliberal reforms. Chalcraft's chapter in this book shows how, in Egypt and the Arab Peninsula, this took the form of labour protests that were focused on economic and corporatist demands. However, Walton and Seddon (1994) confirm the convergence of the included and peripheralized subaltern as they point out that the protests united a wide array of groups, ranging from shantytown dwellers, unemployed youth, informal sector workers and the unionized working classes, as well as other low-income groups such as students, shopkeepers and public employees. As noted by Sitrin (in her contribution) the nights of protest of 19 and 20 December 2001 in Argentina expressed this subaltern confluence by breaking the silence of decomposition.

Subaltern groups that had been marginal to developmentalism also had their livelihoods and survival strategies undermined, and responded by emerging as political subjects whose heritage of resistance was influenced by other traditions than that of labourism. In Latin America, ideas linked to popular education and liberation theology were particularly important. In Venezuela, as Motta (in this book) points out, this resulted in processes of resistance that went beyond a reclaiming of the moral economy of developmentalism and state-orientated social transformation. As Boden (in this book) suggests, these processes of resistance were also shaped by a conception of decentralized and participatory socialism. A slightly different dynamic is evident in the recent community struggles that have erupted in South Africa in response to privatization of water and electricity. As Dugard (in this book) shows, these protests have taken the form of a composition of community struggles whose objectives are to institute the developmentalist guarantees that had been denied to the majority of South Africa's black population in the years of apartheid.

With the outbreak of popular protest against neoliberal restructuring, the postcolonial field of force had been radically reconfigured. Whereas a historic bloc of transnational and national elites was pursuing a political project that, in the apposite words of Pierre Bourdieu (1998: 1), sought to obliterate 'the collective structures which may impede the pure market logic', novel articulations of popular protest had also emerged, both from subaltern groups that had been peripheral to developmentalism as a

hegemonic project, and from subaltern groups that had benefited from its compromises and concessions. The movements of the former groups tended to mount an 'offensive' form of opposition to the exclusionary dimensions of developmentalism, and advocated either a deepening of state-led development towards popular socialist statism, alternative forms of development centred on local participation or alternatives based on a politics beyond representation. The resistance of the latter groups assumed a more 'defensive' character in that it opposed the erosion of those forms of state intervention that had helped to sustain subaltern livelihoods. It was during the 1990s – the era of neoliberal triumphalism par excellence – that these two strands of popular protest seemed to be increasingly converging in social movements that were simultaneously critical of state-led capitalist development and neoliberalism, perhaps paradigmatically captured in this book by Boden's discussion of the attempted rearticulation of a participatory and decentred socialism.

Neoliberal hegemony and/in the global South

Dubbed as 'the Washington consensus' by the liberal economist John Williamson (1993: 1330, 1329), a 'universal convergence' crystallized 'among ... the US government and the international financial institutions' in the 1980s that a return to the principles of classical economics was what was needed to address the developmental problems of the global South (Toye, 1993; Hettne, 1995). During the 1990s, this hegemony was further expanded: with the collapse of the communist bloc, Eastern Europe and Russia were laid open to shock therapy; in the early 1990s, India succumbed to a balance of payments crisis and embarked on neoliberal restructuring; in the late 1990s, the NICs of East Asia buckled under the weight of financial crisis and joined the ranks of the structurally adjusted (Gowan, 1995; Bullard et al., 1998; Chibber, 2003; Klein, 2007). The new transnational historic bloc of neoliberalism fused the US government, IFIs, and dominant economic and political elites across the North–South divide in particular articulations of state power across the globe. This has constituted a substantial shift in the balance of class power that had given shape to the global political economy of capitalist development since the end of the Second World War as it proceeded through the reversal of the victories won and gains made by social movements during the first half of the twentieth century. It has thus restored the power of capitalist elites over working classes and other subaltern groups (Harvey, 2005). In the following, we delineate the main modalities through which this reversal has been achieved in the global South.

In his analysis of neoliberalism as a project for the restoration of the class power of capital, David Harvey (2005) notes that whereas the return to the free market was supposed to revive stagnant economies, growth has continued to plummet since the 1970s. The failure to revive growth has

been paralleled by declines in a number of social development indicators, unprecedented levels of unemployment and steep increases in inequality – both between and within countries. Thus, the ‘main substantive achievement of neoliberalization ... has been to redistribute rather than to generate wealth’ (ibid.: 159). This redistribution has been effected through ‘accumulation by dispossession’ – that is, a set of mechanisms centred on the conversion of non- or de-commodified assets, practices and institutions into sources of profit for capital, such as privatization, financialization, crisis management and manipulation and state redistribution through regressive tax codes and cutbacks in the social wage (ibid.: 160–4; Federici, 1990).

In the urban sector, accumulation by dispossession has resulted in the erosion of the economic and political underpinnings of organized labour and the middle classes of the global South, whose experience is increasingly one of unemployment, job insecurity and processes of declassing. Moreover, due to the increasing commodification of social reproduction under neoliberalism, the access of subaltern communities to health, education and housing has been radically eroded (see Williams et al., 1994; Gill and Bakker, 2003; Hart, 2006; Ong, 2006; Roberts, 2008). In the place of access to social goods as a non-commodified entitlement, which was a reality for some subaltern groups under developmentalism, there has emerged a concerted focus among state elites of the global South and key IFIs to promote strategies for poverty reduction based on market principles. Thus, poverty reduction increasingly revolves around micro-credit, targeted social policy and social investment funds wherein poverty is attributed to an individual’s lack of assets, rather than structural questions of exploitation and oppression. The reach of neoliberal discipline is extended to the level of individuals in their communities as ‘the poor themselves are to act as vigilantes to enforce the disciplines which perfect and maintain their subordination to capital’ (Cammack, 2004: 206; see also Jayasuriya, 2001; Webber, 2004). Thus the assumptions of neoclassical economics colonize the political, the social and the subjective in an attempt to create docile subjectivities and commodified social relationships (Fine, 2001; Webber, 2004; Kamat, 2004).

The increasing commodification of social relations has therefore eroded the basis of the militant particularisms that underpinned the political force of the popular sectors during developmentalism. This has often resulted in social dislocation, community disintegration and at times subjective destruction as the identities and masculinities of organized labour fall into crisis (Craine and Aitken, 2004; Hubbard, 2004; Jocoy and Del Casino, 2006; Wacquant, 2009). Gender inequalities are also intensified as women are forced to take up insecure employment in the informal sector at the same time as the burden of their domestic work increases as a commodification of social reproduction intensifies (Gill and Bakker, 2003; Bakker, 2007; Chant, 2008). This creates deeper micro-divisions in the proletarian subject. However, it also forges the grounds for unity due the intensification

of experiences of disempowerment and exclusion that transcend such disciplinary forms of micro political-economy. A notable result of this has been the resurgence of subaltern women at the head of struggles against dispossession and for alternative forms of development that are territorialized in the space of community as opposed to the workplace. This is evidenced in this book in the contributions by Dugard, Mukherjee et al., Motta and Sitrin.

In the rural sector, it is typically small and marginal peasants and indigenous subsistence peasants that have borne the brunt of accumulation by dispossession. Liberalization policies have ended key subsidies, reduced public investment in rural development infrastructure, extension services and agricultural credit, and eliminated protectionist measures that enabled small and marginal peasants to sustain themselves through petty commodity production (Bernstein, 1994, 2001; McMichael and Reynolds, 1994; Bryceson, 2000). Exposed to the onslaught of global market forces they are poorly equipped to withstand, they are slowly being forced off their land in a process where 'various forms of property rights' are being converted into 'exclusive private property rights' (Harvey, 2005: 159). In the place of petty commodity production for domestic markets, states in the global South are increasingly promoting 'export-oriented luxury-food agro-industry' with significant participation from global agribusiness (McMichael and Myhre, 1991: 94–5). However, as Morton (2007) has pointed out, it would be erroneous to assume that this process signals the quiet 'death of the peasantry'. Rather, peasant groups across the global South have challenged their dispossession vigorously through movements and networks that seek to reclaim land rights and reorient agriculture towards the imperatives of food security and ecological sustainability (see Moyo and Yeros, 2005; McMichael, 2006). As Gadelha de Carvalho and Mendes (in this book) demonstrate, this has involved the construction of new subjectivities and social relationships that reinvent a development beyond developmentalism and against neoliberalism. Indigenous peoples have been subject to a more direct process of dispossession as natural resource bases that previously served as commons that underpinned subsistence livelihoods have been opened up to exploitation by national and transnational capital. The Narmada Bachao Andolan, discussed by Nilsen (in this book), is one example of the movements that have emanated in response to such dispossession. More recently, eastern and central India has become the scene of the struggle of Adivasi communities – often mobilized by a Maoist guerrilla movement – that are pitted against mining corporations and the armed might of the state. These struggles D'Souza (in this book) claims, raise fundamental questions about the direction and meaning of development, as well as the capacity of our conceptual tools to contribute politically to these movements.

Neoliberalism has functioned as 'the policy "grease" of global capitalism' (Robinson, 2004: 80) by generating radically more globalized commodity

chains and investment markets. The curtailment of state intervention and regulation and the concurrent advance of commodification have removed key constraints on the movement of capital across borders, and 'the construction of a new legal order and regulatory superstructure for the global economy' through supranational institutions such as the World Trade Organization has made national economies increasingly attuned to the imperatives of global competitiveness with the objective of the synchronization of 'each national environment with an integrated global economic environment' (*ibid.*: 80). However such restructuring has not resulted in the convergence of developmental trajectories in the world economy. Global production and commodity chains are instead characterized by a dynamic of polarization in which those parts of the production process that are based in the global South tend to be low-cost and lower value production, whereas advanced capitalist countries recover most of the value added at the higher value end of production. Similarly, advanced capitalist countries attract two-thirds of global FDI, and the FDI which actually reaches the global South is concentrated in a few emerging markets in East Asia and Latin America, and related to mergers and acquisitions rather than greenfield investments. Global financial flows are polarized in a similar way (Kiely, 2007). This, of course, is a form of integration into global circuits of capital which reinforces the subordinate position of the South in the world economy, and helps us understand why 'after more than thirty years of developmental efforts of all kinds, the gaps that separate the incomes of the East and the South from the West and the North are today wider than ever before' (Arrighi, 1991: 40).

These patterns of uneven development in turn result in subaltern fragmentation within and across borders, as a narrow minority of the popular classes are inserted into globalized commodity chains, whereas other sections are increasingly marginalized from global accumulation and subjected to intensifying immiseration (Castells, 2001; Hoogvelt, 2001; Bauman, 2003; Davis, 2006; Taylor, 2009). These processes create the conditions for a radical recomposition and reimagining of social emancipation and political change, which is arguably most clearly present in Latin America, where the oppositional projects of subaltern groups move both beyond and below the nation-state by politicizing localities and everyday life, and constructing alternative forms of transnationalization such as the World Social Forum or the solidarity economy movement (see contributions by Boden, Gadelha de Carvalho and Mendes, Sitrin and Motta in this book; Arruda, 2003, 2006; De Sousa Santos, 2005).

Neoliberalism has thus not proceeded through the retreat of the state, but rather through a reconfiguration of state power, and, consequently, the emergence of a new form of state – the neoliberal state (De Angelis, 2003; Jessop, 2003; Robinson, 2004; Harvey, 2005). Reflecting the restoration of the class power of capital, the neoliberal state provides 'essential services for capital within specific national territories', such as the implementation

of monetary and fiscal policies that maintain macroeconomic stability, the provision of infrastructure necessary for global economic activity, and the maintenance of law, order and social stability (Robinson, 2004: 125). Moreover, reflecting the transnational character of the neoliberal historic bloc, states are increasingly locked into a political-economic configuration that Gill (1995: 413) has called the 'new constitutionalism' – that is, a process in which the policy frameworks formulated by supranational institutions result in 'the imposition of discipline on public institutions, partly to prevent national interference with the property rights and entry and exit options of holders of mobile capital with regard to particular political jurisdictions' (ibid.: 413). In the global South, this process is manifest in the agenda for poverty reduction currently advanced by the World Bank and the IMF, in which national poverty reduction strategies are tailored in accordance with parameters set by these institutions. The World Bank and the IMF in turn have extensive powers of surveillance over national policy design (Webber, 2004). This agenda thus marks a shift from the 'shallow' interventionism of structural adjustment – that is, a form of intervention that was chiefly concerned with macroeconomic structures – towards a 'deep' interventionism which extends its scope to education, health, social policy and infrastructure (Cammack, 2004).

Neoliberal discipline is also constructed through the co-optation of political parties moored in the popular classes into the neoliberal historic bloc when elected to national government. When in office these parties create political and ideological mechanisms to discipline the popular class forces that have enabled their development as mass-based political parties and their election to national power. As Gadelha de Carvalho and Mendes (in this book) demonstrate, Lula's PT government in Brazil have both reinforced the structural conditions of neoliberalism at the same time as creating piecemeal changes that open marginal spaces for the development of public forms of education. This has imposed constraints and opened possibilities for the development of curriculum linked to the struggle for agrarian reform of the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST, Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement) (Stedile, 2002; Bessa and Garmany, 2008). As Dugard (in this book) shows in relation to South Africa, the role of the African National Congress in government has been to introduce and stabilize neoliberalism, and, as evidenced by her discussion of the campaign against the instalment of prepayment meters for water, to discipline the popular classes in accordance with neoliberal imperatives (see also Desai, 2002; Bond, 2006).

A key problem faced by the neoliberal state in the global South is that the processes of restructuring have eroded, through increasing immiseration and exclusion, the basis for subaltern consent to neoliberal hegemony. In response to this fracturing of neoliberal hegemony, the state is increasingly coming to rely on the exercise coercive force, as is evident in the increasing policing and penalization of poverty and the poor, particularly

in the cities of the global South, as well as a concern with the containment of so-called 'failed states' (Duffield, 2001; Brown and Herbert, 2006; Davis, 2006; Nadesan, 2006; Wacquant, 2009). Another way of countering the fractures of neoliberal hegemony is the resort to individual rather than collective mediation of the state's relationship with the popular classes. Clientelistic relationships between elites and subaltern groups create dependency of the latter upon the former and thus undercut popular mobilization (Hagopian and Mainwaring, 2005; O'Reilly, 2010). Such methods are of course always underpinned by the threat of coercion, particularly if communities begin to organize. This is illustrated clearly in the discussion of Sitrin (in this book) in relation to Argentina, in which the experience of the 1990s of the state in local communities was mediated by corrupt *punteros* (municipal representatives in local communities) who used state funds to maintain political acquiescence and further the individualization of popular class communities. This is similarly illustrated in Motta's discussion (in this book) of the urban shantytown dwellers of La Vega in Caracas, where an individualized and corrupt relationship with the state characterized developmentalism and neoliberalism. This illustrates the continuities and the ruptures in the relationships between the state and popular classes, particularly the informal and peasant sectors. This helps develop a conceptual frame through which to understand the rejection of developmentalism and neoliberalism in large sectors of the informal classes in Venezuela, some sectors of India's recomposed popular classes and in community resistance in South Africa.

Social movements in, against and beyond the postcolonial?

The current postcolonial field of force, then, is criss-crossed by a number of deeply intertwined and conflictual processes through which relations of domination and resistance in the global South are recomposed and rearticulated. The locus of popular resistance too in the global South is the collapse of developmentalism and the fault lines and contradictions in the transition to neoliberalism. As we noted above, this has given rise to a variety of responses from the popular classes including the attempt to re-envision a popular developmentalism from below and above and the attempt to reinvent the very meaning and practice of development and politics which involves a re-envisioning of the politics of knowledge that is at its heart.

Some social movements seek to reclaim and re-envision a popular developmentalism. In this book, Chalcraft shows how the beginnings of a rearticulation of a popular counter-hegemony in Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula feeds into a moral economy of the rights and guarantees of developmentalism that have been lost to neoliberal restructuring. However, he also shows that this politicization remains fragmented and individualized not articulated as a subaltern political project of social transformation. Dugard's chapter shows how resistance to privatization of water services in

Phiri, one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Soweto, South Africa, takes the form of a reclaiming of public services. This has involved the use of judicial activism as part of rights-based legal mobilization by the Anti-Privatization Forum. Through this strategy, shantytown communities as collective agents of resistance with rearticulated subaltern subjectivities have emerged. These subjects fuse political cultures that are shaped by the experience of resistance to apartheid, as well as the political cultures of socialism and developmentalism. Dugard sees such struggles as laying the groundwork for a broader struggle for socio-economic emancipation by the left. Similar dynamics are at play in the struggle of the Bhopal survivors' movement, where Mukherjee et al. (in this book) show how claims have been partly articulated in terms of a moral economy of rights, articulated by new subaltern subjects; impoverished women, that are to be guaranteed by the state but also the transnational architecture of rights and obligations. These attempts to re-envisage developmentalism therefore combine elements of 'traditional' developmentalism with new subjectivities embedded within a multiplicity of subaltern forces and across a multiplicity of scales, raising questions about the content, form and feasibility of a reinvented popular developmentalism in our times.

What these struggles bring to the forefront is the question of the extent to which it is possible for social movements to pursue their oppositional projects through the institutions, practices and discourses of the state. This has been the subject of much debate and controversy in relation to popular struggles in both Latin America and India, where those who claim that the state and state power cannot be conduits of popular empowerment, for example, Holloway (2002), Sitrin (2007), Inden (1995) and Nandy (2002), are pitted against those who claim that engagement with the liberal democratic process, the institutions of the state and state power are the only possible vehicles of subaltern emancipation, for example, Petras and Veltmeyer (2005), Branford and Rocha (2002), Corbridge and Harriss (2000) and Rangan (2000).

In this book, Boden and Nilsen both approach these issues through the theoretical lens of Marxian state theory. With reference to Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution, Boden argues that it would be a strategic fallacy to dismiss the state as a vehicle for progressive social change. Focusing on the advance of participatory democracy and the centrality of law and radical constitutionalism in the Venezuelan experiment with twenty-first century socialism, he argues for envisioning oppositional projects centred on a popular developmental state of a new kind. Nilsen contrasts the success of a local movement of Adivasis in western Madhya Pradesh, India in curbing extortion by the local state through a claiming of constitutional rights and entitlements with the failure of the Narmada Bachao Andolan's campaign against dam building through a strategy of holding the state accountable to liberal constitutional principles. He argues that this reveals that there are

structural limits to how far popular emancipation can advance via the capitalist state, and points towards the necessity of counter-hegemonic projects that can challenge the social foundations of state power as such.

Gadelha de Carvalho and Mendes' analysis of the MST in Brazil complements these reflections on social movements and the state. In this case, the challenges and possibilities of counter-hegemony and the construction of a new, popular, socialist revolution revolve around how conscientization and popular education can help animate a process in which community experience and reflection on that experience provides the building blocks for the creation of emancipatory knowledge that can support agrarian reform and broader social transformation in Brazil. Their chapter thus points towards how popular classes can recompose and reconstitute themselves out of the disarticulation of elitist developmentalism and the immiseration of neoliberalism. However, they also point to strategic differences and conflicts that can occur between a reinvention of socialism from below and from above. Along with the chapters by Mukherjee et al., Motta, and Otto and Terhorst, Gadelha de Carvalho and Mendes also raise crucial questions related to the politics of knowledge generated by and in relation to social movements in the global South. These chapters all engage with aspects of popular education, or, in the case of Otto and Terhorst, participatory research methods.

Mukherjee et al. discuss how their engagement with the semi-literate women who formed the base of the Bhopal survivors' movement involved a dialogue between the theoretical knowledge of the academy and the experience-based knowledge of survivor communities. Their aim was to create 'really' useful knowledge that could contribute to the movement's political goals, in which the key thematics of analysis were devised together with the movement via the use of video interview and the capturing of oral histories. This suggests that knowledge takes a variety of forms that are not necessarily or primarily textual or theoretical in the scholastic sense of the word. It also demonstrates that the crafting of movement-relevant theory requires the transcendence of the boundaries of the academy. These concerns are also central to Gadelha de Carvahlo and Mendes' analysis of curriculum building in the MST, which suggests that the methodologies of popular education can enable a meeting of university and movement, and of theoretical knowledge with movement knowledge in which the knowledge and subjects of both are transformed.

Motta's chapter engages with the post-representational politics of the Urban Land Committees (CTUs) in Venezuela, and the way in which this politics is animated by practices of collective learning that demonstrate that movements do not only create situated, concrete and experiential knowledge, but also theoretical knowledge. This process is immanent to their experiences of domination and resistance and it produces knowledge that is prefigurative as it creates the collective thinker in the here

and now. This leads Motta to question conventional assumptions about movement-relevant research, where the researcher is typically granted the epistemic privilege of producing theoretical knowledge that will help social movements to contextualize their experiences and thus achieve more effective strategic orientations. She suggests in her critique that constructing prefigurative epistemologies involves deconstructing epistemic privilege and reorientating the subjectivity of the radical academic.

Otto and Terhorst also problematize epistemic privilege and the ways in which unequal power relations between movement researchers from the North and movements in the global South can be unintentionally reproduced in the research process. They argue for the necessity of awareness of the researcher's complicity in global power structures, and argue for an engagement with the paradoxes that flow from this in order to create more genuinely participatory research methods. They suggest a combination of post-representational and representational forms of knowledge construction that produce movement-relevant research that transforms both researcher and movement.

From these discussions it becomes clear that it is through processes of collective learning and knowledge production that movements are crafting their oppositional imaginaries, practices and utopias. However, they do so in a diversity of ways, with a diversity of contents and objectives and sometimes in dialogue with the university but also at other times in opposition to the university. For movement researchers dedicated to the furtherance of social justice through their research and practice this diversity reopens the discussion about the nature of movement-relevant research, the relationship between university and movement and the subjectivity of the militant investigator (Barker and Cox, 2002; Bevington and Dixon, 2005; De Sousa Santos, 2007; Tischler, 2008; Shukaitis, 2009). Particularly, it draws our attention to the inherently paradoxical positionality of the researcher; at once reinforcing hierarchies of power at the same time as actively involved in transforming these relationships. The experiences analysed also raise questions about the ability of methodologies rooted in particular epistemic, material and symbolic privileges to contribute to the forms of reinvention of development and politics that are occurring in the global South. They suggest the need to be constantly reflexive (historically, politically and collectively) and experimental in the development of movement-relevant research and open to the possibility that there are many forms (sometimes contradictory) that such research can take.

As the first two parts of the book illustrate there are a multiplicity of popular responses to the crisis of developmentalism and the transition to neoliberalism. Some of these responses, as we have noted, are centred on a reinvigorated and transformed reclaiming of the moral economy and subjectivities of developmentalism. However, there are other movements, typically emanating from subaltern groups that did not benefit from the compromises and concessions of developmentalism that move

beyond this moral economy and these subjectivities in their struggles against neoliberal dispossession. There is an increasing disjuncture between the practices of these movements and many of the 'old' tools of social movement conceptualization and theorization. These tools seem increasingly unable to engage sufficiently with movements whose practices, imaginaries and utopias move beyond these frames (De Sousa Santos, 2008; Motta, 2009). As D'Souza argues in her chapter subaltern recomposition (political and intellectual) is outstripping conceptual and theoretical developments amongst the intelligentsia.

One of the key questions thrown up by these movements is of course how to conceptualize these social movements and their relationship to the postcolonial development project. One approach to this question has been the assertion that social movements simply reject the development project as such – Escobar (1995: 215), for example, has argued that social movements in the global South do not articulate 'development alternatives' so much as 'alternatives to development, that is, the rejection of the entire paradigm altogether'. This perspective, however, has come in for substantial criticism in terms of its lacking ability to actually grasp the subtle and complex dynamics through which subaltern groups and social movements develop their oppositional projects by appropriating and reworking central idioms in postcolonial discourses of development (see Moore, 1998, 2000, 2005; Rangan, 2000; Sinha, 2003; Nilsen, 2008).

The challenge of conceptualizing the ways in which subaltern groups appropriate and reshape the postcolonial development project is taken up in this book by D'Souza. Echoing the concerns of previous chapters on the politics of knowledge, her chapter focuses on the intellectual challenges that flow from the radical oppositional projects of subaltern groups – in particular contemporary Adivasi struggles in India. She argues that the theoretical hegemony of classical liberalism renders intellectuals incapable of developing politically enabling analyses of structures of dispossession and exploitation. Most fundamentally, current movement struggles transcend the parameters of distributive justice and raise the challenge of developing new social relations between people, nature and society. D'Souza argues that it is necessary to return to the traditions of self-determination and decolonization that inspired struggles for national liberation and revolutionary social change in order to address these challenges. She again indicates that such theoretical work is being done by the movements themselves, and, concurrently, that it is the intelligentsia that is placing a break on these processes.

Sitrin's chapter on horizontalism in Argentina shows how the exhaustion of developmentalism and the crisis of neoliberalism have opened up spaces for a radical reimagining of the nature of politics. What has resulted from this is a prefigurative politics – that is, a politics that seeks to create the alternatives desired in the present – centred on direct democracy and participation, forms of knowledge production and political action that destabilize extant norms of representation, reorienting the constitution of

subjectivities towards alternative and collective forms of economic production, and alternative forms of social reproduction. Sitrin thus argues that the crisis of neoliberalism has not only generated a reclaiming of developmentalism, but also a more radical reinvention of political subjectivity and social transformation which 'old tools' of analysis are often unable to 'see', let alone theorize. The development of politically enabling concepts and theories, she argues, is predicated on dialogue with, and learning from, movements.

These discussions raise fundamental questions about the conceptual and theoretical frames that orientate social movement researcher's engagement with social movements in the global South. They point to a disempowering mismatch between many 'traditional' conceptualizations and the actual practices of such movements. In particular they point to the limitations of embedding our analysis in the assumptions and theoretical frames of developmentalism (echoing Boden's and Nilsen's contributions), to the limitations of theoretical lenses limited to liberal representative political theoretical assumptions of analysis (echoing Motta's, Otto and Tehurts's contributions in this book), and to the limitations of conceptual lenses developed by western intelligentsia (echoing D'Souza's contribution). They point therefore to the centrality of embedding conceptual and theoretical development in subaltern political struggle and to the inherently historically and geographically specific and therefore praxis-like nature of these conceptual tools. As Tischler argues,

We are living in a time of liberation of revolutionary imagination. The demolition of fetishes of power is part of the complex process of elaborating a new revolutionary subject. This elaboration is taking place here and now, and it does so in the form of the new social movements.

(2008: 173)

These, then, are some of the questions raised by social movements in the global South that in different ways seek to vanquish the lie about the victory of neoliberalism and the end of history. In the following chapters we explore some conceptual, theoretical and epistemological categories and practices which we hope can contribute to creating 'useable knowledge for those seeking social change' (Flacks cited in Bevington and Dixon, 2005: 189).

Notes

1. 'First Declaration of La Realidad for Humanity and against Neoliberalism', issued January 1996, available online at <http://www.actlab.utexas.edu/~zapatistas/declaration.html>.
2. However, as evidenced by the US-backed conservative counter-revolutions in Iran, Indonesia and Chile, there were clear limits to the autonomy and self-determination of Third World states.

3. The first experiment with neoliberal restructuring, however, was implemented in Chile in 1973, following the US-backed military coup of Augusto Pinochet, which set a precedent for the type of political coalitions and practices that would be necessary to implement such a revolution from above, namely the defeat of the organized popular classes that had been articulated around the developmentalist alliance, their exclusion from political participation and the silencing of their ideological and cultural articulations (see Klein, 2007).

References

- Armstrong, P., Glyn, A. and Harrison, J. (1991). *Capitalism Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Arrighi, G. (1991). 'World Income Inequalities and the Future of Socialism', *New Left Review*, 189, 39–65.
- Arrighi, G. (1994). *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso).
- Arrighi, G., Hopkins, T. K. and Wallerstein, I. (1989). *Anti-Systemic Movements* (New York: Verso).
- Arruda, M. (2003). *Humanizar o Infra-humano: A Formação do Ser Humano Integral: Homo Evolutivo, Práxis e Economia Solidária* (Rio de Janeiro: PACS/Editora Vozes).
- Arruda, M. (2006). *Tornar o Real Possível: A Formação do Ser Humano Integral: Economia Solidária, Desenvolvimento e o Futuro do Trabalho* (Rio de Janeiro: PACS/Editora Vozes).
- Bakker, I. (2007). 'Social Reproduction and the Constitution of a Gendered Political Economy', *New Political Economy*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 541–6.
- Banerjee, S. (1984). *India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising* (London: Totowa).
- Barker, C. and Cox, L. (2002). "'What Have the Romands Ever Done for Us?' Academic and Activist Forms of Movement Theorizing', *Alternative Futures and Popular Protest, 8th Annual Conference*, April, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.
- Basu, A. (1987). 'Grassroots Movements and the State: Reflections on Radical Change in India', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 16, 647–74.
- Bates, R. H. (2005). *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Bauman, Z. (2003). *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Berger, M. T. (1994). 'The End of the "Third World"?', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 257–75.
- Berger, M. T. (2001). 'The Nation-State and the Challenge of Global Capitalism', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 6, 889–907.
- Berger, M. T. (2004). 'After the Third World? History, Destiny and the Fate of Third Worldism', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 9–39.
- Bernstein, H. (1994). 'Agrarian Classes in Capitalist Development', in L. Sklair (ed.), *Capitalism and Development* (London: Routledge): 40–71.
- Bernstein, H. (2001). "'The Peasantry" in Global Capitalism: Who, Where and Why?', *Socialist Register 2001*, Vol. 37, 25–50.
- Bessa, M. and Garmany, J. (2008). 'Considering Space, Politics and Social Movements: An Interview with Jo o Pedro Stedile, a Leader within Brazil's Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)', *Antipode*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 187–91.

- Bevington, D. and Dixon, C. (2005). 'Movement-Relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism', *Social Movement Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 185–208.
- Bond, P. (2006). *Looting Africa: The Economics of Exploitation* (London: Zed Books).
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). 'Utopia of Endless Exploitation: The Essence of Neoliberalism', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December.
- Branford, S. and Rocha, J. (2002). *Cutting the Wire: The Story of the Landless Movement in Brazil* (London: Latin America Bureau).
- Brown, E. and Herbert, S. (2006). 'Conceptions of Space and Crime in the Punitive Neoliberal City,' *Antipode*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 755–77.
- Bryceson, D. F. (2000). 'Disappearing Peasantries? Rural Labour Redundancy in the Neo-Liberal Era and Beyond', in D. F. Bryceson, C. Kay and J. Mooji (eds), *Disappearing Peasantries* (London: Intermediate Technology Publications): 299–336.
- Bullard, N., Bello, W. and Mallhotra, K. (1998). 'Taming the Tigers: The IMF and the Asian Crisis', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 505–55.
- Cammack, P. (2004). 'What the World Bank Means by Poverty Reduction, and Why it Matters', *New Political Economy*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 189–211.
- Cardoso, F. and Faletto, E. (1979). *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Castells, M. (2001). *End of Millennium – The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume III* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell).
- Chant, S. (2008). *Gender, Generation and Poverty: Exploring the 'Feminisation of Poverty' in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Cheltenham and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing).
- Chatterjee, P. (2004). *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Chibber, V. (2003). *Locked in Place: State-Building and Late Industrialization in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Chibber, V. (2005). 'Reviving the Developmental State: The Myth of the National Bourgeoisie', *Socialist Register 2005*, 226–46.
- Collier, R. B. and Collier, D. (1991). *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Corbridge, S. (1993). *Debt and Development* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell).
- Corbridge, S. and Harriss, J. (2000). *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Cowen, M. and Shenton, R. W. (1996). *Doctrines of Development* (London: Routledge).
- Craine, J. and Aitken, S. C. (2004). 'Street Fighting: Placing the Crisis of Masculinity in David Fincher's Fight Club,' *GeoJournal*, Vol. 59, No. 4, 289–96.
- Davis, M. (2006). *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso).
- De Angelis, M. (2003). "Neoliberal Global Governance and Accumulation". *The Commoner*, No. 7, Spring/Summer <http://www.commoner.org.uk/07deangelis.pdf>.
- Desai, A. (2002). *We are the Poors! Community Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press).
- Desai, R. (2004). 'From National Bourgeoisies to Rogues, Failures and Bullies: 21st Century Imperialism and the Unravelling of the Third World', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 169–85.
- Duffield, M. (2001). *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed Books).

- Ellner, S. and Tinker-Salas, M. (2005). 'The Venezuelan Exceptionalism Thesis: Separating Myth from Reality', in S. Ellner and Tinker-Salas, M. (eds), *Venezuela: Hugo Chavez and the Decline of an 'Exceptional Democracy'* (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield Publishers): 5–19.
- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Evans, P. B. (1979). *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Evans, P. B. (1995). *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Featherstone, D. (2005). 'Towards the Relational Construction of Militant Particularisms: Or Why the Geographies of Past Struggles Matter for Resistance to Neoliberal Globalisation', *Antipode*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 250–71.
- Federici, S. (1990). 'Africa, the Debt Crisis and the New Enclosures', *Midnight Notes*, midnightnotes.org, 10–18.
- Federici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia).
- Fine, B. (2001). 'Neither the Washington Consensus nor the Post-Washington Consensus: An Introduction', in B. Fine, C. Lapavistas and J. Pincus (eds), *Development Policy in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond the Post-Washington Consensus* (London: Routledge).
- Frankel, F. (2005). *India's Political Economy: The Gradual Revolution 1947–2004 – The Gradual Revolution* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- George, S. (1993). *A Fate Worse Than Debt: The World Financial Crisis and the Poor* (London: Penguin Books).
- Gill, S. (1995). 'Globalisation, Market Civilization, and Disciplinary Neoliberalism', *Millennium*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 399–423.
- Gill, S. and Bakker, I. (eds) (2003). *Power, Production, and Social Reproduction: Human In/Security in the Global Political Economy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Glyn, A., Hughes, A., Lipietz, A. and Singh, A. (1991). 'The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age', in S. A. Marglin and J. B. Schor (eds), *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Post-War Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 39–125.
- Gowan, P. (1995). 'Neo-Liberal Theory and Practice for Eastern Europe', *New Left Review*, Vol. 213, 3–60.
- Gramsci, A. (1998). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart).
- Hagopian, F. and Mainwaring, S. P. (2005). *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Halperin, S. (2004). *War and Social Change in Modern Europe: The Great Transformation Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Harman, C. (1994). 'The Prophet and the Proletariat', *International Socialism*, Vol. 64.
- Hart, G. (2006). 'Denaturalizing Dispossession: Critical Ethnography in the Age of Resurgent Imperialism', *Antipode*, Vol. 38, No. 5, 977–1004.
- Harvey, D. (1996). *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing).
- Harvey, D. (2000). *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Hettne, B. (1995). *Development Theory and the Three Worlds*, 2nd edn (Essex: Longman Scientific and Technical).

- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1995). *The Age of Capital: 1848–1875* (London: Vintage Books).
- Holloway, J. (2002). *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today* (London: Pluto Press).
- Hoogvelt, A. (2001). *Globalisation and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan Press).
- Hubbard, P. (2004). 'Revenge and Injustice in the Neoliberal City: Uncovering Masculinist Agendas', *Antipode*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 665–86.
- Inden, R. (1995). 'Embodying God: From Imperial Progresses to National Progress in India', *Economy and Society*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 245–78.
- Jayasuriya, K. (2001). 'Governance, Post-Washington Consensus and the New Anti Politics', Working Paper Series, No. 2, April, Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong.
- Janssens, A. (1998). *The Rise and Decline of the Male Breadwinner Family?: Studies in Gendered Patterns of Labour Division and Household Organisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Jessop, B. (1990). *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in its Place* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Jessop, B. (2003). *The Future of the Capitalist State* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Jocoy, C. L. and Del Casino, V. J. (2006). 'Neoliberal Subjectivities, the New Homelessness and Struggles over Spaces in the City', *Antipode*, Vol. 38, No. 5, 578–601.
- Kamat, S. (2002). *Development Hegemony: NGOs and the State in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Kamat, S. (2004). 'The Privatization of Public Interest: Theorizing NGO Discourse in a Neoliberal Era', *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 155–76.
- Katsiaficas, G. (1987). *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston, MA: South End Press).
- Katzenstein, M. and Ray, R. (2005). 'And in the Beginning There Was the Nehruvian State', in R. Ray and M. Katzenstein (eds), *Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power, and Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers).
- Kiely, R. (2007). *The New Political Economy of Development: Globalization, Imperialism, Hegemony* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Klein, N. (2007). *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Picador).
- Kohli, A. (2005). *State-Directed Development: Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Luke, T. W. (1982). 'Angola and Mozambique: Institutionalizing Social Revolution in Africa', *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 413–36.
- Mamdani, M. (1996). *Subject and Citizen: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Mander, J. and Tauli-Corpuz, V. (eds) (2006). *Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Globalization* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books).
- McMichael, P. (2004). *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective*, 2nd edn (London: Pine Forge Press).
- McMichael, P. (2006). 'Reframing Development: Global Peasant Movements and the New Agrarian Question', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 471–83.
- McMichael, P. and Myhre, D. (1991). 'Global Regulation vs. the Nation-State: Agro-Food Systems and the New Politics of Capital', *Capital and Class*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 83–106.

- McMichael, P. and Raynolds, L. T. (1994). 'Capitalism, Agriculture and the World Economy', in L. Sklair (ed.), *Capitalism and Development* (London: Routledge): 316–33.
- Mohanty, C. H. (2003). *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
- Moore, D. S. (1998). 'Subaltern Struggles and the Politics of Place: Remapping Resistance in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1–38.
- Moore, D. S. (2000). 'The Crucible of Cultural Politics: Reworking "Development" in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 654–89.
- Moore, D. S. (2005). *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
- Morton, A. D. (2007). *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Economy* (London: Pluto Press).
- Morton, A. D. (2010). 'Reflections on Uneven Development: Mexican Revolution, Primitive Accumulation, Passive Revolution', *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 7–34.
- Motta, S. (2009). 'Old Tools and New Movements in Latin America: Political Science as Gatekeeper or Intellectual Illuminator', *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 51, No.1, 31–56.
- Moyo, S. and Yeros, P. (eds) (2005). *Reclaiming the Land: The Resurgence of Rural Movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (London: Zed Books).
- Nadesan, M. H. (2006). *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge).
- Nandy, A. (2002). *The Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Nilsen, A. G. (2008). 'Political Economy, Social Movements and State Power: A Marxian Perspective on Two Decades of Resistance to the Narmada Dam Projects', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 2–3, 303–30.
- O'Donnell, G. A. (1973). *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Omvedt, G. (1993). *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India* (New York: East Gate).
- Ong, A. (2006). *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
- O'Reilly, K. (2010). 'The Promise of Patronage: Adapting and Adopting Neoliberal Development', *Antipode*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 179–200.
- Patel, R. and McMichael, P. (2004). 'Third Worldism and the Lineages of Global Fascism: The Regrouping of the Global South in the Neoliberal Era', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 231–54.
- Petras, J. and Veltmeyer, H. (2005). *Social Movements and State Power in Latin America: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador* (London: Pluto Press).
- Prashad, V. (2009). *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press).
- Rangan, H. (2000). *Of Myths and Movements: Rewriting Chipko into Himalayan History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Roberts, A. (2008). 'Privatizing Social Reproduction: The Primitive Accumulation of Water in an Era of Neoliberalism', *Antipode*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 535–60.
- Roberts, K. M. (2002). 'Social Inequalities Without Class Cleavages in Latin America's Neoliberal Era', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 3–33.

- Robinson, W. I. (1996). 'Globalisation: Nine Theses', *Race and Class*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 13–32.
- Robinson, W. I. (2001). 'Transnational Processes, Development Studies and Changing Social Hierarchies in the World System: A Central American Case Study', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 529–64.
- Robinson, W. I. (2004). *A Theory of Global Capitalism: Production, Class and State in a Transnational World* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Roseberry, W. (1994). 'Hegemony and the Languages of Contention', in J. M. Gilbert and D. Nugent (eds), *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press): 355–66.
- Santos, B. De Sousa (2005). 'The Future of the World Social Forum: The Work of Translation', *Development*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 15–22.
- Santos, B. De Sousa (2007). 'Beyond Abysmal Thinking: From global lines to ecologies of knowledges', *Eurozone*, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-06-29-santos-en.html> (accessed, 14 February 2010).
- Santos, B. De Sousa (2008). 'Depolarised Pluralities: A Left with a Future', in P. Barrett, D. Chavez and C. Rodríguez-Garavito (eds), *The New Latin American Left: Utopia Reborn* (London: Pluto Press).
- Schamis, H. E. (1991). 'Reconceptualizing Latin American Authoritarianism in the 1970s: From Bureaucratic-Authoritarian to Neoconservatism', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 201–20.
- Shukaitis, S. (2009). *Imaginal Machines: Autonomy and Self-Organization in the Revolutions of Everyday Life* (London and New York: Minor Compositions, Autonomedia).
- Silver, B. (2003). *Forces of Labour: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Sinha, S. (2003). 'Development Counter-Narratives: Taking Social Movements Seriously', in K. Sivaramakrishnan and A. Agrawal (eds), *Regional Modernities: The Cultural Politics of Development in India* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press): 286–312.
- Sitrin, M. (2007). *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Protest in Argentina* (Oakland, CA: AK Press).
- Smith, A. C., Acuna, C. H. and Gamarra, E. A. (1994). *Latin American Political Economy in the Age of Neoliberal Reform: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives for the 1990s* (Miami, FL: University of Miami Iberian Studies Institute).
- Stedile, J. P. (2002). 'Landless Battalions', *New Left Review*, Vol. 15, 77–104.
- Taylor, M. (2009). 'Displacing Insecurity in a Divided World: Global Security, International Development and the Endless Accumulation of Capital', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 147–62.
- Thompson, E. P. (1978). 'Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?', *Journal of Social History*, May, 133–65.
- Tischler, S. (2008). 'The Crisis of the Classical Canon of the *Class Form*', in W. Bonefeld (ed.), *Subverting the Present: Imagining the Future* (New York: Autonomedia): 161–78.
- Toye, J. F. J. (1993). *Dilemmas of Development: Reflections on the Counter-Revolution in Development Economics* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Vanaik, A. (1990). *The Painful Transition: Bourgeois Democracy in India* (London: Verso).
- Wacquant, L. (2009). *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
- Wallerstein, I. (1990). 'Anti-Systemic Movements: History and Dilemmas', in S. Amin, G. Arrighi, A. G. Frank and I. Wallerstein (eds), *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movements and the World-System* (New York: Monthly Review Press): 13–53.

- Wallerstein, I. (2006). 'The Curve of American Power', *New Left Review*, Vol. 40, 77–94.
- Walton, J. and Seddon, D. (1994). *Free Markets and Food Riots: The Politics of Global Adjustment* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Watts, M. (2000). '1968 and All That ...', *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 157–88.
- Webber, H. (2004). 'Reconstituting the "Third World"? Poverty Reduction and Territoriality in the Global Politics of Development', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 187–206.
- Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Williamson, J. (1993). 'Democracy and the "Washington Consensus"', *World Development*, Vol. 21, No. 8, 1329–1336.

Part I

Struggles Against Dispossession: Social Movements and the State in the Global South

2

Labour Protest and Hegemony in Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula

John Chalcraft

Introduction

William Sewell's (1993) article 'Towards a Post-Materialist Rhetoric for Labour History' challenged labour historians to abandon their basic economic conviction that the arena of production and exchange was a uniquely material one. He cogently suggested that 'we must imagine a world in which every social relationship is simultaneously constituted by meaning, scarcity and by power' (ibid.: 34). Recent, significant, but under-reported rounds of labour protest in Egypt (since 2004) and in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (since 2005), however, can easily be read in a way that repeats rather than revises standard materialist premises in the labour historiography of North Africa and South West Asia. It is tempting to argue that intensifying capitalist globalization has led automatically to protests from below as workers suffer higher rates of exploitation, objectively defined. But even the most basic reminder that oppression and exploitation sometimes demobilize, and at other times spark collective action, indicates the inadequacy of mechanistic analyses. This chapter aims to respond to Sewell's challenge by outlining how old and new movements of labour protest in Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula can be understood in terms of hegemonic contestation.

Hegemony and protest

Antonio Gramsci's work is a field of inspiration for historians seeking to rise to Sewell's challenge. There is no space here to justify a particular interpretation of Gramsci, but I propose to draw on Femia's reading, which seems to me to steer convincingly between the Scylla of economism and the Charybdis of poststructuralism. Gramsci, arguably, was an historical materialist whose great contribution was to accord an 'independent and creative role' to human subjectivity (Femia, 1981: 1). His analysis links capitalism (Sewell's 'scarcity') to the struggle over meaning in the 'redoubts

and trenches' of civil society. In turn, economic activity and meaning are thoroughly linked to political society – the 'apparatus of state coercion which legally assures the discipline of those groups which do not consent' (ibid.: 28).

In this analysis, the central dynamic is not given by purely material and structural shifts in the mode of production or materialistically defined class contradictions. This framework therefore departs from the assumptions underlying much of the standard work in the labour historiography of Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula (Abbas, 1967; Disney, 1977; Halliday, 1977a, 1977b, 1980, 1984, 2002 [1974]; Lackner, 1978; Franklin, 1985; Khalaf, 1985; Beinín and Lockman, 1987; Beinín, 1989). Instead, historical dynamics are sought in a struggle for hegemony. Here, leading groups (whether dominant or oppositional), discharging or associated with decisive economic functions, conduct projects of moral, political and intellectual leadership in order to win consent from dominant and subaltern social groups alike. Subaltern groups are not ciphers of elite control. Their culture(s) and interests are neither completely autonomous of the dominant bloc, nor are they entirely defined by them (Hall, 1981; Patnaik, 1987). The maintenance of effective hegemony – whether paternalist, statist developmentalist, socialist or liberal-democratic – requires a stream of concessions, symbolic and material. It is a dynamic and unfinished process involving both change over time and hegemonic expansion and contraction. It encompasses a 'field-of-force' involving unequal reciprocity (Thompson, 1978). Where consent is won for a dominant hegemony, then one might expect either quiescence from below or protest when that hegemony comes under threat. Where consent is won for an alternative hegemony, one might expect protest against the established order.

This framework is arguably compatible with E. P. Thompson's sophisticated discussion of moral economy, which he developed with regard to eighteenth-century England to argue against economic reductionism in which protests stemmed spasmodically from purely material concerns (Thompson, 1971, 1978, 1991). Thompson's moral economy of the crowd measures the extent of the partial autonomy of plebeian culture from the cultural hegemony of gentry-based paternalism in eighteenth-century England (see especially Thompson, 1978: 163–5). But Thompson's notion also enables us to see the ways in which the crowd, drawing on customs in common and statutes old and new, defended a paternalistic hegemony, threatened in part by profiteering or hoarding or forestalling, or at least a hegemony redefined by plebeians in ways that would deliver to them a stream of material and symbolic concessions. As E. P. Thompson has it, this eighteenth-century moral economy came under strain and finally 'snapped' (ibid.: 165) during the Napoleonic wars – giving way to new forms of protest and dissent linked to the explicit language of class in the nineteenth century. The ideological break with paternalism came not just

through experience, 'the economy', or from the plebeian culture itself, but via new forms of intellectual culture and middle-class dissent (*ibid.*: 164) which enabled an outright assault on paternalism. Inasmuch as the moral economy of the crowd continued into the nineteenth century in ways that were more than residual, it was incorporated into a nineteenth-century critique – by Chartists and others – of the new liberal political economy and the laissez-faire capitalism it supported (Thompson, 1991: 337). The point is that Thompsonian notions of moral economy can be stitched into a larger framework anchored by Gramscian notions of hegemony and alternative hegemony. In this case, true to Thompson's deeply historical vision, the moral economy becomes less a conceptual framework, valid for all times and places, and more an element in a larger alternative hegemony, or an example of a particular kind of crowd action and protest, occurring at a particular historical juncture.

The idea of hegemonic contestation may offer one kind of answer, moreover, to what Walton and Seddon (1994: 35) throw down as an 'important theoretical challenge' in their study of Third World food riots from Peru (1976) to Nepal (1992) during structural adjustment. The challenge is how to combine subjective and objective factors, moral economy, community, state- and market-based approaches, and how to develop 'explanations that move across levels and dimensions' (*ibid.*). There is much to agree with regarding their overall argument that in the Middle East as elsewhere, popular protests during these years can be read as a response to the 'abrogation of the social pact established between developmentalist regimes and rapidly urbanizing populations' (*ibid.*: 54; cf. Posusney, 1993). This is clearly an advance on the idea that protests were either the automatic outcome of capitalist contradictions, or a matter of an attempt to return to some traditional status quo ante – to which the decidedly modernist and developmentalist 'social pact' defended from below by subaltern groups owed little. Arguably, the notion of hegemonic contestation can bring some theoretical coherence to what might otherwise end in eclecticism, while expanding the range of protest that can be explained, and avoiding the overly consensual idea of a 'social pact' in favour of the more conflict-ridden notion of 'unequal reciprocity' that underpins the idea of hegemony. The notion of hegemonic contestation, moreover, can accommodate Hugh Roberts' (2002) salient emphasis on the importance of the political (as opposed to the purely economic demands) of protesters, as in the case of Algeria in the late 1980s.

This chapter argues that protests in Egypt before 1952 and on the Arabian Peninsula before 1973 can be understood in terms firstly of the contraction of the existing but increasingly minimal and residual hegemony linked to liberalism, monarchism and imperialism. Secondly, they are linked to the emergence of an increasingly expansive alternative hegemony linked to oppositional groups promising national self-determination and socio-economic development. Quiescence in Egypt during the Nasser

years (1952–70) is understood in terms of the expansiveness of a dominant hegemony based around this previously only emergent developmentalism. Demobilization in the states of the GCC from 1973 to the early 2000s is associated with the defeat and disarticulation of the alternative hegemony, and the rise of a new hegemony built of conservative nationalism, patrimonialism and neoliberalism. The re-emergence of protest in Egypt since the 1970s is linked to the defence ‘from below’ of the pre-existing developmentalist hegemony under assault from above. And protests in the Gulf since 2005 are understood in terms of the failure of the neoliberal dispensation for workers even on its own terms, and their protests in defence of this hegemony from below.

Protest in Egypt before 1952

The pioneering labour historiography of Egypt tended to link worker protest in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Egypt very closely to contradictions stemming rather automatically from the development of capitalism in Egypt (Abbas, 1967; Izz al-Din, 1967; Beinin and Lockman, 1987; Beinin, 1989). These authors argue that a newly emerging category of wage-workers selling only their labour power started to protest their exploitation. The coalheavers of Port Said were among the first to go on strike in 1882. The labour movement burst more forcefully onto the scene during the rebellion of 1919, affecting the transport network and other major industrial establishments. Throughout the interwar period, the movement increasingly came under more proletarian leadership. By the 1940s and early 1950s a far more developed and conscious working-class movement played a major role in the termination of British rule, the Free Officers’ coup of 1952 and the end of the monarchy in 1953.

This analysis has rightly been criticized for determinism and materialism (Beinin, 1994; Lockman, 1994a, 1994b). Firstly, there was a longer history to activism and protest than the conventional historiography admits (Burke and Lapidus, 1988; Zubaida, 2008). Capitalism did not stir a previously stagnant Orient into life. Protests and petitions among crafts and service workers went back centuries. In the eighteenth century, artisans mobilized against oppressive local oligarchies, and then against the French occupation of Egypt 1798–1801 (Raymond, 1968, 1973; Baer, 1977). In Istanbul, an alliance of merchants, clerics, military corps and guilds brought down the Sultan in 1806 (Akarlı, 1987). Journeymen weavers struck in Damascus in the 1870s (Vatter, 1994). In Egypt, in the same decade, crafts and service workers (boatmen, carpenters, masons, cab drivers and so on) protested corrupt guild leaders manipulating custom under heavy pressure to collect higher taxes, and guild leaders protested heavy taxation. In the countryside, peasants petitioned against the corruption of village leaders and/or their dispossession at the hands of landowners; they participated vigorously in newly instituted

elections for village headmen in the 1870s (Chalcraft, 2005b). These protests came to a head in Colonel Ahmad 'Urabi's rebellion of 1881–82 which united diverse groups including crafts and service workers under the banners of constitutionalism and patriotism against local autocracy and European control (Salem, 1981; Schölch, 1981; Cole, 1993; Sa'id, 1994). The mobilization of the coal-heavers in 1882 is usefully placed in this context.

A wide variety of groups, not necessarily male, and not necessarily industrial, and holding diverse grievances, were involved in protest. Migrant workers from Southern Europe and Syria transmitted transnational ideas and forms of activism to Egypt before 1914 (Gorman, 2008; Khuri-Makdisi, 2010). Cairo's cab drivers, mostly self-employed, played an important role in sparking a significant round of protest in the spring of 1907. Alongside butchers, carters, fishermen and others, cab drivers were protesting against new invasive state regulations backed by colonial agencies (Chalcraft, 2004). Cab drivers were again involved in 1919. Protestors did not always target a quintessential capitalist bourgeoisie: coal-heavers mobilized from the 1880s onwards against their corrupt quasi-guild shaykh contractors as much as the coaling companies – such protests were articulated by notions of just leadership and they were inspired in part by new forms of state intervention providing a referee and a set of regulations against which claims could be brought (Chalcraft, 2001).

Newly educated and emerging nationalist middle classes increasingly adopted the imaginary of the working class as a constituency to represent in their struggle against the British. This imaginary had an impact on the categories internalized by workers themselves (Lockman, 1994b). Organizational alliances between nationalists and diverse subaltern social groups were built after the protests against the heavy-handed British repression of peasants in the village of Dinshaway in 1906, and after a round of protest joined by urban crafts and service workers in the spring of 1907. These alliances were cemented during the rebellion and labour upsurge of 1919. During the remaining years of direct colonial rule, worker mobilization and nationalist struggle marched together (Beinin and Lockman, 1987; Beinin, 1988).

None of this sprung purely from domestic or socio-economic contradictions. Ideas of national self-determination, liberty, equality and emancipation emerged from the revolutionary Atlantic during previous centuries (Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000). A round of protest against autocracy and colonial power rocked the region and the wider colonial world in the early 1900s. The victory of Japan in the war with Tsarist Russia in 1905 and the workers' revolt in Russia in the same year, the constitutional revolution in Iran 1905–06 (Afary, 1996), and the constitutional revolution in the Ottoman empire in 1908 (Quataert and Zürcher, 1995) were all part of the context for the labour upsurge in Egypt. The same was true of the nationalist rebellions that broke out around the colonial world from Ireland to

India after the end of the First World War. Nationalism became more urgent in North Africa and the Levant in the years following 1945, as in so many other parts of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. It was certainly no coincidence that in Egypt protests – linked to nationalism – were always more numerous and intense in factories owned by European interests.

Collective protest among workers owed much to how the narrow, corporate interests of workers considered as a class were identified with what Gramsci defined as principles capable of attaining universality in the social formation as a whole – above all a form of Egyptian nationalism – itself in some measure a project of a transnational anti-colonial imaginary. Workers played an important role in a rising historic bloc articulating an alternative hegemony in opposition to an increasingly weak, corrupt and coercive historic bloc composed of British colonial officials, the Egyptian monarchy, and the landowners, merchants, usurers and European capitalists of the ancien regime. The ideas of monarchy, liberalism and gradual reform that had stitched this bloc together were increasingly discredited. And when this by now defunct hegemony was effectively overthrown in 1952, few workers lamented its passing.

Protests in the Arabian Peninsula in the 1950s and 1960s

Worker protests in the conventional sense came later to the Arabian Peninsula – beginning in the 1930s and peaking in the 1950s and 1960s. The conventional labour historiography associates these protests in a rather automatic mode with capitalist contradictions in emerging oil economies (Disney, 1977; Halliday, 1977a, 1977b, 1980, 1984, 2002 [1974]; Lackner, 1978; Franklin, 1985; Khalaf, 1985). Protests began ‘when a labor class began to develop with the discovery of oil’ (Nakhleh, 1976: 75). The first labour strike in the Gulf is thus regarded as the oil workers’ strike over pay and conditions at the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO) in 1938. The most active protests in the labour movement in Bahrain, heavily linked to the demand for the right to unionize, then took place between 1954 and 1956. There was another major strike in March 1965 at BAPCO which ‘soon developed into a national popular uprising’ (ibid.: 79). There were strikes in 1968, 1970 and 1971. A series of strikes by workers in aviation, hospitals, ports, industrial areas and the aluminium company then rocked the country in March 1972 which ‘practically brought the island’s commercial life to a halt’ (ibid.: 79–81). The arc of activism in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and to some extent Oman and Qatar was similar – being at its most intense during the 1950s and 1960s, and diminishing by the 1970s (Halliday, 2002 [1974]). In Saudi Arabia, for example, there were major strikes, demonstrations and boycotts by oil workers and others at ARAMCO in 1945, 1953–54, 1955, 1956 and more sporadically during the 1960s (Vitalis, 2007: 92–5, 145–62, 172–81, 263–4).

But protest and even strike action has had a longer history in the Persian Gulf than might be assumed, involved a wider variety of subaltern social groups than industrial wage-workers, and was shaped by grievances more diverse than capitalist exploitation. A substantial strike among pearl divers suffering indenture and debt peonage in Bahrain in May 1932, for example, followed 'a number of poor seasons and growing resentment at the low... capital advances... being offered'. The strike leaders were arrested, whereupon 1500 divers 'attacked' the police station in Manama where the leaders were detained. Two divers were shot dead (Seccombe, 1983: 4). Urban unrest in the interwar period in Bahrain owed much to 'pearl divers and labourers from Najd and Iran' (Fuccaro, 2008: 22). The first known strikes in Saudi Arabia's history did not involve oil workers. The first strike seems to have been joined in 1931 by King Abd al-Aziz's drivers, who were rapidly repressed and deported (Lackner, 1978: 90). The second took place in September 1942 – at the beginning of Ramadan, the month of fasting – when 'some two thousand men engaged in hard labour for the state at a building site... assembled in a mass demonstration to demand a shorter workday' (Vitalis, 2007: 92). Here labourers' demands and grievances were linked to religious duty.

In Bahrain, poorer villagers, in the increasingly sidelined activities of boat construction and date palm agriculture, along with small traders of shi'a extraction, students and lower-level state employees were involved in popular protests from the 1930s onwards (Lawson, 1989: 49, 58, 65). In Saudi Arabia, skilled Saudi drillers, among others, were not simply contesting capitalist exploitation. As Vitalis makes clear, opposition in the oil fields had much to do with protest against the US-imposed, settler colonial work camp system based on racial discrimination (Vitalis, 2007: 92–5, 145–62, 172–81, 263–4).

Worker activism was also linked directly and indirectly to growing oppositional movements among higher status, wealthier or more educated groups. The members of the nationalist Higher Executive Committee in Bahrain during 1954–56 (Bakir, 1965; Lawson, 1989), the politicization of the athletic and social clubs frequented by professionals in Kuwait, the nationalist deputies in the National Assembly in Kuwait, along with 'progressive' sections of the merchant community, the occasional renegade prince or disaffected elements in the military (Lackner, 1978: 90–1; Vitalis, 2007: 161), and guerrillas fighting in Dhofar (Naqeeb, 1990: 93; Halliday, 2002 [1974]). Arab migrants, above all Palestinians, Egyptians and Yemenis, came to the Peninsula in their hundreds of thousands after 1947–48. They staffed the education, health and public sectors, above all in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In Saudi Arabia, for example, Palestinians played an important role in organizing the first oil strikes in the 1950s (Halliday, 1984: 7). As Lackner has it, in the mid-1950s, opposition groups were organized on a local basis and many of them 'consisted of immigrant Yemenis, Egyptians and Palestinians

who had flocked to Saudi Arabia They had considerable political influence on the Saudi Arabian workers in the oil fields' (Lackner, 1978: 94–5). The unions in Kuwait, for example, influenced by the Palestinians and the ideas of the Arab Nationalist Movement, struck in protest in 1967 against the government for not giving adequate support to front line Arab states in the war with Israel (Weiner, 1982: 23).

Worker protests in the Arabian Peninsula were shaped by and helped shape in turn a discernible if by no means entirely united oppositional bloc that appeared during these years. By 1956, as Vitalis (2007: 161) puts it with regard to Saudi Arabia, 'all the diverse populist currents . . . that were remaking the political order in Egypt and the Arab East were taking root . . . and the oil workers were only one of a number of forces beginning to crowd the political field.' What stitched these groups together, and helped forge an oppositional bloc and rising alternative hegemony that seriously frightened the ruling families was above all 'the revolutionary, Arab nationalist tide which inundated the Gulf and Arab peninsula region in the 1950s' (Naqeeb, 1990: 101). Just as Southern Europeans played a role in North Africa before the 1950s, highly politicized migrant Palestinians, Egyptians and Yemenis, who flocked to the Arabian Peninsula after 1948–49, played a major role, especially in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as a transmission belt for the 'ideas of pan-Arabism, Marxism, and Islamism in the 1960s and 1970s' (Louër, 2008: 33). Activism was further aided and abetted by the direct support that Egypt, above all, was willing to give to oppositional movements before Nasser was defeated in Yemen and by Israel in the late 1960s. As Lackner has it, after the success of Nasser in 1956, '[a] widespread progressive movement developed rapidly in [Saudi Arabia] . . . manifested by strikes, discontent in the army and the emergence of a number of nationalist organisations.' The main grievances – which could be articulated by a radical pan-Arabism – were 'the absence of "modernisation" in Saudi Arabia, the country's subservience to the west and in particular to US imperialism, the lack of democratic rights, and the corruption and waste within the regime' (Lackner, 1978: 94–5). Indeed, the oil workers' strike of July 1956, which combined economic and nationalist demands, presented 'a danger feared by all sections of the ruling group' (*ibid.*: 61).

These movements drew further inspiration from wider transnational currents. The USSR presented an apparently successful model of development and superpower based on the language of socialism and workers' struggle. A communist leaflet distributed in the village of al-Khobar in 1954, for example, urged the overthrow of the reactionary, corrupt royals, and the expulsion of the 'American pigs' with whom they were collaborating. 'The days of the Cadillac and the palaces', the leaflet read, 'are finished. [They will] give way to popular democracy for the workers' (American Consul, 1954). Finally, inspiration also came from the eruption of the Non-Aligned Movement onto the world stage at Bandung in 1955 as the embodiment

of the political aspirations of newly independent Third World nations. None of the major figures in the movement – Nasser of Egypt, Nehru of India, Nkrumah of Ghana and Tito of Yugoslavia – were monarchs. Third Worldism generally depicted Arabian amirs and shaykhs as the old-fashioned reactionary puppets of neocolonialism, and adjuncts of economic dependency and underdevelopment (Malley, 1996; Khalili, 2007; Prashad 2007). Ba'thism, Pan-Arabism, Nasserism, communism and Third Worldism, for all their diversity, were capable of uniting oppositional movements at the very least around their opposition to monarchy.

In short, workers of various kinds and statuses were articulated as subaltern social groups in a diverse oppositional bloc and stitched together by powerful and progressive ideas associated with pan-Arabism, Nasserism, leftism and Third Worldism more generally. It was this rising alternative hegemony, not simply the changing relations of production, that accounts for much of the incidence, force and content of labour protest in the Peninsula. Just as in Egypt before 1952, widespread labour protest was linked to forms of nationalism. Unlike in Egypt, this oppositional bloc, foundering on the defeat of 1967 and the oil boom after 1973, ultimately failed to overthrow the ruling families of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and what became the UAE.

Labour quiescence in Egypt, 1952–67

Whereas Nasserism helped to stir labour activism on the regional stage, its impact was quite different domestically, where labour protests diminished rapidly after independence. The problem for the older historiography is precisely as Beinín recognized: 'if the consciousness and capacity of Egyptian workers were increasingly enhanced by the spread of capitalist relations of production and the growth of large-scale transport and industry, why was the organized working class so easily integrated into the corporatist structure of the Nasserist state after 1954?' (Beinín, 1994: 266). The puzzle cannot be resolved without a significant revision of the materialist scheme. It was not that the irreducible demands of a self-acting proletariat were crushed after independence by repression, state power, nationalist ideological delusion, and the betrayal of the workers by urban intellectuals more interested in anti-imperialist, gesture-politics than class struggle and socialist revolution (Beinín, 1989). This story of coercion, material interest and delusion does not give an adequate picture. Arguably, instead, the establishment of an expansive Nasserite hegemony in Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s was the basis of worker incorporation during those decades.

Firstly, while it is true that the Free Officers immediately met the labour movement with coercion, the colonial state had done likewise, but failed to crush workers' activism. Secondly, workers were nationalist and developmentalist themselves. Popular desires for Egyptian national self-determination and socio-economic development – the latter meaning jobs,

education, schooling, literacy, electricity, better housing, growing wealth and so on – were real enough. The notion that workers should be productive and disciplined in the name of national development after independence in the context of nationalization and state ownership was hardly an ideological delusion foisted on workers who were then beguiled into betraying their true class interests. There were elements in this complex to which workers could sign up to without overt coercion.

But nor was it that, in a rather static version of the moral economy approach, industrial peace was secured because leaderships now restored conditions which did not violate worker norms and standards, ‘to which the subaltern class... [had] become accustomed and which it expects the dominant elites to maintain’ (Posusney, 1993: 85). New forms of consent were not forged in line with a static and unchanging moral inheritance, and nor were they made outside of the pressures and power of statist and monopolistic leadership. Nasserite hegemony insisted in corporatist mode that workers join state-controlled unions, give up their independent political role, and abandon the notion of irreducible class division and struggle, in return for economic development and social protection – shorter working hours, higher pay, pensions, sick pay, bonus pay, unemployment benefit, job security and the like. That Nasserist leaderships (including intellectuals) championed this formula, worked its way into the construction and definition of workers’ interests, a process which formed part and parcel not of conservative restoration, but far-reaching change, and a language of change and progress. Doubters were persuaded by Nasser’s apparently dazzling anti-imperial success on the Arab and Third Worldist stage after 1956. Many of the themes of Third Worldism validated the kinds of policies that Nasser’s government pursued at home and abroad. For waverers, repression shaped social interests and perceptions of the desirable and the practical. In other words, principles of consent were forged in the heat of political leadership and changed over time – they did not involve static moral conformity to the status quo ante based on ‘traditional’ values. Overall, leadership, and combinations of coercion and consent channelled, harnessed and captured forms of popular agency and subjectivity.

The formula that diminished labour protest in Egypt after independence was not simply repressive, nor simply moral, but hegemonic. In the process, Nasserism appropriated many of the ideas of the communists, even while imprisoning their leaderships (Botman, 1988). Such hegemony could withstand significant antagonism. Workers did strike, often or even overwhelmingly without the support of their official unions, but they evinced their loyalty to the existing project of moral and intellectual leadership by maintaining and even increasing production, for example, demonstrating their commitment to national development goals, even while occupying factories and locking out management (Posusney, 1997).

Demobilization in the Gulf, 1970s–2000s

Worker protest in the Arabian Peninsula subsided in the 1970s for quite different reasons. As Naqeeb writes, the defeat of Nasserism and the flood of petrol revenue lured ‘whole populations to forsake the field of opposition and resistance. . . . [The region became] an empty wasteland of . . . memories of demonstrations’ (Naqeeb, 1990: 93). Here, unlike Egypt, there was no incorporation of labour in a new and expansive hegemonic order once an oppositional bloc had come to power. Instead, in the wake of 1967 and the oil boom of 1973, the oppositional bloc was dismantled, and workers were disarticulated from their place within it. A recomposed, divided and ‘diversified’ labour force was now repressed by, on the one side, and rearticulated to, on the other, a resurgent monarchical and narrowly neoliberal hegemony linked to the changing regional and international context. Protest did not diminish because capitalist exploitation was ameliorated. Far from it. The 1970s witnessed the beginning of a new wave of neoliberal globalization and attendant forms of exploitation – both in the Gulf as elsewhere. Quiescence stemmed from the break-up and then rearticulation of the old oppositional bloc in a changing international scene.

The patronage resources that ballooning oil revenues put in the hands of Gulf rulers drew national groups away from the older oppositional bloc. Merchants were given the opportunity and support to make money as long as they withdrew from politics (Crystal, 1990). The consent of professional classes was won in part by massive projects of socio-economic development (in industry and the physical and social infrastructure) pushed forward by ruling monarchs using oil revenues. Previously downwardly mobile groups – ‘ship captains, small landowners, tradesmen, artisans (caulkers, builders, goldsmiths), storekeepers, shepherds’ (Naqeeb, 1990: 129) – were given secure government jobs, pensions, land grants, health care and education for their progeny. And national workers’ demands on pay and conditions were generously accommodated (Lackner, 1978: 98).

If nationals were accommodated, non-nationals were restructured, segregated and even more tightly controlled. The restructuring of the migrant workforce in the GCC monarchies between the 1970s and the 1990s drove a coach and horses through the material and affective links that had bound migrants through pan-Arabism to allies in the receiving country. Firstly, there was a turn to less politicized Asian labour from the mid-1970s (Weiner, 1982: 9, 12, 28; Halliday, 1984: 5; Choucri, 1986; Kapiszewski, 2006: 6–7). By 1985, the percentage of migrants in the GCC countries accounted for by Arabs had fallen to 56 per cent (from 72 per cent in 1975). Contrarywise, non-Arabs had constituted only 12 per cent of all workers in the Gulf in 1970, but by 1985 Asians comprised some 63 per cent of the Gulf workforce (Kapiszewski, 2006: 7). Pan-Arabism was completely incapable of identifying Asian labour as having a role within its liberatory project, and

tended to depict that labour in pejorative terms (Fergany, 1983: 13; Beaugé and Roussillon, 1988: 171–2). Secondly, there were growing restrictions on Palestinian labour in the 1970s (Russell, 1989: 36–7), followed by the mass expulsions of Palestinian and Yemeni labour from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in 1991–92 (Sadowski, 1991; Gause, 1993: 161–2; Russell and al-Ramadhan, 1994; Hartmann, 1995). And finally, policies of ‘diversification’ emerged once the ‘danger’ from Arab migrants had been neutralized, and the idea became to divide and rule the workforce by preventing any one national or ethnic group from holding too significant a position (and hence have potential leverage) in the labour market (Davis, 2006).

Non-nationals were also segregated and controlled in new ways from the 1970s. Firstly, many of the development projects inaugurated in the 1970s, such as Jebel Ali in Dubai, were located in enclaves at some distance from existing urban centres, minimizing contact between the migrant workers who built them and nationals (Birks and Sinclair, 1980: 151). Secondly, work camps to ‘facilitate the “containment” of the immigrant populations at these large industrial sites’ (ibid.) were now envisaged on a more permanent basis than before. Thirdly, a new system of self-sufficient contracting begun in 1976 greatly reduced the kinds of social and economic linkages that a large migrant worker population otherwise tended to create with nationals. Under this ‘turnkey’ system ‘[c]ontractors who bring all the labour they need with them, build and provide all the facilities necessary for these workers, and take the workers back after the completion of the contract, are given preference’ (Disney, 1977: 23–4; Lackner, 1978: 194; Kapiszewski, 1999: 7). Finally, segregation and rotation was now backed by new legal and administrative measures to supplement the already formidable panoply of controls denying nationality, civil liberties and social rights to migrants (Khalaf, 1992: 72) – controls policed by the severe sanction of summary deportation (Choucri, 1986: 263).

On the regional stage, pan-Arab unity schemes failed to bear lasting fruit, and the Arab radical republics were crushingly defeated at the hands of Israel in 1967. If the *nakba* of 1948 was a hammer blow to the lustre of monarchs, the *naksa* of 1967 meant a crisis of authority for a generation of republican military officers. Stated most vividly, it meant a complete defeat ‘for the opposition and resistance movements in the whole of the Arab East’ (Naqeeb, 1990: 93). Sadat’s October ‘victory’ in 1973 was very much in the name of Egyptian national interests rather than those of Arabs and Palestinians. And whereas the turn towards what came to be known as Washington Consensus economics involved a coup d’état in Chile (1973), Sadat’s Egypt inaugurated in 1974 without any such coercion an economic liberalization (or *infītah*, literally ‘opening’) that marked a clear break with Nasserism. Further, by signing a separate peace with Israel in 1978–79, Egypt broke ranks with the Arab world, abandoning the Palestinians to their

fate. Syrian national interests governed, and were seen to govern its intervention in Lebanon in 1976 against Palestinians, leftists and pan-Arabists. On the domestic stage, the republics, weighed down with high energy prices and debt, compared extremely unfavourably with the Gulf monarchies, boosted by the quadrupling in the oil price in 1973, in terms of delivering physical and social infrastructure and raised disposable incomes to their national populations. Opposition movements in the Peninsula were now severed from international material or affective support, and the oppositional historic bloc in the Peninsula could no longer be stitched together by pan-Arabism, developmentalism and regional radicalism because these ideas were comprehensively losing their lustre. Via a conservative rearticulation of local nationalism, GCC rulers successfully identified themselves as generous father-figures, authentic yet modernizing guardians of national, Arab and Islamic traditions and values (Khalaf, 1992, 2000). As Khalaf has it, '[t]he state, personified by the ruling family... has produced in the eyes of its subjects an image of a paternalistic, all-powerful, all-providing, and all-giving father' (Khalaf, 1992: 64).

The broader international context, which changed fundamentally during these years, was equally important. The USA and Britain continued to offer significant geopolitical support to monarchies in the region, the difference being that the USA was increasingly powerful internationally, and after 1991 became the world's only superpower with a major military presence in the Persian Gulf to boot. What changed also was the increasing confidence in, or indifference to, the survival of monarchs displayed by cultural elites in Europe and the USA. The assaults from the Marxist left steadily melted away, while the new postcolonial left eschewed discussion of the fate of monarchy. The theory of the rentier state, which started out as a left critique of the nugatory economic effects of rentierism, became, with the demise of this kind of developmentalist economics, a rather elitist and determinist explanation for the power of monarchs to repress or co-opt. Neoliberal economists bracketed politics as a market distortion, and/or offered their consultancy services to the ruling families. Towards the political right, and among those mostly closely identified with US and Israeli geopolitical interests, monarchy was increasingly applauded as 'politically balanced, economically developmental, yet traditional and socioculturally integrative' (Kostiner, 2000: 10). Elsewhere, oppositional geopolitical and ideological forces disappeared. The Non-Aligned Movement ran out of steam, fatally split over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and steadily lost its socially revolutionary appeal. The USSR broke up in 1991. China was engaged in forms of neoliberal market reform from the late 1970s.

Overall, the break-up of Third Worldism and communism, the attrition of leftist pan-Arabism, the rise of a closed and conservative local nationalism, and the 'savage god' (Davis, 2001) of the free market worked to break apart the older oppositional bloc. Migrant workers were alienated from local

allies, interpellated as a demographic and cultural problem, and faced market forces, segregation and exclusion. Their national counterparts, with notable exceptions, were incorporated into a system of generous patronage. Workers continued to lodge protests, but in ways that remained divorced from the politics of any oppositional bloc, and that raised only corporate-economic demands.

Protest in Egypt 1967–2000

In the Arabian Peninsula, the period 1967–73 inaugurated several decades of demobilization – even under increasingly neoliberal conditions. In Egypt, the picture was quite different. The 1970s and 1980s were marked by higher levels of labour and popular protest as the dominant bloc in Egypt undertook an assault on the social protections and popular achievements of the Nasserist years. There was a significant revival of industrial collective action during 1971 and 1972. After Sadat officially proclaimed the beginning of market liberalization in late 1974, there was an important round of workers' sit-ins, strikes and demonstrations in 1975 and 1976 (Beinin, 1994: 257–8). When subsidies to basic consumer goods (such as bread, sugar and tea) were cut at the behest of the IMF in January 1977, there followed 'two days of the most widespread collective outrage witnessed in Egypt' since the last days of the British-backed monarchy (*ibid.*: 248). There was a major round of strikes during 1985 and 1986 and two fierce confrontations associated with major sit-ins at Helwan in 1989. There were further labour protests in the mid-1990s (Pratt, 1998).

Posusney has argued with considerable cogency, under the rubric of a moral economy approach to collective action, that these protests sought to defend and restore the terms of the status quo ante (Posusney, 1993, 1994, 1997). But rather than trying to universalize the importance of a moral economy approach to labour protest in general, the argument here is that a more contextualized and conceptually useful way of putting it would be to say that these protests sought to defend and restore, from below, the terms of a pre-existing hegemony under assault from above. It was precisely a defence of the protections and benefits and political terms of a Nasserist hegemony in the face of IMF-backed assault – more than moral economy consciousness in general – that stirred grievance and collective action during these years. In some respects this period was inaugurated by the mass demonstrations that reversed Nasser's decision to resign in the wake of the 1967 defeat. Moreover, as Posusney notes, protests did tend to coincide 'with the times that leftists had the greatest freedom to operate [notably in the press]' especially 1974–76 and 1984–87 (Posusney, 1994: 239–40). Thus, strikes were encouraged by the ideological and material support of non-workers in opposition to the regime – incipient elements of an oppositional bloc. Relative quiescence during the 1990s, moreover, coincided with the period when the political

stage was occupied by a bitter struggle between militant Islamists and the regime. During this period, the oppositional politics of the former were separate from or at loggerheads with those of the labour movement and forms of socialism (Amin, 2001). Finally, the transnational context should not be ignored. Protests and food riots relating to IMF-backed 'market reform', the cutting away of subsidies and social protections, rocked the region and the Third World more generally during these years (Denoeux, 1993; Walton and Seddon, 1994).

Rising protest in the Persian Gulf

Relative labour quiescence in the Arabian Peninsula did not last. Since the strike over unpaid wages of mostly Bangladeshi cleaners partially paralysed five hospitals in Kuwait in April 2005, labour protests have emerged on the Persian Gulf littoral on a scale not seen since the 1950s and 1960s. There were strikes in Qatar and Oman in late 2005 and early 2006. In September 2005, no less than 800 workers staged an unprecedented protest march down the main Shaykh Zayed highway in Dubai. This dramatic action was followed by at least eight major strikes in Dubai over the coming months. One of the most important was the computer and equipment breaking involving 2500 workers at the Burj Dubai site in March 2006. The following day, thousands of labourers working at Dubai International Airport laid down their tools. On 18 May 2006, about 400 migrant Asians working for construction company Al-Hoda gathered on a construction site in the industrial area of Jebel Ali 40 km north of Dubai's centre, demanding pay overdue for more than a month. In late 2007, construction workers demanding better pay and conditions took to the streets in Dubai, attacking police and overturning vehicles. In Bahrain, there was a round of protest in February 2008 on a scale unseen since the early 1970s. This collective action included a week-long strike of 1300 workers on Bahrain's largest worksite. Kuwait witnessed a second major round of labour protests and strikes over pay and conditions triggered by a strike by female sanitation workers, and then involving cleaners, petrol station employees, service workers and others during June–August 2008. In one of the biggest actions, around ten thousand cleaners struck over pay and conditions in the last week of July.

These protests raised primarily defensive and economic-corporate demands. Again and again workers struck over unpaid wages. The most insistent demand of the striking cleaners in Kuwait in April 2005, for example, related to up to six months of arrears in wage payments (Al-Watan, 2005). There is no evidence, however, that companies in Kuwait were becoming worse at paying wages on time. Judging by scattered reports in the press going back to at least the early 1990s, their track record in this regard had long been dismal. Nonetheless, riyals, dinars and dirhams, pegged to a falling US dollar, started to be worth less in 2004 – and more importantly

this shift accompanied a global rise in the prices of food, petrol and basic commodities. In other words, migrants' wages started to be worth less, both for basics in the receiving country and above all in the sending countries where they were spent in the form of remittances. What this wage crunch meant, therefore, was a blow against migrants' abilities to pay debts, provide for their families' subsistence, housing, health care and education, and/or to contribute to dreams of amassing capital for small business. It seems therefore that discharging the web of family and debtor-oriented obligations and maintaining status honour was increasingly difficult during this period.

If so, and the argument here is primarily a suggestion, given that little research has been carried out, then this wage devaluation meant an assault on the one element in the migratory system that owed something to the consent of the migrant workers' themselves. Migrants left primarily in the hopes of improving their and their families' lives. This was the hegemonic engine room, as it were, of circular labour migration. The wage crunch of the mid-2000s represented an assault on this pre-existing hegemonic form. By laying claim, moreover, to unpaid wages, owed to workers by law and by contract, workers were merely demanding their dues under the law, a law which was supposedly to be honoured even by the neoliberal market framework within which they operated. Sometimes demands were slightly more transformative. The ten thousand cleaners who struck in Kuwait in July 2008 sought to improve pay and conditions (*Al-Dar*, 2008) and thus change favourably the terms of their contract. But even here, in view of inflation, such changes were aimed simply at returning migrants to the status quo ante regarding the value of wages.

These limited claims were congruent in many ways with the rights framework which informed the activism of various groups from both the USA and sending countries concerned with migrants' rights in the Persian Gulf. These groups became more active in the wake of worker protests, included Human Rights Watch as well as numerous NGOs from South-East Asia such as the Sri Lankan Action Network for Migrant Workers (ACTFORM), the Thailand-based Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD) and the Filipino Center for Migrant Advocacy. In a letter to the relevant governments of sending and receiving countries in 18 December 2007, these groups diagnosed the problem and called for key reforms, envisaged as realizable through the regional consultations involved in the Colombo Process. A move was sought towards regional minimum standards regarding recruitment, employment and protection. The key problems were said to be that many migrants are 'deceived about their working conditions', 'cheated out of rightful wages', 'abused [especially physically and sexually] by their employers' and 'deported without access to redress'. Proposed reforms were to tackle these abuses, but they said very little about the larger structures of market and other forms of power within which migrant exploitation was

arguably being reproduced. In the absence of anything but an incipient oppositional bloc, and in the absence of compelling alternative political ideas, both rights groups and extensive labour protests, have not been able to get beyond an economic-corporate form or challenge the existing hegemony.

Protest in Egypt since 2000

The recent round of labour protest in Egypt has been more dramatic. 'The strike wave', writes Beinin (2009: 77), 'which began in 2004 and continues in 2009, is the largest social movement Egypt has witnessed in over half a century', involving '[o]ver 1.2 million workers and their families'. It would appear from the reports of the Land Centre for Human Rights that collective actions by workers were already becoming more frequent in the early 2000s, with over 100 incidents per year. During 2004–06 more than 200 actions per year were recorded. During 2007 there were 'a staggering 614' collective actions (ibid.: 77), and then 608 during 2008 (Alexander, 2009). The most important industrial strike since 1947 took place at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in Mahalla al-Kubra in December 2006. Just as in Kuwait in June 2008, women (garment workers in this case) played an important role in pushing forward the action – 3000 of them downing tools until they were joined by about 7000 men – the whole group occupying the factory for four days before their demands were largely met. The success of this strike was the catalyst for the multiplication of strikes during 2007 – which ended in December with the single largest action of the entire period – when 55,000 real-estate tax collectors went on strike over pay. The attempt to coordinate a national protest and even a general strike alongside a planned strike at Mahalla al-Kubra on 6 April 2008 – a protest linking the urban democracy movement (*Kifaya/Enough!*), bloggers, the Nasserist Karama Party and some Islamist groups with the workers' movement – however, was not so successful. Calls for a 'Day of Anger' by similar networks in April 2009 largely fizzled (ibid.).

These protests in part continued the tradition of previous decades, inasmuch as they represented a defence of the terms of the pre-existing hegemony in the face of neoliberal assault from above. For example, the workers at the ESCO Spinning Company in Qalyub, in the Delta, who struck in October 2004 and then during February–May 2005 were determined that 'they and the broader public were the real owners of the enterprise, not the state managers' who planned to privatize the company, a move that threatened redundancies, benefit cuts and job insecurity (Beinin, 2009: 78). These and similar strikes aimed to defend existing public sector protections regarding jobs, conditions and wages in the face of a new wave of privatization unleashed by the new Egyptian cabinet of July 2004. In this sense, the pattern of previous decades was maintained.

Nonetheless, many workers were now too young to remember the Nasser years. Moreover, an important proportion (a quarter during 2004, for example) of protests were now actually in the private sector itself (ibid.: 77). It would seem, in fact, that elements in an incipient oppositional bloc involving rather diverse groups were creating the conditions of possibility for more intensive collective action, even if the project of moral, political and intellectual will leadership capable of uniting all of these groups to create a compelling alternative hegemony was underdeveloped.

The substantial protests that broke out in Egypt in September 2000 alongside the outbreak of the Second Intifada in the Occupied Palestinian Territories do not seem to have followed the usual form of a 'safety valve' that deflected attention from domestic issues. The opposite seems to have happened, in the sense that these protests actually targeted the Mubarak government for its complicity in Israeli occupation and brutality and the US imperialism that stood behind it. Participants recall how demonstrators used the term Suharto – the corrupt and discredited former President of Indonesia toppled in 1998 – to refer to Hosni Mubarak. The implication was clear. This was the most important public and openly voiced call – even in coded language – for the downfall of Mubarak that anyone could remember. The protests also stimulated forms of coordination between diverse tendencies. A grouping of 20 NGOs and independent activists established the Popular Committee to Support the Intifada (PCSI). 'For the first time in modern Egyptian history', writes El-Mahdi (2009: 94), 'the committee had members of rival political factions' – from the Muslim Brotherhood to the Nasserists. Egypt's position as a major US ally in the region was put under further strain with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Mubarak's government was also compared highly unfavourably in the minds of many during the summer of 2006. Hizbullah and its leader Shaykh Hasan Nasrallah were seen as one of the few non-corrupt Arab leaderships ready bravely to stand up to and even defeat the Zionist enemy.

The movements and networks that stemmed from September 2000 formed the basis for the emergence, in December 2004, of a significant pro-democratic movement of urban and middle-class protest, the most well-known element of which was known as *Kifaya/Enough*. Kifaya organized a host of demonstrations, campus rallies, meetings and marches (Mahdi, 2009). It broke a major taboo by criticizing Mubarak directly and opposing the succession of his son, Gamal, to the presidency. Within a year Kifaya had obtained 1800 signatures – no minor matter where signing risked 'attention' from the security services (ibid.: 89). During 2005, after the presidential elections a new pole of middle-class opposition emerged when prominent judges refused to ratify the results of the election and alleged widespread electoral fraud (ibid.: 99). Protests in defence of the independence of the judiciary and the particular judges who were stripped of judicial immunity and put on trial for defamation involved mass demonstrations, included the involvement of

the Muslim Brotherhood, and ended in police repression in May 2006 (*ibid.*: 99–100). And whereas the reformist and non-confrontational Muslim Brotherhood had been a staunch supporter of market ‘reform’ and privatization until the early 1990s, reservations appeared in its discourse in this regard from 1991 (Naguib, 2009: 115). One or two Muslim Brotherhood MPs have given their support to aspects of the workers’ movement (Beinin, 2009: 83).

There has been little direct coordination and joint mobilization between these movements and workers. Nonetheless, few in Egypt deny that these movements – linked to intermediary and elite groups who are not workers – have shaken the status quo, provided oppositional ideas and indicated the existence of an incipient oppositional bloc that together have created favourable conditions for emboldened worker protest. The acceleration of labour protest in the wake of and alongside these movements should not therefore be regarded as merely a coincidence, even if the attempt at national coordination in April 2008 was not a resounding success. Both organizational coordination and the political ideas (beyond the removal of Mubarak) providing a basis for the unity of the oppositional bloc are only incipient. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to argue that the recent round of labour protest in Egypt owes not just to a defence of the pre-existing hegemony, but has drawn succour from, and shaped in turn, an incipient oppositional bloc articulating ideas that challenge the status quo. As such, even though ‘bread and butter’ issues continue to play a vital role, worker demands have in some measure moved beyond the economic-corporate. As Mohamed al-Attar, a strike leader at Mahalla al-Kubra, declared at a workers’ rally in September 2007: ‘I want the whole government to resign . . . I want the Mubarak regime to come to an end. Politics and workers’ rights are inseparable. Work is politics by itself. What we are witnessing here right now, this is as democratic as it gets’ (cited in *ibid.*: 85). Here workers’ rights, opposition to the regime, support for democracy and the right to engage in politics in general are all identified as marching together.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined a way to understand labour protests in Egypt and the Gulf in terms of hegemonic contestation. I have aimed to show that this approach can better explain, understand and assess labour movements than the kind of analysis that imagines these protests to stem from the automatic contradictions of capitalism, as if capitalism could ever be read in the singular, or in such a materialist and apolitical fashion. Workers are acculturated and political subjects. Their activism and quiescence is inextricably linked to the social formation as a whole – and as I have argued here, to forms of hegemony and alternative hegemony. Arguably the problematic materialist reading is advanced in order to make surely valid criticisms of the violence and exploitation of neoliberalism. But such criticism should not make

workers its puppets, nor mistake the political dimensions of alienation and how it can be resisted. Nor should it refuse an analysis of how neoliberalism is politically embedded as a project linked to and stitching together the interests of a dominant bloc. Indeed, materialism, far from being mobilizing, seems to demobilize and encourage passivity among those outside the authentic proletariat; it understates the role of ideas in articulating diverse interests and thus in forging oppositional blocs; it defines exploitation itself too narrowly; and it is too scornful of the possibilities for and achievements of opposition that nonetheless falls short of socialist Armageddon. The task of building an alternative hegemony is clearly not a one-horse show.

References

- Abbas, R. (1967). *Al-Haraka al-Ummaliyya fi Misr 1899–1952 (The Labour Movement in Egypt, 1899–1952)* (Cairo: Dar al-Katib al-'Arabi).
- Afary, J. (1996). *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Akarli, E. (1987). 'Gedik: Implements, Mastership, Shop Usufruct and Monopoly Among Istanbul Artisans, 1750–1850', *Wissenschaftskolleg Jahrbuch 1985/86*, Berlin: n.p., 357–69.
- Al-Dar* (2008). 'Idrab al-10 Alaf 'Amil al-Ahad al-Muqbil' ('Strike of Ten Thousand Workers This Coming Sunday'), 25 April.
- Al-Watan* (2005). 'Idrab li-'Ummal al-Nadhafa fi 5 Mustashfiyyat' ('Strike Among Cleaners in 5 Hospitals'), 25 April.
- Alexander, R. A. (2009). 'Egypt's Strike Wave: Lessons in Leadership', Research Briefing, ESRC Non-Governmental Public Action Programme.
- American Consul, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and the Department of State, Washington, DC (1954). 'Distribution of Subversive Leaflet in al-Khobar', Foreign Service Despatch No. 12, 25 August.
- Amin, S. (2001). 'Political Islam', *Covert Action Quarterly*, Vol. 71, 3–6.
- Baer, G. (1977). 'Popular Revolt in Ottoman Cairo', *Der Islam*, Vol. 54, 213–42.
- Bakir, A. R. (1965). *Min al-Bahrain ila al-Manfa (From Bahrain to Exile)* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Haya).
- Beaugé, G. and Roussillon, A. (1988). *Le Migrant et Son Double: Migrations et Unité Arabe* (Paris: Publisud).
- Beinin, J. (1988). 'Islam, Marxism, and the Shubra al-Khayma Textile Workers: Muslim Brothers and Communists in the Egyptian Trade Union Movement', in Edmund Burke III and Ira M. Lapidus (eds), *Islam, Politics and Social Movements* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press): 207–27.
- Beinin, J. (1989). 'Labor, Capital and the State in Nasirist Egypt, 1952–61', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 21, 71–90.
- Beinin, J. (1994). 'Will the Real Egyptian Working Class Please Stand Up?', in Z. Lockman (ed.), *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press): 247–70.
- Beinin, J. (2009). 'Workers' Struggles Under "Socialism" and Neoliberalism', in R. El-Mahdi and P. Marfleet (eds), *Egypt: The Moment of Change* (London: Zed Books): 68–86.

- Beinin, J. and Lockman, Z. (1987). *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam and the Egyptian Working Class* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Birks, J. S. and C. A. Sinclair. (1980). *Arab Manpower: the crisis of development* (London: Croom Helm).
- Botman, S. (1988). *The Rise of Egyptian Communism, 1939–1970* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press).
- Burke, E. III and Lapidus, I. M. (eds) (1988). *Islam, Politics and Social Movements* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Chalcraft, J. (2001). 'The Coal-Heavers of Port Sa'id: State-Building and Worker Protest, 1869–1914', *International Labour and Working Class History*, Vol. 60, 110–24.
- Chalcraft, J. (2004). *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt, 1863–1914* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).
- Chalcraft, J. (2005b). 'Peasants, Petitions, Protests and Rights on the Eve of the 'Urabi Rebellion in Egypt', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 303–25.
- Choucri, N. (1986). 'Asians in the Arab World: labor migration and public policy', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 22, 2: 252–73.
- Cole, J. R. I. (1993). *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Crystal, J. (1990). *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
- Davis, M. (2001). *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (New York: Verso).
- Davis, M. (2006). 'Fear and Money in Dubai', *New Left Review*, Vol. 41, 47–68.
- Denoeux, G. (1993). *Urban Unrest in the Middle East: A Comparative Study of Informal Networks in Egypt, Iran and Lebanon* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).
- Disney, N. (1977). 'South Korean Workers in the Middle East' in MERIP No. 61 (October): 22–24, 26.
- Femia, J. V. (1981). *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Fergany, N. (ed.) (1983). *Al-'Ummala al-Ajnabiyya fi Aqtar al-Khalij al-'Arabi (Foreign Workers in the Gulf Countries)* (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies).
- Franklin, R. (1985). 'Migrant Labor and the Politics of Development in Bahrain', *Merip Reports*, Vol. 132, 7–13, 32.
- Fuccaro, N. (2008). 'Pearl Towns and Early Oil Cities: Migration and Integration in the Arab Coast of the Persian Gulf'. Unpublished paper.
- Gause, F. G. III. (1993). *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations).
- Gorman, A. (2008). 'Foreign Workers in Egypt 1882–1914: Subaltern or Labour Elite?', in S. Cronin (ed.), *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa* (London: Routledge): 237–60.
- Hall, S. (1981). 'Notes on Deconstructing the Popular', in R. Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul): 227–47.
- Halliday, F. (1977a). 'Migration and the Labor Force in the Oil Producing States of the Middle East', *Development and Change*, Vol. 8, 263–91.
- Halliday, F. (1977b). 'Labor Migration in the Middle East', *Merip Reports*, Vol. 59, 3–17.
- Halliday, F. (1980). 'The Gulf Between Two Revolutions: 1958–1979', in T. Niblock (ed.), *Social and Economic Development in the Arab Gulf* (London: Croom Helm): 210–38.
- Halliday, F. (1984). 'Labor Migration in the Arab World', *Merip Reports*, Vol. 123, 3–10, 30.

- Halliday, F. (2002 [1974]). *Arabia Without Sultans* (London: Saqi Books).
- Hartmann, R. (1995). 'Yemeni Exodus from Saudi Arabia: The Gulf Conflict and the Ceasing of Workers Emigration', *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Winter).
- Izz al-Din, A. (1967). *Ta'rikh al-Tabaqa al-'Amila al-Misriyya mundhu nash'atiha hatta thawrat 1919 (The History of the Egyptian Working Class from its Beginning Until the Revolution of 1919)* (Cairo: Dar al-Sha'b).
- Kapiszewski, A. (1999). *Native Arab Population and Foreign Workers in the Gulf States* (Kraków: TAIWPN Universitas).
- Kapiszewski, A. (2006). 'Arab versus Asian Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries'. Paper Presented to United Nations Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region. Beirut (15–17 May): 1–20.
- Khalaf, A. H. (1985). 'Labor Movements in Bahrain', *MERIP Reports*, 132 (May): 24–29.
- Khalaf, S. N. (1992). 'Gulf Societies and the Image of Unlimited Good', *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 17, 53–84.
- Khalaf, S. N. (2000). 'Poetics and Politics of Newly Invented Traditions in the Gulf: Camel Racing in the United Arab Emirates', *An International Journal of Cultural and Social Anthropology*, Vol. xxxix, No. 3, 243–62.
- Khalili, L. (2007). *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Khuri-Makdisi, I. (2010). *Levantine Trajectories and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Kostiner, J. ed. (2000). *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner).
- Lackner, H. (1978). *A House Built on Sand: A Political Economy of Saudi Arabia* (London: Ithaca Press).
- Lawson, F. H. (1989). *Bahrain: The Modernization of Autocracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press).
- Linebaugh, P. and Rediker, M. (2000). *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press).
- Lockman, Z. (ed.) (1994a). *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).
- Lockman, Z. (1994b). 'Imagining the Working Class: Culture, Nationalism and Class Formation in Egypt 1899–1914', *Poetics Today*, Vol. 15, 157–90.
- Louër, L. (2008). 'The Political Impact of Labor: Migration in Bahrain', *City and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 32–53.
- Mahdi, R. (2009). 'The Democracy Movement: Cycles of Protest', in R. Mahdi and P. Marfleet (eds), *Egypt: The Moment of Change* (London: Zed Books).
- Malley, R. (1996). *The Call from Algeria: Third Worldism, Revolution, and the Turn to Islam*. (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- Naguib, S. (2009). 'Islamism(s) Old and New', in R. Mahdi and P. Marfleet (eds), *Egypt: The Moment of Change* (London: Zed Books): 103–19.
- Nakhleh, E. A. (1976). *Bahrain: Political Development in a Modernizing Society* (Lexington, KY: D.C. Heath).
- Naqeeb, K. H. (1990). *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula: A different perspective*. Trans. L. M. Kenny (London: Routledge).
- Patnaik, A. K. (1987). *Gramsci's Concept of Commonsense: Towards a Theory of Subaltern Consciousness in Hegemony Processes* (Calcutta: Centre for Studies in Social Sciences).

- Posusney, M. P. (1993). 'The Moral Economy of Labor Protest in Egypt', *World Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 83–120.
- Posusney, M. P. (1994). 'Collective Action and Workers' Consciousness in Contemporary Egypt', in Z. Lockman (ed.), *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).
- Posusney, M. P. (1997). *Labor and the State in Egypt: Workers, Unions, and Economic Restructuring* (New York: Columbia University Press): 211–246.
- Prashad, V. (2007). *The Darker Nations: a people's history of the Third World*. (New York: The New Press).
- Pratt, N. (1998). 'The Legacy of the Corporatist State: Explaining Workers' Responses to Economic Liberalisation in Egypt', Middle East Paper No. 60, November, University of Durham, Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies.
- Quataert, D. and Zürcher, E. (1995). *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1839–1950* (London: I. B. Tauris).
- Raymond, A. (1968). 'Quartiers et Mouvements Populaires au Caire au XVIIIe Siècle', in P. M. Holt (ed.), *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press): 113–25.
- Raymond, A. (1973). *Artisans et Commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe Siècle*, 2 vols (Damas: Institut Français de Damas).
- Roberts, H. (2002). 'Moral Economy or Moral Polity? The Political Anthropology of Algerian Riots', Crisis States Programme, Working Papers Series No. 1, DESTIN, (London: London School of Economics).
- Russell, S. S. (1989). 'Politics and Ideology in Migration Policy Formulation: The Case of Kuwait'. *International Migration Review*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring): 24–47.
- Russell, S. S. and M. A. al-Ramadhan. (1994). 'Kuwait's Migration Policy since the Gulf Crisis'. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol 26, No. 4 (Nov): 569–587.
- Sadowski, Y. (1991). 'Arab Economies After the Gulf War: Power, Poverty, and Petrodollars'. *Middle East Report* 21, no. 3 (May/June).
- Sa'ïd, R. (1994). *Al-Asas al-Ijtima'i li-l-Thawra al-'Urabiyya (The Social Bases of the Urabi Revolution)* (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization).
- Salem, L. (1981). *Al-Quwa al-Ijtima'iyya fi-l-Thawra al-'Urabiyya (Social Power in the 'Urabi Revolution)* (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization).
- Schölch, A. (1981). *Egypt for the Egyptians! The Socio-Political Crisis in Egypt, 1878–1882* (London: Ithaca Press).
- Seccombe, I. J. (1983). 'Labour Migration to the Arabian Gulf: Evolution and Characteristics 1920–1950', *Bulletin of the British Society for Middle East Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 3–20.
- Sewell, W. H. (1993). 'Towards a Post-Materialist Rhetoric for Labour History', in L. Berlanstein (ed.), *Rethinking Labour History* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press): 15–38.
- Thompson, E. P. (1971). 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, Vol. 50, 76–136.
- Thompson, E. P. (1978). 'Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle Without Class?', *Social History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 133–65.
- Thompson, E. P. (1991). *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (London: Penguin Books).
- Vatter, S. (1994). 'Militant Journeymen in Nineteenth-Century Damascus: Implications for the Middle Eastern Labor History Agenda', in Z. Lockman (ed.), *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press): 1–20.

- Vitalis, R. (2007). *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).
- Walton, J. and Seddon, D. (1994). *Free Markets and Food Riots: The Politics of Global Adjustment* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Weiner, M. (1982). 'International Migration and Development: Indians in the Persian Gulf'. *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (March): 1–36.
- Zubaida, S. (2008). 'Urban Social Movements, 1750–1950', in P. Sluglett (ed.), *The Urban Social History of Middle East, 1750–1950* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press): 224–56.

3

Choice From No Choice; Rights for the Left? The State, Law and the Struggle Against Prepayment Water Meters in South Africa

Jackie Dugard¹

In South Africa everyone will say that life is not fair for the poor. Even the rich will say... this when they are just finding more and more excuses to give more of the country's money to themselves to build all these very expensive things... so they can feel themselves to be 'world class'. Meanwhile our children, who, like the children in Haiti and Kenya and Zimbabwe are... burning in shack fires and dying from diarrhoea around the corner. One of the truths that people want to hide from is that in this country where everything is done in the name of the suffering of the poor, life is good for the masters of the poor but it is very unfair for the servants of the poor.... But for the dawn of justice for all to come we must accept the truth that in our country, a country where... the law gives everyone the right to gather and to speak, in reality the poor have to make their choices from no choice. Business and politics... are all united in their demand for our silence... [yet] everyday we are maturing in our struggle. We were always many but every day we are more. The red river that carried me will carry us all on and on through the shooting and the lies and the unfairness and all the choices that we will have to make without choice.

–S'bu Zikode, president of *Abahlali baseMjodolo*,
'When Choices Can No Longer Be Choices'²

Introduction

In 1996 the South African post-apartheid legal order was consolidated with the enactment of the 'final' Constitution.³ Among the rights guaranteed in the Constitution is the right of access to sufficient water (Section 27(1)(b) of the Constitution). The insertion of socio-economic rights, including

the right to water, alongside other more traditional civil and political rights underscored the understanding that apartheid was as much a system of socio-economic subjugation as of civil and political tyranny. Part of this recognition was an acknowledgement of the need to redistribute water resources and services more equitably. To this end there is a progressive legislative framework for water services that includes a national Free Basic Water (FBW) policy aimed at ensuring a lifeline amount of water per property per month,⁴ as well as a range of laws advancing a rights-based approach. However, notwithstanding such recognition and intention, when it comes to implementation, contemporary water service delivery is fraught with problems of non-participation, non-connection, disconnection and restriction. One of the main reasons for the disjuncture between frameworks and reality is the ascendancy of a neoliberal thrust towards cost-recovery in terms of which national government has devolved responsibility for water services to municipalities, and steadily decreased its financial and technical support for such services. As a result, municipalities are under considerable fiscal pressure to maximize profits from water services, entailing a preoccupation with recovering service-related costs from all areas, including poor communities. At the same time, there is no national regulation to enforce basic water standards or to ensure the protection and fulfilment of water-related rights, which adds to the perverse incentives for municipalities to view water more as a commodity than a public service.

Thus, in 2001, the City of Johannesburg formulated a project to limit water consumption in Soweto by means of the mass installation of prepayment water meters (PPMs). Called Operation *GcinAmanzi* (OGA) (meaning: conserve water, in isiZulu), the project was premised on the mass roll-out of PPMs across Soweto, starting with a pilot in one of the poorest suburbs – Phiri. Unlike the conventional meters available throughout Johannesburg's richer suburbs, which provide water on credit with numerous procedural protections against disconnection, PPMs automatically disconnect once the (largely inadequate) FBW supply is exhausted unless additional water credit is loaded. As such, PPMs fundamentally compromise low-income households' rights of access to water and equality (because PPMs are only installed in poor areas), contradicting the promises of the post-apartheid state and undermining the hopes of the residents of Phiri to become full participants in the socio-economic order. The contrast between the right to water in the Constitution and the limitation of that access by means of a PPM could hardly be starker, especially in the context of the hedonistic water consumption in Johannesburg's swimming-pooled (predominantly white) richer suburbs. For the residents of Phiri, this apparent betrayal was too much and, as the first trenches were being dug for the installation of the PPM infrastructure, in August 2003, they embarked on a resistance campaign against PPMs. From the outset, their

resistance was supported by the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), a socialist social movement.

In Phiri, the struggle first took the form of direct protest rather than 'legal mobilization', defined by Frances Zemans as the point at which 'a desire or want is translated into a demand as an assertion of one's rights' (1983: 700). This was not surprising, given the influence of the APF and the political left's historical antagonism to the law and rights as legitimizing privilege. However, as detailed below, such resistance was only successful in delaying the installation of PPMs. But, at the lowest moment, when it looked like community resistance had failed, the APF took a strategic decision to turn to rights-based litigation, despite its ideological aversion to rights and the law. Nevertheless, from the outset, not much hope was vested in the litigation process, which was viewed as a last resort. Yet, following victory in the first stage of the legal battle – the Johannesburg High Court, which declared PPMs unlawful and unconstitutional on 30 April 2008 – there has been a remarkable demonstration of support for the law from the APF and other traditional sceptics. This is despite the fact that (pending the outcome of the appeals process), the order against PPMs is suspended, suggesting that there might be more value to even contingent legal mobilization than de facto outcomes alone. As Michael McCann concluded in his seminal study of the 1980s wage equity campaign in the USA, 'litigation provided movement activists an important resource for advancing their cause' (McCann, 1994: 4). I suggest the same is true for the Phiri campaign against PPMs, where the uptake of rights-based litigation has empowered water activists in ways that I suspect will continue to reverberate and shape struggles for water in Phiri and beyond.

In this vein, in the same year that the City of Johannesburg formulated its plan to install PPMs in Phiri, Daria Roithmayr wrote an article entitled 'Left Over Rights' responding to Duncan Kennedy's articulation of a 'post-rights' position. Roithmayr's article advances the argument (in line with Critical Race Theory, itself an offshoot of Critical Legal Studies) that rights can be pragmatically useful 'for particular communities of colour at particular moments in history' (2001: 113). In this Chapter I develop Roithmayr's thesis, arguing that rights can be useful to the left, regardless of the ultimate outcome of litigation per se. Advocating a pragmatic approach to rights, I suggest that in contemporary South Africa, with its extreme socio-economic and racial inequalities, while in the normal course law indeed serves the interest of elites, rights-based legal mobilization can have a predominantly positive impact on social movements representing disempowered groups, including the poor. I conclude, as Roithmayr did, that, if strategically used, right-based legal mobilization may in certain circumstances offer the left an additional tactic in a broader political struggle. In some instances the additional tactic might be a last resort, but still a useful one. Indeed, in Phiri, rights provided what S'bu Zikode has referred to

as 'choice from no choice'. Nevertheless, even where litigation emerges as a tactic of desperation rather than hope, 'since rights carry with them the connotations of entitlement, a declaration of rights tends to politicize needs by changing the way people think about their discontents', legitimating claims, and thereby contributing to political mobilization and, ultimately, to political change (Scheingold, 1974: 95, 131, 132, 147).

This chapter documents and analyses the struggle against PPMs in Phiri, focusing in particular on the uptake and utility of rights-based legal mobilization by the APF as an ordinarily rights-adverse social movement, manifesting in the *Mazibuko* water rights case.⁵ At the time of writing, the *Mazibuko* appeal had just been heard in the Constitutional Court. The judgment was handed down on 8 October 2009, during the final editing phase. In a shock decision, which overturned the findings of two previous courts, the Constitutional Court ruled against the applicants, finding PPMs to be lawful. However, notwithstanding the final judgment, the Phiri water campaign provides an interesting case study of an impoverished community's struggle against neoliberal policies, which has involved, but has never been dominated by, the uptake of litigation based on a human rights framework.

Commercialization and corporatization

When the post-apartheid government was swept into power by the vast majority of South Africans in 1994, its political mandate involved righting historical wrongs. One of these was the legacy of vastly unequal basic services, particularly water. As recognized by the African National Congress' (ANC) first, expansionist, economic development strategy, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), in 1994 an estimated 12 million South Africans (approximately a quarter of the population) did not have access to piped water (ANC, 1994: para. 2.6.1). There was an expectation that equalizing water services would be prioritized and water would be recognized 'as a public good whose commodification would inherently discriminate against the majority poor' (McKinley, 2005: 181).

Undoubtedly, commendable progress has been made in connecting previously unconnected households to the water grid.⁶ However, in recent years such gains have been fundamentally eroded by a growing neoliberal preoccupation with cost-recovery, which results in poor households being disconnected for inability to pay for water services. The catalyst for the increasing focus on cost-recovery and the concomitant escalation of water disconnections was the consolidation of the local government sphere of government in the 2000 municipal elections. The arrangement of three spheres of autonomous government – national, provincial and local – was itself a product of political compromise – a concession by the ANC to the other main parties (notably the Inkatha Freedom Party, with its support base in KwaZulu/Natal, and the then Democratic Party, with its support base in Cape

Town) to afford them some zone of political dominance. Part of this devolution was a constitutionally entrenched division of functions, in which water services became a local government mandate (Schedule 4B of the Constitution).

Within this arrangement, national government has always exerted relatively tight fiscal control over municipalities. In particular, municipalities are under pressure to become financially self-sufficient and they are precluded from any deficits on their operating budgets (Section 18(1)(c) of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003). At the same time, national government has steadily withdrawn central financial support and, following the advice of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, decreased grants and subsidies to local government (McKinley, 2005: 182). The effect has been directly felt on municipal services. Because basic services are one of the main sources of revenue for municipalities – electricity and water services, which together account for approximately 50 per cent of aggregated municipal revenue (Seidman, 2006: 8) – municipalities are driven to pursue a commercialized approach to water services in which water is viewed as a source of revenue rather than a public service.

Proper implementation of the RDP mandate would have required ‘a national redistributive water pricing policy with higher unit amounts for higher-volume water consumers, especially large firms, mines and (white) farms’ as well as intervention in the ‘functioning and autonomy of local government to ensure equitable tariffs, including regulation of appropriate cross-subsidies between rich and poor consumers within a municipality’ (Bond and Dugard, 2008b: 6–7). Instead social equity regulation has been sacrificed at the altar of neoliberal cost-recovery and decentralized government autonomy. While the commercialization of water services gained momentum in the wake of the consolidation of local government (2000–1), there were ominous signs of a more neoliberal approach to water services as early as 1994 – the 1994 Water Supply and Sanitation White Paper stipulated ‘where poor communities are not able to afford basic services, government may subsidize the cost of construction of basic minimum services *but not the operating, maintenance or replacement costs*’ (DWAF, 1994: 19, emphasis added). Similarly, the 1997 White Paper on a National Water Policy for South Africa stated: ‘to promote the efficient use of water, the policy will be to charge users for the full financial costs of providing access to water, including infrastructure, development and catchment management activities’ (ibid.: 4).

In the South African context, the commercialization of water has entailed highlighting its role mainly as an economic good and attempting to reduce price distortions, while pursuing a limited form of obligatory means-tested subsidy – the FBW allocation (Bond and Dugard, 2008a: 5).⁷ Crucially, it has also involved harsh credit control enforcement, aimed at curtailing water revenue losses in poor communities, including water disconnection and

restriction through physical mechanisms such as flow restrictors and PPMs. At the municipal level, this has meant that almost as fast as poor households are connected to the grid in terms of the extension of infrastructure, they are disconnected because they cannot pay their monthly water bills.⁸

And, although the South African version of the commercialization of water services has not entirely echoed the global trend of privatization *per se*, as pointed out by Bakker (2007), it is possible to commercialize water services without privatizing them. This has certainly been the case in South Africa, where most water services remain publicly owned but where water is viewed primarily (and even ideally) as an economic good. In some instances this commercialization of water services has also entailed their corporatization. In the City of Johannesburg, for example, in 2001 water services were corporatized under the auspices of Johannesburg Water (Pty) Ltd (Johannesburg Water), which is a ring-fenced corporation whose only shareholder is the City of Johannesburg.

Furthermore, although there are very few outright private water concessions – mainly due to popular resistance after initial attempts at private water concessions (Bond and Dugard, 2008b: 9) – many of the global agents of privatized water services have played pivotal roles in South Africa. For example, the French multinational (and one of the world's largest privatized water management firms), Suez (now called GDF Suez), was awarded a five-year management contract in 2001 – the first year of the corporatization of Johannesburg's water services – under the Johannesburg Water (Pty) Ltd management subsidiary, Johannesburg Water Management (Jowam). The result was a regressive interpretation of social equity standards, including the structure of the rising block water tariff.⁹ In contrast to a the ideal structure, with a convex curve starting with low-priced tariff blocks and rising very steeply at the luxury end of consumption that would have better served lower-income households, in 2003, the City adopted a relatively steep-rising concave tariff curve for water. In addition:

In 2003, the second tier of the [rising] block tariff (7 to 10 kilolitres/household/month) was raised by 32%, while the third tier (11–15 kilolitres/household/month) was lowered by 2% (during a period of roughly 10% inflation, which was the amount by which higher tier tariffs increased)... Moreover, the marginal tariff price for industrial/commercial users of water, while higher than residential, actually declines after large-volume consumption is reached.

(Bond and Dugard, 2008a: 7)

In such domestic water tariff structures, where the lower block tariffs are dramatically increased, this impacts negatively on low-income households, making water bills unaffordable, escalating municipal debt and resulting in increased disconnections (*ibid.*: 9). And in Johannesburg, at the top end of

the domestic consumption spectrum, luxury residential water consumption is not overly penalized because such environmental and social justice rationale might irritate wealthy users into consuming less water, thereby reducing municipal revenue. Indeed, the head of Jowam between 2001 and 2005, Jean Pierre Mas, has indicated that it would be foolish for Johannesburg Water to raise the price at the top end in an attempt to pursue more progressive cross-subsidies and 'to promote water conservation' among affluent households 'who pay their water bills', as this might reduce the company's revenue (quoted in Smith, 2006: 29).¹⁰

Within this corporate model, water services are managed along largely commercial lines, albeit with some nationally legislated (though rarely enforced) concessions to social equity (such as the FBW allocation). Indeed, across South Africa and gaining ground particularly in bigger metropolitan areas, water has become more of an economic *product* and less of a public health-related *service* (Hemson, 2008: 30). In many respects, the City of Johannesburg has headed this trend, including in its use of PPMs to limit access to water in poor households, starting with Phiri.

The City of Johannesburg

Johannesburg has almost since its birth been characterized by infrastructure inequalities. In the early days of the gold rush wealthy landlords and the mining middle classes lived in leafy suburbs to the north of the City and the budgets of the fledgling municipality were largely channelled towards these residents (Beavon, 2000). By the 1970s these northern areas were well serviced and enjoyed lifestyles similar to the wealthy in many of the richest countries. In stark contrast, hidden behind the mine dumps or to the southwest of the City, were the townships such as Soweto (the name standing for *South Western Township*). Such areas were under-serviced and predominantly poor, and essentially functioned as labour camps to service mines and industry with cheap black labour, which became part of the apartheid project from 1948, resulting in the expansion of Soweto during the 1950s and 1960s.

By the 1970s the congregation of large numbers of oppressed people in Soweto had become an explosive mix, which was set alight by the Black Consciousness movement and the student uprisings of 1976. In an attempt to co-opt and pacify rising militancy, the City extended municipal services infrastructure to Soweto households, albeit using inferior water piping and low-ampere electricity. For water, a 'deemed consumption' system was operated, which meant that households were not charged for their consumption but rather were billed a flat rate, regardless of how much water was consumed. From the apartheid administration's perspective, the deemed consumption system held the benefit of not requiring municipal officials to undertake monthly readings, which might expose officials to politically

motivated reprisals. Moreover, despite widespread non-payment of water bills, the City rarely disconnected water supplies, fearing this would stoke militancy. Because neither credit control nor water disconnection was practised, household arrears mounted, until by 2000 most households were deeply in debt.

When Johannesburg's first non-racial municipality – the Greater Johannesburg Transitional Metropolitan Council – was established in 1995, it almost immediately faced a fiscal crisis, related in the first instance to the enormous challenge of incorporating township and informal settlement areas into the City's administrative system and equalizing services across the City. Moreover, from 1996, residents in the rich northern suburbs (notably Sandton) had organized a rates boycott because they were 'resistant to redistributive policies which meant that wealthy areas would subsidize poorer parts of the City' (Wafer et al., 2007: 14). Such financial pressures culminated by 1997 in a looming 'fiscal crisis' (Tomlinson, 1999: 1–39), which prompted a shift in municipal governance towards a more commercial cost-recovery oriented model, in line with the broader trend outlined above. Beall and colleagues have argued that in fact the 1997 'fiscal crisis' was 'talked up' as a way of justifying metropolitan restructuring to suit market driven demands (Beall et al., 2002: 94). Regardless of the motivation, the ultimate result was a corporate model of governance manifested in 'iGoli 2002' (launched in December 1999),¹¹ a turnaround strategy for municipal financial recovery that involved the corporatization of municipal services. In line with this strategy, in 2001, along with Johannesburg Water, City Power (Pty) Ltd was established as the City's electricity service provider and Pikitup (Pty) Ltd became the City's waste management and refuse service provider, all under the newly named City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. The new corporate governance paradigm entrenched a technocratic attitude towards municipal management, in terms of which class (but still commonly overlapping with race) became the dominant determinant of marginalization (Bond, 2000).

From the City's perspective, it was essential to minimize inefficiencies and revenue losses in municipal services. One of the main such identified areas was Soweto. Yet, at the same time the City was aware of the national FBW policy. So, while households in the rich suburbs continued to access as much water as they liked – for their gardens, swimming pools and so on – without any direct pressure to conserve, in mid-2001 the City devised its plan to physically restrict water consumption in Soweto to the obligatory FBW allocation unless the household could purchase additional water credit, by means of PPMs. The high-density suburb of Phiri, one of the poorest in Soweto, with high unemployment and multi-dwelling properties (a small house and several backyard shacks per property), was chosen as the OGA pilot project.¹²

Prepayment water meters and Phiri

According to an undated OGA report included in the minutes of the Meeting of the Operations and Procurement Committee of Johannesburg Water (27 November 2002),¹³ OGA comprised an 'immediate, intensive and comprehensive intervention on a number of fronts' that sought to remedy the problems of 'over-supply', lack of 'ownership' of water consumption by residents and a 'non-payment paradigm amongst consumers' in Soweto (Johannesburg Water, n.d.: 1). Whereas other municipalities had remedied deemed consumption through conventional metering, Johannesburg was determined that Soweto residents would not access more water than the FBW amount without first paying for it. According to the same undated OGA report, the City was 'intent on adopting prepayment water metering as the preferred service delivery option to be implemented in deemed consumption areas of supply' because 'prepayment can be considered to be a water management tool' (ibid.: 3). Such demand management was perceived by the City to be critical to the objective of promoting 'savings in water purchases by Johannesburg Water' (ibid.), and to the broader goal of improving the 'financial positions' of the City and Johannesburg Water (First and Second Respondents' Heads of Argument, 16 November 2007: para. 17.8, *Mazibuko* High Court case). Seeking to 'reduce demand' for water among Phiri residents, as well as to improve the City's financial position, Johannesburg Water began the bulk infrastructure construction work for the installation of PPMs in Phiri on 11 August 2003. The first phase of individual house connections began in Phiri Block B in February 2004.

Lindiwe Mazibuko (the first applicant), an unemployed single mother living on a small property with 20 people, first became aware of OGA on 17 March 2004, when a Johannesburg Water employee came to her house to tell her that her water supply system was old and rusty and needed replacing. The employee gave Mazibuko a letter entitled 'Decommissioning of the old secondary mid-block water supply system' which made no mention of PPMs. Later that day, Johannesburg Water workers started digging trenches in the pavement outside her house. When she asked the workers what they were doing, they told Mazibuko that they were digging trenches to install PPMs. She had heard about PPMs from activists and told the employees that she would never accept such a method of water delivery. At the end of March 2004, without any further notification or warning, the Mazibuko household's water supply was abruptly disconnected. It remained disconnected until October 2004, when she capitulated and asked for a PPM. Around the same time many other Phiri residents experienced a similar process, although some households were given a choice between a PPM and a stand-pipe (a cold water yard tap, which is unconnected to the household water and sanitation supply).¹⁴

From the outset of their installation, PPMs compromised Phiri residents' access to water in very tangible ways. With an average number of 13 or more people living across multi-dwelling households,¹⁵ the standard FBW allocation (6 kilolitres per property per month) has always been insufficient to meet the basic needs of Phiri residents. In the context of high unemployment and endemic poverty, Phiri residents are forced to make undignified and unhealthy choices. For example, people living with HIV/AIDS must choose between bathing or washing their soiled bed sheets, and parents must choose between providing their children with body washes before they go to school or flushing the toilet. Even so, households such as Lindiwe Mazibuko's regularly go without water for days at a time because the FBW supply usually only lasts until mid-month and there is often insufficient money in the house to buy additional water credit:

The free 6 kilolitres of water per month has never lasted the entire month since it was installed on 11 October 2004. It usually finishes any time between the 12th and 15th of each month. We can often not afford to buy further water. This means that our household is without any water for more than half of every month.¹⁶

For the many large households in Phiri that exhaust their FBW supply before the end of the month and are too poor to afford additional water credit, the ultimate punishment is the PPM's automatic and sudden disconnection, which often takes households by surprise. The continuous infringements to dignity and health are serious, and a direct risk to life is posed in the event of fire. This was tragically demonstrated in a shack fire on the property of Vusimuzi Paki (the fifth applicant in the *Mazibuko* case), on 27 March 2005, that resulted in the death of two small children when there was insufficient water to put out the fire.¹⁷ More routinely, PPMs exacerbate already difficult lives by adding the stress of trying to manage on insufficient water. PPMs represent the ultimate technicist solution to poverty, delegating the administrative burden of access to water onto the individual household, thereby individualizing 'the relationship of people to the resources necessary for life' (Naidoo, 2007: 62). And yet, despite the potential for PPMs to individualize struggle, in Phiri the blatant attempt to ghettoize poor households, at least initially, served to collectivize resistance.

Resistance and rights

For Critical Legal Studies (CLS) scholars such as Mark Tushnet, Peter Gabel and Duncan Kennedy, rights are part of the machinery of law that reflects and reinforces the exercise of power by elites (see, for example, Gabel, 1984; Tushnet, 1984; Kennedy, 1986).¹⁸ As such the law works to domesticate poverty and need (Brand, 2005), while leaving in place the class and racial

structure. Yet, as appreciated even within the CLS critique of law, rights have radical as well as conservative potential (see particularly Tushnet, 1984). In Stuart Scheingold's words, 'rights, like the law itself, do cut both ways – serving at some times and under some circumstances to reinforce privilege and at other times to provide the cutting edge of change' (Scheingold, 1989: 76). So, while law 'in the aggregate surely tends to support hierarchical power relations', it also provides 'the opportunity or space for creative challenge' (ibid.: 9). It is not necessary – as the CLS school might suggest – that law and legal ideology 'either straightjackets citizen imagination or disarms critical understanding' (ibid.: 12). Indeed, as played out in Phiri's struggle against PPMs, reform-oriented rights mobilization can build on and yet 'remain relatively independent of, or even defiant toward, the official, state-sanctioned legal order' (ibid.: 12).

Resistance

Even before the first PPMs were installed, in August 2003 the initial digging of trenches for the bulk construction work met with widespread resistance. Residents such as Lindiwe Mazibuko had heard about PPM problems from residents of Orange Farm informal settlement, where such meters had been recently installed (and many of which had been destroyed by activists). As it became clear that the City was determined to roll out PPMs in Phiri, opposition mounted and gained momentum through support from the APF. Established in 2000, the APF is a left-wing social movement alliance comprising affiliated community-based organizations, activists and movements, the latter group including the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC). It was formed out of the struggles against the City's commercialization and corporatization agenda and brought together political activists and nascent community movements committed to the de-commodification of all basic needs. Among the APF's core objectives are: 'a halt to all privatisation of public sector entities and return of public control and ownership; the co-ordination and intensification of anti-privatisation struggles in communities ...' (McKinley, unpublished draft: 3). The APF's stated modus comprises:

various forms of mass, direct action at local, provincial and national levels; regular mass community meetings; alliance-building and solidarity activities with community organisations outside of Gauteng as well as with organised labour; door-to-door campaigning in communities; submission of memoranda of demands and policy alternatives to all levels of government; and regular, community-based report-back meetings.

(Ibid.: 3)

Deeply rooted in community struggles against the commercialization and corporatization of public services such as water, the APF was well placed

to take up the struggle, and become the vehicle for community resistance against PPMs in Phiri. Indeed, an APF affiliate, the SECC, which had already campaigned against electricity prepayment meters elsewhere in Soweto, played a pivotal role in mobilizing resistance. In the early months of the resistance campaign, increasing numbers of residents joined the struggle, swelling the numbers at APF/SECC meetings in Phiri and at the APF's office in Johannesburg's inner city and participating in mass marches to City and Johannesburg Water offices. In addition, the direct resistance involved attempting to physically prevent Johannesburg Water employees from digging trenches. Under the auspices of the APF/SECC, spontaneous protests morphed into mass action, with residents refusing to allow Johannesburg Water to continue its work. As described by activist and APF member, Prishani Naidoo:

Residents came together to physically prevent the work of Johannesburg Water. They were supported in their actions by members of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee and the Anti-Privatisation Forum. Several altercations ensued between the police and private security hired by Johannesburg Water, and the residents.

(2008)

Such altercations held the potential to derail the entire project and, in a drastic response to the rising direct action, the City and Johannesburg Water successfully applied to the Johannesburg High Court for an interdict, which was granted on 22 August 2003. In terms of the interdict, any interference with OGA was banned and activists, as well as all members of the APF and SECC, were interdicted from coming within 50 metres of any physical work of the project. The interdict also authorized the sheriff of the court to engage the services of a private security company to assist with any violations of the terms of the interdict. The APF responded in early September 2003 by establishing a Coalition Against Water Privatisation (CAWP), to refocus activism against PPMs under a newly configured affiliation. However, the City followed up the interdict with a concerted effort to crush any opposition to PPMs, including arresting and harassing activists. By the end of September 2003, 14 residents of Phiri and activists supporting them were charged with 'public violence', 'malicious damage to property' and 'incitement' for handing out flyers. The APF and its affiliate organizations, especially the SECC and CAWP, had to divert much energy and funds to securing bail and defending those charged. In the end, almost all charges were dropped, but battling against state repression took a heavy toll on the organization and effectively undermined its ability to halt the City's operations in Phiri. This failure to stop the roll-out of PPMs, in turn, fundamentally weakened the overall campaign.

Although many households continued to resist the installation of PPMs on their properties, without further disruption of the OGA operations, the

structural work went forward and the first PPMs were installed in February 2004. For those households that refused to accept PPMs, the City deployed a new weapon: total water disconnection, which left households such as Lindiwe Mazibuko's without water for months until they capitulated. Having tried to live without direct access to water and enduring intimidation by the City, by the end of 2004 most households in Phiri had been forced to accept either PPMs or standpipes. All were forced to relinquish the previous unlimited water supply, which was discontinued. By 2005 the last remaining households had given in, 'choosing' PPMs or standpipes over no water at all.

The ultimate failure to stop the installation of PPMs was perceived by the APF/SECC/CAWP alliance to mark a low point in the resistance campaign. According to a research report by the APF and CAWP:

While large numbers of families came together to physically resist the installation of the meters in the early days of [OGA]... over time, arrests, fines, intimidation and threats have resulted in a decline in resistance. They very threat of being cut off from water completely for refusing to sign onto the system led to many residents signing onto the system begrudgingly.... Today, activists bemoan the fact that it is difficult to call a successful mass meeting in Phiri....

(APF and CAWP, 2006: 21)

At the time, the interdict, arrests, intimidation and water disconnections clearly struck a near-fatal blow to the campaign. Yet, in retrospect, it is apparent that, by cutting off one line of activism, the interdict sowed the seeds for the uptake of another line, that of rights-based litigation.

Rights

On a dreary mid-winter day in July 2004, Hameda Deedat (an activist researcher) phoned the Centre for Applied Legal Studies' (CALS) former colleague, Mike Nefale, to tell him that, in the course of her research into municipal services in Soweto, she had encountered households whose water supply had been disconnected because they had refused to accept PPMs. Mike and I immediately drove to Phiri, where we met some of the future *Mazibuko* applicants. Over the subsequent weeks, Mike and I went back to Phiri several times to document household stories. It was quickly apparent that there was a legal case to be made. We raised this possibility tentatively with our Phiri householders, who turned out to be very keen to pursue litigation. Aware that the APF was active in Phiri, we then contacted APF co-founder, Dale McKinley, to discuss the litigation option. Commensurate with APF policy, Dale took the issue back to the APF for deliberation. Recent interviews with McKinley have clarified that, around this time, the APF had been contemplating defensive litigation to try to overturn the interdict. Nevertheless, according to McKinley, the idea of proactive utilization of the law had not been contemplated until it was raised by CALS. This is because,

in line with CLS critiques, the APF viewed the law as entrenching inequality and protecting privilege. Until that point, the APF's only engagement with the law had been through the arrest and defence of members against criminal charges, as well as the banning of marches.

When the question of proactive use of the law was put to the APF, several options emerged. First, was an outright rejection of the legal route, accompanied by a proposal to escalate the resistance to 'all-out war'. However, when it was pointed out that many of the proponents of this option did not live in Phiri and were less likely to be exposed to the full brunt of the ramifications, this option was collectively abandoned. The second option was to continue a low-intensity resistance campaign, which in discussion appeared to be compatible with the third option, litigation. The consensus position was a strategic decision to pursue litigation but not to suspend other forms of resistance. That is to say, to utilize rights as one tactic within the broader struggle against PPMs (and more broadly against the commercialization and corporatization of water services). This position was put to the residents of Phiri at a mass meeting in September 2004, at which it was agreed to pursue a case.¹⁹

The conscious resort to litigation as 'another terrain of struggle' is evident in the language of the APF and CAWP's 2006 research report, which explains how the APF and CAWP 'prepare for another terrain of struggle in this war against water privatization, that of the courts.... As activists look to the court case as a means to revive struggle at the local level' (APF and CAWP, 2006: 4). Similarly, APF and CAWP member, Prishani Naidoo, writes: 'Earlier this year, the Coalition Against Water Privatisation launched a constitutional case against the Johannesburg City Council, challenging its roll-out of prepaid water meters in Phiri, in the hope that some of the losses made in struggle could be won through courts' (Naidoo, 2007: 34). Clearly the decision to take forward the litigation was not lightly taken. According to McKinley:

the battle of Phiri marked another new watershed in post-1994 water struggles. It served to not only further focus South African and international (critical) attention on the practical character and consequence of the ANC government's neoliberal (water) policy onslaught, but also opened the door to testing the stated water service delivery commitments of relevant state policies/legislation and South Africa's constitution. For left/anti-capitalist activists, it is never an easy thing to adopt tactics that do not appear to fit into pre-configured, historically-located understandings and approaches to such struggle.... And so, it was in 2005–2006, with a great deal of trepidation and initial half-heartedness, that the APF and CAWP (with the assistance first, of the Freedom of Expression Institute and subsequently, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies) entered into the institutional-legal terrain of class struggle, assisting

five, representative, Phiri residents to prepare and file a case in the Johannesburg High Court challenging the legality and constitutionality of OGA's limitation of the free-basic supply of water and the installation of pre-paid water meters. The case was seen as a tactic, part of a larger, long-term strategy seeking to use all means available to ensure that water itself is seen and treated as a public resource, that water service providers remain publicly owned, managed and run and that water service delivery provides adequate, accessible and quality water to all

(Ibid.)

The tactical resort to rights-based litigation indicates recognition by the social movements of the contingency of law. Evidently, the failure of traditional forms of mobilization in Phiri hastened the APF's decision to take up a legal campaign, as, undoubtedly, did the fortuitous advent of human rights lawyers from the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) and CALS.²⁰ What is perhaps more surprising than the recognition of the contingency of law among legal sceptics is the *celebration* of law by such actors since the legal victory in the High Court. For example, referring to the judgment as 'historic and groundbreaking', McKinley writes:

The judgement ranks as one of post-apartheid South Africa's most important legal victories for poor communities and all those who have been struggling against unilateral and profit-driven neo-liberal basic service policies . . . Judge Tsoka however, went beyond the legal points, recognising the racial, class, administrative and gender-based discrimination underlying the City of Johannesburg's water policy. The judge explicitly rejected the arguments for restricting the water usage of poor communities: ' . . . to expect the applicants to restrict their water usage, to compromise their health, by limiting the number of toilet flushes in order to save water is to deny them the rights to health and to lead a dignified lifestyle.' The judge labeled the so-called 'consultation' with the Phiri community as, 'more of a publicity stunt than consultation' and criticised the City's 'big brother approach'.

(Ibid.)

There was further endorsement following a public condemnation by Johannesburg Mayor, Amos Masondo, in which Masondo criticized the *Mazibuko* judgment at a Johannesburg press conference, attacking Judge Tsoka as follows: 'Judges are not above the law We cannot have a situation where a judge wants to take over the role of government. Judges must limit their role to what they are supposed to do. If they want to run the country they must join political parties and contest elections. In that way they can assume responsibilities beyond their powers' (Mabuza, 2008). In a surprisingly pro-rule of law rebuttal, on 16 May 2008, the international

anarchist website, *anarkismo.net*,²¹ carried a press release by CAWP – entitled ‘Attack on High Court Judgment and Judge Tsoka is Unwarranted, Dangerous and Betrays a Complete Ignorance of How Democracy Works: This is Not Zimbabwe Mr Masondo, and You are Not Robert Mugabe’ – in which Masondo’s attacks on the judiciary were described as ‘unprecedented’, ‘vicious’, ‘unwarranted’ and ‘dangerous’, the press release continuing:

Mr. Masondo – unless you made your statements while dreaming that you were in a country like Zimbabwe where there is no meaningful democracy, where the judiciary is treated with contempt and where the government thinks that it is the law, then you would know that a democratically elected government (at whatever level) like we have in South Africa has no power beyond that given to it by the people themselves. No one has given the government the right to unilaterally interpret and determine any right contained in the Constitution. No one has given the government the right to unilaterally pronounce that any law it passes is sacrosanct. . . . Yes Mr. Masondo, we still have a functioning democracy in our country (as weak as it might be at times). One of the benefits of that democracy – underpinned by the Constitution – is that laws and government action can be challenged through the courts by any individual citizen or collection of citizens and, if such a challenge is successful, those laws and action can be reviewed and changed. That is one of the key essences of the democratic principle of the limitation of powers. . . . Mr. Masondo, your right to appeal Judge Tsoka’s ruling is a component of that limitation process but you can claim no unilateral right to limit Judge Tsoka’s ruling simply because you are an elected politician. The ruling might, or might not be, overturned/changed, but any outcome is for the Constitutional Court to decide, not you or the government you claim to represent. You show your contempt for our hard won democracy Mr. Masondo when you make dangerous claims that you and your government are above it.

(CAWP, 2008)

Finally, in an apparent new-found endorsement of litigation as a tactic, and a surprising optimism over its potential to affect socio-economic change, McKinley concludes:

While the judgement has already been appealed by the respondents, and will most probably go all the way to the Constitutional Court, this does not detract from the political and social significance of this victory. It is a case which does not only have applicability to South Africa but which, by its very character, enjoins the attention and direct interest of billions of poor people around the world who are suffering under neo-liberally

inspired water policies, alongside the governments that are implementing such policies and their corporate allies who seek to turn water into nothing less than another profit-making stock market option.... The CAWP and its allies are confident that the High Court judgement will be upheld and that water provision will now no longer be delivered in a discriminatory, patronising and inhumane manner.

(McKinley, 2008)

Conclusion

Although it is not possible yet to assess the full impact of the *Mazibuko* legal mobilization, it is clear that, in Phiri, the tactical resort to rights-based litigation was premised on recognition of the contingency of law. The APF decision to mobilize legally following the failure of traditional forms of leftist resistance is consistent with Scheingold's proposition that rights are 'less established political facts' than potentially 'political resources' (Scheingold, 1974: 84). As such, the uptake of litigation should not be isolated and compared in zero-sum terms, but should be considered in a dialectical and potentially cumulative relationship with other tactics in the political struggle (McCann, 1994: 292).

If so, it is possible that the rights-based legal mobilization has already impacted the movement activists and their fight against the commercialization of water through dramatizing the issues and energizing the struggle. While further research is necessary to properly evaluate this proposition – particularly in the light of the ultimate judgment – it seems to be supported by the APF's own analysis. According to McKinley, the APF is currently considering further proactive litigation. In his words, *Mazibuko* provided 'something to organise around; hope and recognition after having been fucked over by the police – it became the centre of mobilization and reinvigorated the struggle, as well as catalysing political discussions and refining strategy' (interview, 10 July 2009).²² Indeed, it is apparent that the case has played a fundamental role in reinvigorating water-related struggles around the country. For example, during May 2008 the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) used the High Court judgment to mobilize against the City of Cape Town's attempts to install a different kind of water-limiting meter (Foster, 2008). It has also provided erstwhile sceptics with a platform for viewing at least some manifestations of the law as potentially progressive. Indeed, *Mazibuko* has quickly achieved almost mythical status and the High Court judgment reverberates in unanticipated, overtly political, ways. For example, on 19 July the *Mail & Guardian* online carried a story by Matuma Letsoalo entitled 'Masondo Next to be Axed?', in which the author suggested that Amos Masondo may be the next mayor to be fired (following the 'abrupt departure of Ekurhuleni mayor Duma Nkosi'). According

to the author, the writing on the wall in Masondo's case has come in the form of accusations from the regional ANC that Masondo 'undermin[es] the region when taking important decisions', specifically, 'for failing to inform the regional leadership of his decision to challenge a Johannesburg High Court ruling on pre-paid water meters' (Letsoalo, 2008).

While cautioning that legal mobilization is not a linear or predictable process, McCann notes that it can 'matter for building a movement, generating public support for new rights claims, and providing leverage to supplement other political tactics' (McCann, 1994: 10). As understood by Karl Marx, consciousness develops out of, rather than precedes, mobilization, if it develops at all (ibid.: 307). As such, even if rights-based litigation represents a choice from no choice for impoverished communities and associated social movements – or perhaps precisely because it does – it has the potential to tangibly contribute to the broader struggle for socio-economic emancipation by the left.

Postscript

On 8 October 2009, in a profoundly conservative judgment, the South African Constitutional Court overruled the findings of the High Court and the Supreme Court of Appeal and ruled against the *Mazibuko* applicants, finding the City's policies reasonable and PPMs lawful.²³ Clearly, it is too soon to assess the effect of the judgment on the APF, but initial feedback suggests that the judicial defeat has neither deterred the campaign nor discouraged further uptake of proactive litigation by the APF (interview, McKinley, 9 October 2009). Moreover, as tentatively concluded in this chapter, the *Mazibuko* rights-based mobilization has already indirectly impacted, and continues to impact, broader struggles in South Africa. The full extent of this impact can only be determined by future research.

Notes

This chapter builds on two previous articles by the author (Dugard, 2008; 2010).

1. I have been part of the campaign against prepayment water meters and a member of the legal team in the case *Mazibuko and others v City of Johannesburg and others (Mazibuko)*, about which this chapter is written, since July 2004. More generally, I am a water rights academic and activist. I do not claim to be a detached commentator. Rather, I write this chapter as a theoretically informed semi-insider historical account of a particular moment in the struggle for water rights in South Africa. I am grateful to Hivos for providing funding for a month's research sabbatical, during which I did most of the writing for this chapter (August 2009, the month before the final *Mazibuko* appeal was heard in the Constitutional Court). I would like to acknowledge the personal struggle of Lindiwe Mazibuko, our lead applicant. Alongside other Phiri residents, she fought valiantly against prepayment water meters but succumbed to a long illness in May 2008, less than a

month after the Johannesburg High Court victory. She was 41 years old. Although very weak when the judgment was handed down on 30 April 2008, Lindiwe was ecstatic that her struggle had been vindicated by the High Court.

2. S'bu Zikode, 'When Choices Can No Longer Be Choices', 28 February 2007, <http://www.abahlali.org/node/841>. Zikode is president of *Abahlali baseMjondolo* (meaning: we who live in the shacks, in isiZulu). *Abahlali* is one of the growing social movements in South Africa. Like the Anti-Privatisation Forum – the social movement dealt with in this chapter – *Abahlali* is sceptical about the overall function of law in shoring up privilege in South Africa. Yet *Abahlali* has always seen a role for law as a tactic in their broader struggle. In contrast, for the Anti-Privatisation Forum, the *Mazibuko* case was the first instance of proactively taking up litigation.
3. During the period of multi-party negotiations, South Africa had an interim Constitution, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 200 of 1993. It was finalized as the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act 108 of 1996 (Constitution).
4. According to national FBW policy, each household – or at least each poor household – should receive 6 kilolitres (6000 litres) of free water per month. The 6 kilolitre figure is based on a calculation of 25 litres per person per day in a household of eight people. There is not the space to deal with all the problems with the FBW policy, save to mention two. Firstly, there is no national regulation or enforcement of the policy and there are many municipalities that do not provide FBW at all. Secondly, for those municipalities that do provide FBW, such as Johannesburg, the allocation is often insufficient to cover the basic needs of low-income households. This is particularly the case in poor township areas such as Phiri, where there are multi-dwelling households (one main house and several backyard shacks) on one property but only one water connection. On such properties, everyone has to share the same 6 kilolitre monthly FBW allocation, meaning each person receives a woefully inadequate amount.
5. The *Mazibuko* case was heard in the Johannesburg High Court between 3–5 December 2007, in the Supreme Court of Appeal between 23–25 February 2009 and in the Constitutional Court on 2 September 2009. For the sake of ease of reference, unless otherwise indicated, I refer to the case in the cumulative sense, as *Mazibuko*. The citation of the High Court case is *Mazibuko and Others v City of Johannesburg and Others* 2008 (4) All SA 471 (W); in the Supreme Court of Appeal it is *City of Johannesburg and Others v Mazibuko and Others* 2009 (3) SA 592 (SCA); the Constitutional Case is *Mazibuko and Others v City of Johannesburg and Others* CCT 0039/09.
6. In the decade after 1994, 3.37 million households were connected to water services (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2006: 385, 422).
7. Most municipalities pursue a means-tested approach to FBW allocation, using a registration process – called indigency registration – in terms of which poor households must prove their poverty in order to receive FBW. Initial research indicates that such indigency registers typically only capture approximately a fifth of formally qualifying low-income households (Tissington et al., 2008: 34–9).
8. Beyond direct observance of this phenomenon, as well as feedback from affected communities, it is hard to quantify the scale of water disconnections. This is because most municipalities, as well as national government, do not keep data on disconnections or are reluctant to share such information. Furthermore, in those municipalities that have installed PPMs in poorer residential areas, any disconnection is 'outsourced' as a private disconnection in the person's own home

and not part of the municipality's administrative record (such disconnections are referred to by community-based organizations as 'silent disconnections'). Nevertheless, some authors have managed to track water disconnections for specific periods. For example, in Smith's 2005 study of the Cape Town and Tygerberg administrations, 159,886 households had their water disconnected for reasons of non-payment between 1999 and 2001; most of these households were in poor areas where people struggle to pay water bills. And, using national household data and data collected in a 2001 national survey, McDonald (2002) estimated that between the years 2000 and 2001, 7.5 million people experienced both water and electricity disconnections. Such data suggest that 'the introduction of free water and electricity policies in 2001 in urban South Africa had little impact on the affordability of services for many households' (McInnes, 2005: 21). Finally, former Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) Director General, Mike Muller conceded that in 2003 alone, 275,000 households were disconnected at least once from water services due to an inability to pay (Muller, 2004), which, based on a national average of around five or six people per household, amounts to approximately 1.5 million people – and this amount excludes prepayment water meter disconnections for the reasons outlined above (Bond and Dugard, 2008a).

9. Although set at the local level, municipal water tariffs are meant to comply with national regulations – set out in the Norms and Standards in Respect of Tariffs for Water Services: Regulations under Section 10 of the Water Services Act 108 of 1997 (20 July 2001). One of the prescribed requirements is that tariffs for metered water connections must reflect a rising block structure with three or more tariff blocks 'with the tariff increasing for the higher consumption blocks' (Section 6(2)(a)). A rising block tariff structure, particularly one with a convex curve with low prices at the low levels of consumption and very high prices at the luxury end of consumption, is meant to promote social equity by cross-subsidizing between the high consumption of wealthy households and the relatively lower consumption of low-income households.
10. In fact, the evidence indicates that South African luxury water users are not very responsive to price changes, suggesting that water tariffs at the top-end could be significantly raised in order to better cross-subsidize low-end usage, without resulting in rich households drastically cutting their consumption.
11. *iGoli* is a colloquial word for Johannesburg (meaning place of gold in Sesotho).
12. In fact Phiri was not the first poor residential area in Johannesburg to receive prepayment water meters. Prior to Phiri, prepayment water meters had been installed in Orange Farm informal settlement.
13. This report formed part of the *Mazibuko* record, found at Bundle B, vol. 2, pp. 439–82 of the court files, which are available at CALS.
14. For example, when her deemed consumption water supply was discontinued, Grace Munyai (the third applicant in the *Mazibuko* case) accepted a standpipe rather than a prepayment water meter because she wanted to ensure that, even if outside, she would always have access to water. However, with a standpipe, whenever household members need water, including for flushing the toilet (Phiri toilets are designed to be part of a waterborne sewerage system), they must fill buckets and carry them inside. Moreover, if a household violates the conditions of a standpipe, which include not connecting the tap to a hose, the standpipe is removed and a prepayment water meter is installed. As Grace attests, the authorities conduct regular surprise checks to ensure that she does not 'misuse' her standpipe (affidavit of Grace Munyai,

- 28 June 2006, available at <http://web.wits.ac.za/NR/rdonlyres/D3CF86E1-961F-4216-A346-70A93059A005/0/Munyai20affi.pdf>. accessed on 26 October 2010.
15. Typical Phiri properties have a main brick house, which has one room, a living room, a kitchen and usually an outside toilet – title to these small ‘matchbox houses’ was transferred to the occupiers in the post-1994 period. Most Phiri properties also have backyard shacks, for which low monthly rentals are levied. Such shacks are generally cramped. Because the backyard shacks are not formally recognized by the City, they are not allocated separate FBW allocations. This means that all people on one property must share the one FBW allocation of 6 kilolitres per month.
 16. Founding affidavit of Lindiwe Mazibuko, 3 July 2006: para. 101, available at http://web.wits.ac.za/NR/rdonlyres/789545BC-025F-4046-8B82-69A63E7497D2/0/MAZIBUKO_Founding_affidavit_Final.pdf.
 17. Two-year-old Katleho Tamane and nine-year-old Dimpho Tamane, who died in the uncontrolled blaze, had been left sleeping in the shack by their mother who had to work a night shift and was unable to get anyone to look after the children.
 18. My ability to research the impact of the *Mazibuko* legal mobilization on the APF was significantly limited by the fact that one of my two long-term APF interlocutors (P) was suspended from the APF in the wake of a rape charge during early 2009. He remained suspended for the duration of my research. In discussions with other APF members, I decided not to try to pursue any research questions with P. This meant that I had to rely on written statements of the APF, as well as interviews with Dale McKinley (my other long-term intermediary), to document the APF’s perspective of the *Mazibuko* journey. Fortunately, as a founding member, treasurer and de facto figurehead of the APF, McKinley was an excellent source of critical analysis. However, this limitation means that the activist perspective is not as rich as it should have been. Particularly in view of the disappointing Constitutional Court judgment, this suggests the need for further research, delving deeper into the activists’ accounts and perspectives.
 19. On the legal side of things, we appealed to and were very fortunate to secure – on a contingency basis (meaning legal fees would only be paid to counsel in the event of us ultimately winning and advocates’ costs being awarded in our favour) – two outstanding advocates for the duration of the litigation, Wim Trengove, SC and Nadine Fourie. In the initial stage, when we were building the case, the FXI were the attorneys of record for the applicants and CALS provided the socio-legal research. As such, FXI launched the case in the Johannesburg High Court in July 2006. However, from March 2007, CALS took over as the attorneys of record.
 20. The role of lawyers in advocating the legal mobilization course should not be ignored. Nevertheless, throughout the years, the *Mazibuko* legal team has attempted to ensure that legal mobilization is driven by the clients and their support movements, rather than by ourselves.
 21. Anarakismo.net describes itself on the website as follows: ‘We identify ourselves as anarchists and with the “platformist”, anarchist-communist or especificista tradition of anarchism.’ In terms of its objectives, according to the website, ‘Anarchism will be created by the class struggle between the vast majority of society (the working class) and the tiny minority that currently rule. A successful revolution will require that anarchist ideas become the leading ideas within the working class’, see <http://www.anarakismo.net/about>. accessed on 26 October 2010.
 22. When asked to list the drawbacks of the legal route, McKinley noted the length and complexity of the process, as well as the potential to alienate activists (there

is no doubt that over the five years it has taken to mount the case and to get a final hearing, in the Constitutional Court, many activists have withdrawn their initial interest). McKinley and I agree that, if we could relive the process, we would try to spend more time on communicating with the residents of Phiri and allied activists to keep them informed about each step of the legal process.

23. Judgment available at <http://web.wits.ac.za/NR/rdonlyres/CEA91684-DF24-40B1-BE5A-25CB66DC289E/0/CCT3909MazibukoandothersvCityofJohannesburgand othersFINAL.pdf>. accessed on 26 October 2010.

References

- African National Congress (ANC) (1994). *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (Johannesburg: Umanyano Publications).
- APF and CAWP (2006). 'Lessons from the War Against Prepaid Water Meters: The Struggle Against Silent Disconnections Continues', http://apf.org.za/IMG/pdf/Final_PPM_Research_Report_-_102006-2.pdf. accessed on 26 October 2010.
- Bakker, K. (2007). 'The "Commons" Versus the "Commodity": After-Globalization, Anti-Privatization and the Human Right to Water in the Global South', *Antipode*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 430–55.
- Beall, J., Crankshaw, O. and Parnell, S. (2002). *Uniting a Divided City – Governance and Social Exclusion in Johannesburg* (London: Earthscan).
- Beavon, K. (2000). 'Northern Johannesburg: Part of the "Rainbow" or Neo-Apartheid City in the Making?', *Mots Pluriels*, Vol. 13, <http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP1300kb.html>. accessed on 26 October 2010.
- Brand, D. (2005). 'The "Politics of Need Interpretation" and the Adjudication of Socio-Economic Rights Claims in South Africa', in A. J. van der Walt (ed.), *Theories of Social and Economic Justice* (Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University Press): pp. 17–36.
- Bond, P. (2000). *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg and London: University of Natal Press and Pluto).
- Bond, P. and Dugard, J. (2008a). 'The Case of Johannesburg Water: What Really Happened at the Prepayment "Parish Pump"', *Law, Democracy and Development*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1–28.
- Bond, P. and Dugard, J. (2008b). 'Water, Human Rights and Social Conflict: South African Experiences', *Law, Social Justice and Global Development*, Vol. 1, http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/elj/lgd/2008_1/bond_dugard. accessed on 26 October 2010.
- CAWP (2008). 'Attack on High Court Judgment and Judge Tsoka is Unwarranted, Dangerous and Betrays a Complete Ignorance of How democracy Works: This is Not Zimbabwe Mr Masondo, and You are Not Robert Mugabe', 16 May, http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story_id=8914&topic=indigenousthuggles&type=nonanarchistpress&language=en. accessed on 26 October 2010.
- DWAF (1994). Water Supply and Sanitation White Paper, available at <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/Documents/Policies/WSSP.pdf>. accessed on 26 October 2010.
- DWAF (1997). White Paper on a National Water Policy for South Africa, available at <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/Documents/Policies/nwppw.pdf>. accessed on 26 October 2010.

- Dugard, J. (2008). 'Rights, Regulation and Resistance: The Phiri Water Campaign', *South African Journal on Human Rights*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 593–611.
- Dugard, J. (2010). 'Can Human Rights Transcend the Commercialization of Water in South Africa?: Soweto's Legal Fight for an Equitable Water Policy', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 175–94.
- Foster, W. (2008). 'Water Wars Move to Cape', *Mail & Guardian* online, 12 May, <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-05-12-water-wars-move-to-cape>. accessed on 26 October 2010.
- Gabel, P. (1984). 'The Phenomenology of Rights Consciousness and the Pact of the Withdrawn Selves', *Texas Law Review*, Vol. 62, 1563–98.
- Hemson, D. (2008). 'Water for All: From Firm Promises to "New Realism"', in D. Hemson, K. Kulindwa, H. Lein and A. Mascarenhas (eds), *Poverty and Water: Explorations of the Reciprocal Relationship* (London: Zed Books): Chapter 2, pp. 13–46.
- Johannesburg Water (n.d.). 'Operation GcinAmanzi Report', included in Minutes of Meeting of the Operations and Procurement Committee of Johannesburg Water (Vol. B2, pp. 439–82, *Mazibuko* record, available at CALS).
- Kennedy, D. (1986). 'Freedom and Constraint in Private Law Adjudication: A Critical Phenomenology', *Journal of Legal Education*, Vol. 36, 518–62.
- Letsoalo, M. (2008). 'Masondo Next to be Axed?', *Mail & Guardian* online, 19 July, <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-07-19-masondo-next-to-be-axed>. accessed on 26 October 2010.
- Mabuzo, K. (2008). 'Jozi to Contest Ruling on Water', *Sowetan* newspaper, 15 May.
- McCann, M. (1994). *Rights at Work: Pay Equity Reform and the Politics of Legal Mobilization* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press).
- McDonald, D. (2002) 'The bell tolls for thee: Cost-recovery, cutoffs and the affordability of municipal services in South Africa'. Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) report (Pretoria: HSRC).
- McInnes, P. (2005). 'Chapter 1: The policy context', in *Making the kettle boil: Rights talk and political mobilisation around electricity and water services in Soweto*. Unpublished masters dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- McKinley, D. (2005). 'The Struggle Against Water Privatisation in South Africa', in Transnational Institute (TNI) (ed.), *Reclaiming Public Water: Achievements, Struggles and Visions from Around the World*, available at http://www.tni.org/detail_page.phtml?page=books_publicwater. accessed on 26 October 2010.
- McKinley, D. (2008). 'Water Struggles from Johannesburg and Beyond', http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story_id=9168. accessed on 26 October 2010.
- McKinley, D. (n.d.). 'A New "Home of Struggle"', Unpublished Draft in author's possession.
- Muller, M. (24 June 2004) 'Turning on the taps' *Mail & Guardian* newspaper.
- Naidoo, P. (2007). 'Struggles Around the Commodification of Daily Life in South Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 111, 57–66.
- Naidoo, P. (2008). 'Eroding the Commons: Prepaid Water Meters in Phiri, Soweto', Public Citizen website article, http://www.citizen.org/cmep/Water/cmep_Water/reports/southafrica/articles.cfm?ID=11991. accessed on 26 October 2010.
- Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee, APF and CAWP (2004). 'Destroy the Meter, Enjoy Free Water: Why We Oppose the Installation of Prepaid Water Meters, Given

- the Experience in Stretford Ext. 4, Orange Farm', Research Report, Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee, APF and CAWP, Johannesburg.
- Roithmayr, D. (2001). 'Left Over Rights', *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol. 22, 1113–34.
- Scheingold, S. (1974). *The Politics of Rights: Lawyers, Public Policy, and Political Change* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press).
- Scheingold, S. (1989). 'Constitutional Rights and Social Change', in M. McCann and G. Houseman (eds), *Judging the Constitution: Critical Essays on Judicial Lawmaking* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Little, Brown).
- Seidman, N. (2006). 'Local Government Budgets and Development', Unpublished Paper in author's possession.
- Smith, L. (2006). 'Neither Public Nor Private: Unpacking the Johannesburg Water Corporatisation Model', United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Social Policy and Development Programme Paper No. 27, available at [http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/\(httpPublications\)/79F48A7BDD5CA384C12571D100257095?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/(httpPublications)/79F48A7BDD5CA384C12571D100257095?OpenDocument). accessed on 1st February 2010.
- South African Institute of Race Relations (2006). *Annual Survey 2005/2006* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations).
- Tissington, K., Dettmann, M., Langford, M., Dugard, J. and Conteh, S. (2008). 'Water Services Fault Lines: An Assessment of South Africa's Water Service and Sanitation Provision Across 15 Municipalities', CALS, COHRE and NCHR, Johannesburg, Geneva and Oslo, available at <http://web.wits.ac.za/Academic/Centres/CALS/BasicServices/ResearchReports.htm>. accessed on 1st February 2010.
- Tomlinson, R. (1999): 'Ten Years in the Making: A History of the Evolution of Metropolitan Government in Johannesburg' *Urban Forum*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1–39.
- Tushnet, M. (1984). 'An Essay on Rights', *Texas Law Review*, Vol. 62, 1363–403.
- Wafer, A., Dugard, J., Ngwena, M. and Sibanda, S. (2007). 'A Tale of Six Buildings: The Lived-Reality of Poor People's Access to Basic Services in Johannesburg's Inner City', Research Report, Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), Johannesburg, available at http://web.wits.ac.za/NR/rdonlyres/151249A8-4A39-41B2-80C6-896A84B67DFB/0/Tale_of_six_buildings.pdf. accessed on 1st February 2010.
- Zemans, F. (1983). 'Legal Mobilization: The Neglected Role of the Law in the Political System', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 77, 690–703.

4

Neoliberalism and Counter-Hegemony in the Global South: Reimagining the State

Mark Boden

The active politician is a creator, an initiator; but he neither creates from nothing nor does he move in the turbid void of his own desires and dreams. He bases himself on effective reality, but what is this effective reality? Is it something static and immobile, or is it not rather a relation of forces in continuous motion and shift of equilibrium? If one applies one's will to the creation of a new equilibrium among the forces which really exist and are operative – basing oneself on the particular force which one believes to be progressive and strengthening it to help it to victory – one still moves on the terrain of effective reality, but does so in order to dominate and transcend it.

—Gramsci (1971: 172)

Introduction

Since the 1970s neoliberalism has transformed the economics and politics of global capitalism. Neoliberalism first became hegemonic in the global North and later became dominant on a global scale (Harvey, 2005). In the global South, neoliberalism has had a profound impact in relation to increasing levels of inequality and poverty, new forms of accumulation by dispossession such as the privatization of the commons and the rise in power of finance capital at both the national and international level. Neoliberalism at its heart is a response by the ruling class to contain and ultimately reverse gains by the left and popular forces under the rubric of the developmental state and varieties of Third Worldist ideologies from the 1950s until the 1970s (Moore, 2004) to shift the balance of class power decisively in favour of capital (Harvey, 2005). In the global South this was particularly characterized by the defeat and marginalization of revolutionary and radical nationalist movements (Albo, 2008).

Despite the social costs of neoliberalism and its recent economic crisis, neoliberalism has demonstrated a high degree of political resilience and in part this has been a result of the failure of the left to articulate an effective and realistic strategy to confront neoliberalism. Gramsci's (1971) advice to the active politician of the left to create new possibilities for progressive advance based on strengthening forces that already exist in order to transcend present socio-political conditions or what Gramsci describes as 'effective reality' has been to a large extent ignored by the left. As a result the left has alternated between short-term defensive actions or a politics based on a prediction of the collapse of the present social and economic order or postulations for a new utopian global order. As Albo (2008: 8) argues, these oscillations reflect 'the disarray of Left forces and organizational weakness' and to overcome this disarray the left and popular forces must develop 'viable new collective and democratic organizational capacities'.

In relation to the global South and an effective counter-hegemony to neoliberalism, the need for these societies to overcome underdevelopment requires the left and popular forces to construct a new form of developmental state to achieve a more just and less painful form of socio-economic development. Furthermore, to challenge neoliberalism, the left and popular social movements must reimagine their strategy in relation to the state, to conceive the state as a central site or arena wherein a viable counter-hegemony to neoliberalism can be constructed. The argument outlined in this chapter is in three sections.

The first section of the chapter will outline why the developmental state has been challenged and undermined, not only from neoliberalism, but also from an increasingly anti-statist left. Focusing on the left, the currently fashionable rejection of the state as a site for contesting neoliberal hegemony will be criticized, particularly in relation to resistance and alternatives to contemporary neoliberal forms of primitive accumulation and dispossession, which it will be argued logically requires us to reconceptualize the role of the state in relation to viable alternatives to neoliberalism.

In the second section of the chapter, the theoretical issues relating to the reimagining of the state as a means through which subaltern classes and peripheral economies can challenge neoliberalism will be explored. The theoretical resources for such a reimagination can be found within Marxist state theory, which at its heart relates a theory of the state to the advance of effective political strategies for emancipatory socio-political change. To illustrate the continuing politico-strategic relevance of state theory, two areas will be examined: (1) the promotion of participatory democracy as a basis for a democratic developmental state and (2) the importance of law and radical constitutionalism for popular struggles against neoliberalism.

In order to illustrate these theoretical arguments, the third section will analyse the example of Venezuela where struggles against neoliberalism have witnessed the establishment of a new constitution and moves to

democratize the state in an attempt to reconfigure the social and political relations in the interests of the popular classes. The significance of these events will be related to the theoretical debates discussed previously and in relation to left strategy both in Latin America and, more generally, with a particular emphasis upon the lessons that the Venezuelan example can provide for the political strategies that are required for the reconstruction of a developmental state of a new type in the global South.

From right to left: the dismissal of the developmental state

Today, the strategy of a developmental state let alone a socialist or Third Worldist alternative to capitalism has given way to a neoliberal global economic order, which posits the almost supernatural power of markets to solve social and political issues and generate economic development. The thrust of neoliberalism, the ideology that went hand in hand with the structural transformation of international capitalism since the 1970s, is to both reduce and reconfigure the role of the state in order to promote and support the domination of capital (Dumenil and Levy, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Saad-Filho and Johnston, 2005; Gill, 2008).

In relation to the global South, states are disciplined by international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and are required to reduce their role in the delivery of public goods and service their debts to the wealthy North. The role envisaged for the state is as the guarantor of a legal and regulatory framework essential for capital accumulation (Cammack, 2002).

The anti-statist thrust of neoliberalism is, however, deeply contradictory. Neoliberalism is anti-statist in one sense, but in another it advocates a redeployment of state power to cement ruling-class domination, break down barriers to the penetration of capital and to further the commoditization of both society and nature. Karl Polanyi's argument that 'the road to the free market was opened and kept open only by an enormous increase in continuous, centrally organized and controlled interventionism' (Polanyi, 2001: 146) applies not only to the formation of a liberal order in the nineteenth century but also to contemporary neoliberal globalization.

The expansion of commodification and the intensification of market forces unleashed by neoliberalism requires a new form of state at the national level and new institutional arrangements at the international level to promote and maintain neoliberal capitalism (Gill, 2008). The restructuring of the state under neoliberalism is characterized by a reconfiguration of the state, with sovereignty and authority remaining largely intact, but with the capacity of the state to translate this authority becoming limited by 'a complex displacement of powers upwards, downwards, and outwards' (Jessop, 2002: 212).

Fundamental to this recomposition has been the reinforcement of the separation of the political from the economic, with 'the insulation of key aspects of the economy from the influence of politicians or the mass of citizens by imposing, internally and externally, "binding constraints" on the conduct of fiscal, monetary and trade and investment policies' (Gill, 2008: 139). These 'constraints' are themselves produced and reproduced through political mechanisms, with the state's decision making being further integrated into the dynamics of capital accumulation coupled with the restoration and strengthening of capitalist class power (Harvey, 2005).

Gill argues that international political forms and the restructuring of the state forms a 'new constitutionalism' that is reflected in discourses of global governance such as the World Bank and the neoliberal state form. This new constitutionalism is 'defined as the political project of attempting to make transnational liberalism, and if possible liberal democratic capitalism, the sole model for future development' (Gill, 2008: 139). Central to this project is a limitation to democratic control and a 'lock in' of neoliberal frameworks alongside an exclusion or marginalization of alternatives to neoliberalism (*ibid.*: 79). As Kiely (2005) and Harvey (2005) note, neoliberalism is a general trend, but has become consolidated to various degrees depending on a range of socio-political factors with opposition to neoliberalism persisting despite attempts to close the political space. However as Kiely (2005: 279) argues, neoliberalism at least on the international level has become hegemonic, with the Third Way being the most visible example in both its Northern and Southern guises constituting the new 'common sense' of the age.

The reconfiguration of the developmental state (in its various guises: neo-Keynesian, communist and so on) into a neoliberal state form has important implications for left political strategy. As will be discussed in more detail later, one of the most significant advances in Marxist state theory is to conceptualize the state as a social relation, as a field of strategic selectivity which dependent on the form of state, type of regime and forms of intervention and resources is more open to some political strategies as opposed to others (Jessop, 1990).

Neoliberalism has had a deep impact upon the strategic selectivity of the state, hence the conceptualization of the neoliberal state as a new state form, which is interrelated to a new regime of capital accumulation (Jessop, 2002). Harvey (2005: 78) lists some of the consequences of this reconfiguration of the state as a set of institutions and practices, particularly in relation to the balance between consent and force, between capital and popular forces and between executive/judicial power and representative democracy, all of which have profound implications for left strategy.

One implication, which we will be critically examining in more detail later, is a rejection of the state as a means to achieve change in favour of social movements that are autonomous from the state. This can range from a theoretical rejection of the ability of the state to change the world for

emancipatory goals (Holloway, 2003) to a more pragmatic shift away from the politics of taking state power to a politics based on social movements, which is in part a response to the limited space for substantive democracy and social rights under neoliberalism.

Another implication for left strategy is that even if the left gains state power as in the recent turn to the left in Latin America, these governments due to the hegemony of neoliberalism and the constraints on state action this imposes will embrace a pragmatic neoliberalism or 'neoliberalism with a human face' (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2009). The consequences of this centre-left strategy in many of the countries that constitute the left turn in Latin America has been a demobilization of radical social movements and an unstable stalemate between popular forces and the right:

The centre-left emerged from the stalemate between the social movements and the ruling class during the crisis in Ecuador, Argentina and elsewhere. The radical left was able to block capital rule but unable or unwilling to replace it and the ruling class occupied the strategic positions in the economy but were unable to consolidate its rule- to establish a good governance regime.

(Ibid.: 7)

Neoliberalism although in crisis across Latin America has not been fundamentally challenged by the various centre-left governments, which as Petras and Veltmeyer argues is highly dependent on agro-mineral elites for their export-development policies, which provided the funds for the limited forms of redistribution that these governments have carried out. As a result, centre-left regimes have been constrained within the structural parameters of neoliberalism and have both demobilized and back-tracked in their promises to its mass base, paving the way for a revival of the right and the ruling class (ibid.).

A way out of this impasse is a left strategy that has at its heart a radical transformation of the state, which would act to restructure the economy and mobilize popular forces from below to establish a viable counter-hegemony to neoliberalism, a process, which however contradictory, is occurring in Venezuela. The issue of the state and the implications this has for left strategy, particularly in Venezuela, will be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

Social movements, development and a critique of the state

Neoliberalism has restructured the capitalist state and established serious constraints on the activities of centre-left governments despite the depth of the crisis of neoliberalism, particularly in Latin America. Neoliberalism also has a profound negative economic impact upon development in the

global South and this has had significant implications for the idea of state-led development and indeed even the place of the state in the struggle for progressive change.

The devastating impact of neoliberalism has been evident with the rapid collapse of incomes in the global South since the early 1980s, with sub-Saharan Africa being the worst hit of all the regions of the global South. As Arrighi (1991: 52) gloomily argues, 'an increasing number of Third World governments have been forced or induced to give up their developmental efforts and settle – more or less grudgingly – for a subordinate position in the global hierarchy of wealth'.

Neoliberalism has been the most significant factor behind the crisis of state-led developmentalism, but it has not been the only challenge to the developmental state. Coinciding with the impact of neoliberalism, significant social movements in the global South and their intellectual supporters have moved against the state, converging albeit from a very different perspective from neoliberalism. The left and popular forces in the global South have challenged the role of the state for a number of reasons.

The first and most obvious is that the state is regarded by social movements as an apparatus dominated by ruling elites, which are opposed to the interests of the majority. This is particularly significant throughout the global South as the state and ruling class are often fused to form a 'state-class' that rests on various forms of clientelism and exclusion.

The second reason, closely related to the first, is the failure of previous state developmentalism to deliver with the mass of the population paying the high social costs of development while receiving little in the way of increased living standards and a decline in inequality. This failure combined with the weakening or abandonment of the states' role in the provision of welfare and the steering of economic development has created a vacuum that has been filled by non-governmental organizations, aid agencies, new social movements and other non-state actors.

The third reason relates to the world-historical significance of the collapse of communism as a world power.¹ The failure of the communist experiment discredited state intervention and boosted the ideological strength of neoliberalism, which stridently echoed Margaret Thatcher's argument that There Is No Alternative (TINA) to neoliberalism. Perhaps as important, the collapse of communism left anti-systemic movements in a state of crisis and disorientation, the impact of which is still difficult to adequately judge nearly two decades on.

Popular forces reacting to some or all of these challenges and failures of the state have concentrated on bottom-up, grassroots initiatives for development or struggles against state repression and other forms of exclusion and contemporary forms of dispossession that are exemplary of neoliberalism. These grassroots social movements generally bypass the state and focus their

activities within the sphere of civil society or relegate the issue of state power to the margin of their concerns.²

Contemporary debates on the left mirror this general shift away from conceiving that the state can be deployed as a means of change to the articulation of ideas that focus on local/global struggles or a combination of both. Perhaps the most significant theoretical statement of this position is that of John Holloway's *Change the World Without Taking Power*, where he argues that:

If the state paradigm was the vehicle of hope for much of the century, it became more and more the assassin of hope as the century progressed. The apparent impossibility of revolution at the beginning of the twentieth-first century reflects in reality the historical failure of a particular conception of revolution, the concept that identified revolution with control over the state.

(2003: 5)

Why cannot the state be a means to achieve radical social change, be it via revolutionary or reformist means? Holloway provides a number of arguments to support his claim. Firstly, the state cannot challenge capital because it is not autonomous from capitalist social relations being just a node in a web of social relations and unable to tear apart from this web (ibid.: 8). Secondly, Holloway is opposed to the state because it is a form of power, which needs to be opposed through anti-power to create a society 'free of power relations through the dissolution of power over' (ibid.: 16). The state and attempting to use the state to change the world merely reinforces power relations and as such is self-defeating (ibid.: 8).

Holloway's arguments are deeply problematic, not only in relation to the state, but also in their understanding of Marxist theory. A major difficulty stems from Holloway's exceptionally abstract and philosophical interpretation of Marxism and its resulting inability to relate to everyday life (Binford, 2005: 254). As a result, Holloway lacks any real discussion or analysis of how to achieve social change; in short he has no conception of strategy or structure for that matter, leading to a form of idealism or left postmodernism which posits a rejection of capitalism and forms of power over as an act of will, which in some mysterious way does not require building political movements and so on.

A logical consequence of this position is Holloway's rejection of attempts to understand present society, in order to change it. The concept of hegemony (and attempts to analyse forms of domination) is for Holloway 'self-defeating, reproducing rather than dissolving the domination it purports to combat' (ibid.: 270). The same would apply to any attempt to understand contemporary society, which leaves one thinking why Marx bothered to study capitalism as a mode of production in the first place.

As Michael Lebowitz (2005: 226–8), one of Holloway's fiercest critics, argues, Holloway rejects Marx's focus on the state or a new form of state as the means to change society. Instead Holloway sidesteps or ignores the role of the state, due to his focus on pure agency, which can (somehow?) move beyond power relations altogether.

Holloway, however, provides no alternative strategy, no way of conceiving how to change the world without taking power. It is a manifesto for the NO that is based on an abstract, idealist rejection of power, which ultimately goes nowhere as Holloway himself admits: 'How do we change the world without taking power? At the end of the book, as at the beginning we do not know' (Holloway, 2003: 89).

Given the crisis of neoliberalism and the issues this raises for humanity, this position of evading the issue of state power is ultimately not only a theoretical dead end but also an argument that has little if anything to offer for *practical* struggles to change the world in a progressive direction.

Holloway's call for anti-power reflects a strong tendency within a number of social movements that reject taking state power, preferring to concentrate on grassroots community-based politics and local development (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005). As Petras and Veltmeyer argue in relation to social movements and the state in Latin America, the path of non-power or anti-power to rely on social rather than political action avoids 'challenging the larger structure of economic and political power' with the outcome that social movements become agents of reform within the context of neoliberalism as opposed to advancing a counter-hegemonic or anti-systemic agenda (*ibid.*: 238).

The failure of the left and popular forces not to engage with the state and the question of state power is not only a real barrier to the possibilities of counter-hegemonic contestation of neoliberalism but also a very real limitation on whether a sustainable and socially just form of development can succeed in the global South. To achieve a more just and socially acceptable form of development would require the re-establishment and deepening of public goods and rights, policies that reduce poverty and levels of inequality, full employment and sustainable forms of economic growth. Above all real development based on popular power would have to depend on a politics of mass mobilization, which at the same time is combined with electoral politics (*ibid.*: 239). The developmental state that could navigate this road of development would have to be cohesive and above all democratic, for as Graf argues it is not the failure of state intervention per se, but the previous failure of the state in the global South to achieve such a democratic form of developmentalism (Graf, 1995: 158).

The construction of such states across the global South is a huge historical challenge, not only due to global socio-political and economic pressures, but also due to the barriers to democratization that stem from low capacity states, which are characteristic in the peripheral societies of the global South.

As Charles Tilly (2007) argues, low-capacity states are difficult to democratize due to the state being the main source of local resources, with local elites doing all that is necessary to maintain control of state power. These difficulties are not insurmountable, and require considerable intellectual work in relation to political strategy, conceptualization of the relationship between the state and society, role of social movements and so on, alongside social and political struggles at the local, national and global level.³ A key element to this intellectual labour will be a theoretical reimagining of the state in relation to political strategy and counter-hegemony. It is to address these issues that the recovery of a number of insights from the 'lost' tradition of Marxist state theory⁴ may help to provide some of the theoretical resources for such a reimagining of the state.

Reimagining the state and counter-hegemony

Within the tradition of Marxist state theory I will draw primarily on the work of Nicos Poulantzas and Bob Jessop who conceive the state as a strategic field and the implications this has for radical social and political change. In association with these theorists I will also examine the work of Andreas Kalyvas in relation to the importance of law and constitutional change in counter-hegemonic struggles.

Before the state can be reimagined in relation to counter-hegemony and political strategy, the state needs to be defined. The most fruitful way of conceptualizing the state is to conceive the state as a social relation, which Poulantzas defines as:

a relationship of forces, or more precisely the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions, such as this is expressed within the state in a necessarily specific form...by grasping the State as the condensation of a relationship, we avoid the impasse of that eternal counterposition of the State as a Thing-instrument and the State as a Subject.

(1978: 129, Emphasis added)

The state conceptualized as a social relation has no power on its own, it is an institutional ensemble that is not neutral in relation to different social forces but instead acts to produce a class-biased balance among these classes (Jessop, 1990: 256). The institutional forms that this class-biased balance take are constituted by prior socio-political struggles that are materially inscribed within state institutions, their structure, procedures and rules, which either advance or obstruct particular class interests not only within the dominant class or what Poulantzas describes as the power bloc but also *between* the ruling and dominated classes.

Crucially for Poulantzas the state is not a monolithic thing that is outside and acting upon the popular classes, in fact:

Popular struggles traverse the State from top to bottom and in a mode quite other than penetration of an intrinsic entity from the outside. If political struggles bearing on the State traverse its apparatuses, this is because they are already inscribed in that state framework whose strategic configuration they map out.

(Poulantzas, 1978: 141)

Poulantzas' concern with the structural selectivity of the state, that state institutions and practices advance certain interests and not others, has been further developed in Bob Jessop's conceptualization of the state as a strategic field. Jessop's conception of the state from the perspective of strategic selectivity implies that the state as a social relation 'can be analyzed as the site, generator and product of strategies' (Bratsis, 2002: 259). Characterized by 'strategic selectivity', the state is a 'system whose structure and *modus operandi* are more open to some types of political strategy than others ... because of the modes of intervention and resources which characterize that system' (Jessop, 1990: 260; see also Nilsen, this book).

Jessop goes on to argue that the state is the site where strategies are generated, which in turn establish a tenuous form of unity and relative autonomy of the state in relation to pressures from civil society and the impact of contradictions and conflicts generated by class struggles and conflicts within the state apparatus itself (*ibid.*: 261). Lastly, the state, its current strategic selectivity, is 'in part the emergent effect of the interaction between its past patterns of *strategic selectivity* and the strategies adopted for its transformation' (*ibid.*, *Emphasis added*). In essence, Jessop's strategic-theoretical approach attempts to relate structure and agency, constraints and contingency as well as a periodization of the political within his theory of the state.

Theoretically, Jessop's strategic-theoretical approach builds on Poulantzas' thinking that popular forces should move from a strategy which aims to capture the state from without through a Leninist inspired seizure of power to one that aims to transform the state within. This would involve struggles outside and inside the state operating simultaneously (Poulantzas, 1978: 260). Jessop points to three strategic implications of this approach to the state:

These are to conduct a threefold political struggle: (a) to intensify the tensions and contradictions necessarily reproduced within the heart of the state as a strategic terrain without destroying its effectivity as a political force in the hands of a left-wing government, (b) to conduct struggles at a distance from the state on the various micro-sites of power relation in

civil society as well as the economy in order to modify the balance of forces and thereby put popular pressure on the state, and (c) to transform the state so democratic forms and controls are extended and deepened. (1990: 270)

Poulantzas in his later writings gives some insights into how the state may be transformed. At the core of his thinking is the maintenance and expansion of representative democracy alongside the establishment of direct forms of democracy and self-management across society.⁵ Two difficulties are associated with this strategy. The first relates to the danger of the ruling class and its allies and elements within the state such as the military blocking or subverting the process of transformation or even more dangerous attempting a coup. Poulantzas argues that the likely outcome of either of these dangers: deradicalization of the movement or a counter-revolution can only be prevented with the left government's reliance on a broad, unified popular movement, which 'constitutes a guarantee against the reaction of the enemy, even though it is not sufficient and must always be linked to sweeping transformations of the state' (Poulantzas, 2008: 374).

The second difficulty relates to how these two processes of transformation – representative democracy and formal freedoms and direct, participatory forms of democracy – are articulated or assimilated together. A potential problem is for these two processes to be operating separately from each other and coming into conflict with one another. Poulantzas is very clear about the consequences of such a disarticulation, if representative democracy dominates there will be a retreat from radical goals and an accommodation with the old order; alternatively if representative democracy is destroyed in favour of direct forms of democracy, experience tells us that an authoritarian dictatorship is the outcome. Either way 'the state will always end up the winner' (*ibid.*: 375).

Another consequence of a disarticulation between representative and direct democracy, not mentioned by Poulantzas, although implicit in his argument, is that forms of direct democracy if not articulated in the manner advanced by Poulantzas would easily be prone to particularism, be it representing some narrow interests or being limited to a local as opposed to a universalist level of activity. Furthermore, given neoliberalism's assault on the state and the advocacy of a minimal state, forms of direct democracy such as participatory budgeting could become merely legitimating mechanisms for the allocation of ever diminishing public goods, taking over these responsibilities from a retreating state.

Poulantzas unfortunately offers little advice on how to avoid these pitfalls of the inside/outside strategy for transforming the state in favour of popular forces and counter-hegemony. One theorist who has given some thought to these issues is Kalyvas (2002) who emphasizes the role of law and radical constitutional politics as a basis for the democratization of the

state and popular struggles. Kalyvas' arguments are particularly interesting as he logically builds upon Poulantzas' emphasis on the interrelationship between action inside and outside the state. Kalyvas suggests three strategic possibilities in relation to the law and constitutionalism as fields of political transformation. These are firstly, the politics of semi-legality; secondly, the defence and expansion of existing institutions and norms that are related to democratic legitimacy and the articulation of popular interests; and thirdly, the transformation of the constitutional order.

The politics of semi-legality refers to the questioning of limits imposed by the pre-existing legal system and the use of exceptional measures to transform the state, while still at the same time operating within the existing institutional framework. The politics of semi-legality will not be a liberal politics, but an anti-liberal politics that 'will be able to confront the legal barriers imposed by the liberal law, which permeate the entire field of the state, without however, disrupting altogether the existing legal and institutional framework and without representing a new, sudden revolutionary change' (ibid.: 131). The key to this strategy lies in finding, as Kalyvas quotes approvingly from Cohen and Arato, the balance 'between the boundaries of insurrection and institutionalised political activity' (Cohen and Arato, 1992: 566). The key to this strategy is for the left and counter-hegemonic movements to take the law seriously as a field of struggle, both in opposition to the state and neoliberalism and indeed more importantly in order to transform the state.

The second strategic possibility relating to the law is the classical strategy of radicalizing and extending existing rights, which advance popular interests such as political liberties. This becomes particularly important given that neoliberalism at its core is a project to roll back popular gains to permanently shift power to the ruling class. This strategy requires popular movements to take the state seriously as an area of struggle, either to defend existing social and political rights or to build a counter-hegemonic alternative to neoliberalism and the restrictions to democratic politics that are integral to neoliberal hegemony.

The third strategy, comprising radical constitutional change, is perhaps the most important to the strategy of transforming the state in a progressive popular direction. Kalyvas argues that the convocation of a new constituent assembly with mass popular support 'will endow the hegemonic popular bloc with an instituting and founding content'. The significance of constituent politics is that it establishes the grounding norms and institutions for a society, which involves above all the active participation of citizens as a 'conscious political will formation' in the foundation of popular sovereignty (Kalyvas, 2005: 238) or what Gramsci (1971) referred to as a national-popular collective will.

The success of such a radical reconstituting of political power is of course determined not only by the following of procedural steps, at its heart lies the

transformation of the state and its relationship to popular forces. Poulantzas' injunction that for the state to be transformed in a progressive direction, it must be from both inside and outside the state, requiring the persistent intervention of popular forces is central to the success or ultimate failure, of radical constitutional change and the transformation of the state. The significance of radical constitutionalism is that it provides the basis for just such an articulation between representative and direct democracy, which is central to the establishment of a *counter-hegemony*.

The crisis of neoliberal hegemony makes possible the space for such a political transformation and a political reimagining of the state. As discussed earlier, alternatives to neoliberalism depend above all on popular forces taking state power *and* transforming the state in the process. Marxist state theory in relating analysis to political strategy in the advance of social emancipation and counter-hegemonic struggles offers many resources to such a vital task, but like any critical theory have to be related to practice; contemporary struggles and political strategies.

The recent developments in Venezuela within the context of a revival of the left in Latin America generally are particularly illuminating in this regard. Indeed, in Venezuela transforming the state have been central to the strategy of the left and popular forces. The example of Venezuela both for left strategy and an alternative to neoliberalism has global implications, which both challenges the assumptions of many on the left that you cannot change the world through taking state power and provides a possible model for an alternative to neoliberalism that has implications for Latin America and beyond.

Neoliberalism in Latin America, the left and the rise of Chavez

By the early 1990s neoliberalism seemed well entrenched within Latin America with the political foundations of populist/nationalist state-led development undermined by the fall in working- and middle-class incomes, inflation, high levels of debt and the perceived failure of import substitution-based industrialization to deliver economic growth. Despite the apparent success of neoliberalism as the new orthodoxy, reinforced by global forces in favour of neoliberal reform, the structural foundations of neoliberalism were, however, in retrospect unstable.

Gwynne and Kay (2000: 147–51) outline a number of contradictions within the neoliberal model in the context of Latin America: the heavy dependence on external finance and subsequent vulnerability to global shocks such as the Asian crisis of 1997, alongside the persistence of high levels of income inequality, poverty and the erosion of social protection for large sections of the population within Latin American societies. In the political sphere, neoliberalism has acted to undermine already fragile Latin American democracies which as Green (1995: 164) argues has 'ripped the

heart out of democratization, turning what could have been a flowering of political and social participation into a brand of “low-intensity democracy”.

Since the late 1990s, throughout Latin America there has been a notable shift to the left labelled as the ‘pink tide’ as the neoliberal model generated social and political opposition, with the election of centre-left and left governments in Venezuela (1998), Brazil (2002), Argentina (2003), Uruguay (2004), Ecuador (2006), Chile (2006), Bolivia (2006) and Paraguay (2008). The shift to the centre-left and left in recent years has been unprecedented in Latin American history, with the continent being ‘transformed into the weakest link in the neoliberal chain’ (Sader, 2008: 6). However, as Sader notes, this shift to the left has mixed results, with neoliberalism persisting under a more ‘human face’ in more developed societies such as Brazil, Argentina and Chile while anti-neoliberal or post-neoliberal governments have emerged in Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia. Societies that historically have not been at the cutting edge of working-class politics and movements in Latin America, with new historical subjects being constituted in popular opposition to the costs of neo-liberalism and struggles against privatization (ibid.: 22).

In the case of Venezuela, neoliberal reforms were introduced relatively late during the late 1980s. What distinguishes Venezuela from other Latin American societies is the extent to which free market reforms generated social and political crises and failed to attract popular support, characterized by the rejection of no less than three neoliberal Presidents in 1989, 1993 and 1998 with the last resulting in the election of Chavez to the Presidency during the election of 1998 (Ellner, 2008: 90).

The 1998 Presidential campaign was characterized by a decline in the support for the traditional party system and the emergence of powerful anti-system candidates including Chavez and his Fifth Republic Movement Party (MVR). Ellner importantly points to the key reason why Chavez won that election, ‘While being “antiestablishment” was an asset in the 1998 campaign, in the long run genuine commitment to change was defined by opposition to neoliberal economic policies and not by antiparty rhetoric’ (ibid.: 105).

Chavez’s victory on an anti-neoliberal platform refutes much of the traditional political science literature which focused on institutional factors such as the breakdown of the party system and so on in its explanation of support for Chavez as opposed to socio-economic factors related to class polarization and conflict, which had been intensified by shock neoliberal reforms from the late 1980s (Ellner and Hellinger, 2003).

While the support of sections of the military was significant in propelling Chavez to power, it is the widespread and active support of the popular classes who were marginalized under the impact of neoliberal reforms that provide the broad support for Chavez and the Chavista movement both in opposition and government. Although neoliberalism won over the spectrum

of the political elite from right to left during the 1990s it failed as a project to win popular consent and generated mass discontent. As Ellner succinctly argues, neoliberalism was far from hegemonic in Venezuela during the 1990s and has been even weaker since then (Ellner, 2008: 108).

The weakness or crisis of neoliberal hegemony opens a space for the possible construction of counter-hegemony, but no more than this. It is in relation to the construction of an alternative to neoliberalism which distinguishes the radical nature of what Chavez and his supporters have described as the Bolivarian Revolution or, since 2005, the project for a twenty-first century socialism in Venezuela⁶ from the social-democratic reform cum neoliberal governments such as Lula in Brazil. In relation to the political and social changes under the Chavez government, I will examine these transformations in relation to the previous theoretical discussion: (1) the role of radical constitutional change; (2) the significance of the structural selectivity of the state, and the extent to which this has been transformed since 1998; and (3) the articulation of mass mobilization or popular participation and electoral politics that has characterized the distinctly 'reformist-revolutionary' strategy which characterizes political and social change in Venezuela since 1998, which has strong parallels with Poulantzas' position in his later writings.

Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution: the vicissitudes of transforming the state

The Chavez Presidency and the Chavista movement in general came to power without any defined long-term goals (Ellner, 2008: 109). However, as a number of commentators have argued there has been a consistent radicalization of the government, despite conflicts between more moderate and radical currents in the Chavista movement (Wilpert, 2007; Ellner, 2008). Wilpert argues that the radicalization of the Chavez government was driven not by an intrinsic dynamism of the Chavista movement, but by the reaction to the opposition's attempts to undermine and indeed overthrow the government, particularly after the failure of the second attempt to overthrow Chavez during the oil industry shutdown in December 2002, which taught the government that radicalizing its policies was the best way to marginalize the opposition and consolidate its position (Wilpert, 2007: 28). This in part reflects the intense social conflicts and polarization that tore apart the previous political system and the increasingly desperate attempts by the dominant elites to reverse gains made by the popular classes, which were embodied by the Chavez government.

At the centre of the transformation of the Venezuelan state since 1998 has been the articulation of two left strategies that were previously separate in Latin America. The first is the traditional left top-down strategy that relies on the state to assert national sovereignty and mobilize the nation

under national-popular goals. The second strategy takes an alternative route to change relying on organizations outside of the state and other established structures such as trade unions or political parties centred on a variety of social movements that are internally democratic and organized on less hierarchical forms of organization.

These two strategies are reflected in the Chavista movement with neither gaining the upper hand. Instead what has emerged is a parallel set of grassroots organizations based on tens of thousands of cooperatives, networks of worker participation and community councils that far from being autonomous from the state are tied to it, through state-created structures that encourage and channel participation, provide finance and so on (Ellner, 2008: 180).

The 1999 Constitution has also played an important role in relating grassroots bottom-up organization outside the state alongside a radical reconstitution of popular sovereignty, introducing elements of participatory democracy within the framework of a reformed representative democracy through which a new hegemonic bloc based on the popular classes can be formed (Kalyvas, 2002: 132). The advocacy of participatory democracy and popular sovereignty is contained within various articles of the Constitution, particularly Articles 62 and Articles 70 with Articles 71 to 74 setting out the provisions for popular referendums:

The participation of the people in the formation, execution and control of public administration is the necessary means for achieving the involvement that ensures their full development, both individual and collective. It is the obligation of the State and the duty of society to facilitate the generation of the most favourable conditions for putting this into practice.

(Article 62, Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

Participation and involvement of people in the exercise of their sovereignty in political affairs can be manifested by: voting to fill public offices, referendum, consultation of public opinion, mandate revocation, legislative, constitutional and constituent initiative, open forums and meetings of citizens whose decisions shall be binding among others; and in social and economic affairs: citizen service organs, self management, co-management, cooperatives in all forms, including those of a financial nature, savings funds, community enterprises, and other forms of association guided by the values of mutual cooperation and solidarity.

(Article 70, Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

In evaluating the extent to which the Constitution and the interrelationship and tensions between the strategies of top-down as opposed to bottom-up grassroots organization have transformed the Venezuelan state it is important to reflect on Poulantzas' conception of the structural selectivity

of the state and the necessity of transforming the state from both the inside and the outside to advance an anti-neoliberal counter-hegemony.

In relationship to the structural selectivity of the state since 1998 the defeats suffered by the opposition in their failure to remove Chavez from power in both an attempted coup and industry shut down in 2002 and the failure to recall Chavez in a referendum in 2004 have successively weakened the dominant classes' political power, particularly in their ability to influence the state with the state more independent from big business both national and international (Wilpert, 2007: 232). The efforts to democratize the state and develop non-market forms of economic regulation combined with the redistribution of wealth through nationalization, taxes and social programmes has further shifted the balance in power towards the articulation of popular interests. The state has been central to this structural transformation of Venezuelan politics, particularly in its ability to mobilize the rank and file and grassroots organizations (Ellner, 2008: 224).

While the state has been central to the Bolivarian Revolution, popular support from outside the state has at crucial periods been essential to the survival of the Chavez government, particularly in relation to the failure of the coup in 2002. A failure, which combined with the defeat of the oil industry shut down, pushed the state to further target the positions of strength within the state apparatus that were held by the opposition. The importance of popular support combined with subsequent changes in the state brings to mind Poulantzas' injunction that a radical government requires both popular support and transformations of the state to advance its goals and agenda:

A broad popular movement constitutes a guarantee against the reaction of the enemy, even though it is not sufficient and must always be linked to sweeping transformations of the state.

(2008: 374)

The interrelationship between the state or a top-down strategy and a grassroots or social movement strategy, while being an invaluable source of strength has contained a number of tensions as has the relationship between representative and participatory democracy within the Bolivarian Republic.

Grassroots organizations not only played a key role in the defeat of the 2002 coup, they also helped to shape the 1999 Constitution through the discussions that informed the debates within the Constituent Assembly. However, as Ellner (2008: 191) notes, many of the grassroots organizations tied to the Chavista movement were short-lived as many of their activists were enlisted into state-sponsored activities such as missions and cooperatives. In this context and given the centrality of the state for the achievement of a new form of developmental state, a synthesis between the statist top-down and grassroots strategy would, as Ellner argues, be a logical starting point whereby 'the democratization of the Chavista party to create

the mechanisms for the rank and file to participate in decision making in accordance with the grassroots approach, while maintaining a centralised command and enforcing internal discipline' would be the best synthesis possible in the Venezuelan context (*ibid.*: 193).

The formation of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) in 2007 may well provide the political formation to achieve this synthesis, promoting a deepening of democratic engagement with party leaders being responsible to the broader membership and as an institution being separate from the personality of Chavez. The danger could well be the opposite with the PSUV acting as a vehicle for patronage or a means to suppress diversity within the grassroots wing of the Chavista movement (Wilpert, 2007; Ellner, 2008).

The possibilities and dilemmas represented by the PSUV for the Venezuelan experiment reflect the contradictions between participatory and representative democracy that characterize the Bolivarian project. It is certainly true that in Venezuela and in many other societies in the global South, the development of participatory democracy is hindered by corruption, weaknesses in state capacity such as inefficiency in public administration and a weak rule of law, the persistence of top-down management, clientelism and especially in a society like Venezuela, the personal charisma and dominating figure of Chavez. All of these factors present serious, but not insurmountable problems for the construction of a new type of developmental state.

Another difficulty, which may be more difficult to overcome, lies in the structural constraints facing the Venezuelan economy, particularly its reliance on the oil industry for the generation of wealth and its high dependency on the world market for oil, with all the consequences this has for the sustainability of the Chavez government's social and economic policies. As Petras (2009) argues in a recent essay, the private sector is still predominant in the economy and that land reform, although radical in intent has failed to radically transform agrarian relations in Venezuela.

Despite, this rather gloomy perspective, however, Petras (2009) points to significant increases in social expenditure, the limited but still significant growth of workers' self-management within the economy and the expansion of state control of the economy. Ultimately, the success of the Bolivarian Revolution will depend on a deepening of the structural transformation of the Venezuelan economy and society. Central to whether there is a retreat back towards neoliberalism or an advance to a different model of development will depend on the extent to which the Venezuelan state can be reconfigured as a strategic site through which power is exercised and the degree to which popular mobilization can restructure the balance of political and economic power within Venezuelan society.

Despite these problems the Bolivarian experiment has already achieved some impressive gains, and in opposition to the theoretical position of a theorist such as Jorge Castaneda (2005), who argues that there is little to see

in the Chavez government of a left position or an anti-neoliberal stance, the transformation of the state under Chavez despite its contradictions presents the most radical example of a post neoliberal state in the global South today. Sader provides a number of features that a neoliberal project would contain, most of which are elements of or long-term goals of the Bolivarian movement:

We use this term to denote approaches that combine the restoration of several state functions: its regulatory capacity to defend national sovereignty over natural resources; its ability to carry out universally inclusive social policies, as the representative of the great working mass of society; its scope for creating new mechanisms of political participation and for redefining the links between the social and the political. In such economies the recast state will exercise its hegemony, but in cohabitation with a sizeable private sector, and socialized properties may take different forms – cooperatives, small family concerns, etc. The goal is to create a new model of socialization by refounding the state around the public sphere, with the idea that 21st-century socialism means the rehabilitation of the public domain, the universalization of rights, and thoroughgoing de-marketization. Success will ultimately depend on the degree of de-marketization achieved in the post-neoliberal model.

(2008: 22–3)

The Bolivarian project provides a potential model for a new type of developmental state that is based on popular sovereignty that provides a focus of inspiration for left strategy in Latin America and beyond. If the Venezuelan economy can deliver economic growth and greater social justice through processes of de-marketization, then it may well provide a viable anti-neoliberal alternative to an increasingly exhausted neoliberalism not just in Latin America, but in other societies within the global South.

But, as this chapter argues, a viable counter-hegemony to neoliberalism requires social movements to reorientate their position vis-à-vis the state; in part this will involve a general re-evaluation of political strategy and it is in relation to this issue that the Marxist theory of the state, despite its premature burial, has a great deal to contribute, particularly in relation to its conception of the state as a social relation and the importance of popular struggles both inside and outside the state.

Notes

1. This of course is related to the world-historical significance of the Russian Revolution in providing the model of central planning and placing the issue of collectivism as a key political question in the expansion of the capitalist economy for much of the twentieth century.
2. See Brohman (1996).

3. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (ed.), *Democratizing Democracy* (2005) presents a collection of essays that examine a number of cases drawn from the Global south where there are experiments in democratizing the state through the advance of participatory democracy. The volume, however, is weak in relation to issues relating to the various forms of political strategy required to establish new forms of democracy that present an alternative to neoliberal forms of limited democracy.
4. Stanley Aronowitz and Peter Bratsis (2002) argue that Marxist state theory has been the victim of an improper burial for three reasons: the shift to the right inside and outside academia, the assumed decline of the state due to globalizing or localizing forces, and a shift within the left from a concern with political power to a dispersed conceptualization of power, with the work of Michel Foucault being one of the most prominent influences of this approach.
5. Participatory budgeting in examples such as Brazil provides a potential model for just such a combination between representative and direct democracy. In discussing the potential of participatory budgeting for a radical democratization of the state, Emir Sader argues that these experiments must not only be confined to the municipal level but also operate at a state level to become fully universalized and capable of transforming the relationship between the governing and the governed (Sader, 2005).
6. Sader (2008: 22) rightly describes the Venezuelan 'experiment' from 1998 as representing 'The most advanced political processes in Latin America – in all of the world, in a sense, considering it is here that the project has gone furthest – are attempting to design political projects that can be called post-neo-liberal.'

References

- Albo, G. (2008). 'Neoliberalism and the Discontented', *Socialist Register*, Vol. 44, 1–9.
- Aronowitz, S. and Bratsis, P. (eds) (2002). *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered* (Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press).
- Arrighi, G. (1991). 'World Income Inequalities and the Future of Socialism', *New Left Review*, Vol. 189, 39–65.
- Binford, L. (2005). 'Holloway's Marxism', *Historical Materialism*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 251–63.
- Bratsis, P. (2002). 'Unthinking the State: Reification, Ideology and the State', in S. Aronowitz and P. Bratsis (eds), *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered* (Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press): 247–67.
- Brohman, J. (1996). *Popular Development: Rethinking the Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Blackwell).
- Cammack, P. (2002). 'Attacking the Poor', *New Left Review*, Vol. 13, 125–34.
- Castaneda, J. (2005). 'Realism for Latin America: Finding and Achieving the Possible', *Science and Society*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 138–42.
- Cohen, J. L. and Arato, A. (1994). *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).
- Dumenil, G. and Levy, D. (2004). *Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Ellner, S. (2008). *Rethinking Venezuelan Politics: Class, Conflict and the Chavez Phenomenon* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner).
- Ellner, S. and Hellinger, D. (eds) (2003). *Venezuelan Politics in the Chavez Era: Class, Polarization and Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner).
- Gill, S. (2008). *Power and Resistance in the New World Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

- Graf, W. (1995). 'The State in the Third World', *Socialist Register*, Vol. 31, 140–62.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence & Wishart).
- Green, D. (1995). *Silent Revolution: The Rise of Market Economics in Latin America* (London: Cassell).
- Gwynne, R. N. and Kay, C. (2000). 'Views from the Periphery: Futures of Neoliberalism in Latin America', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 141–56.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Holloway, J. (2003). *Change the World Without Taking Power* (London: Pluto).
- Jessop, B. (1990). *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in its Place* (Cambridge: Polity).
- Jessop, B. (2002). *The Future of the Capitalist State* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Kalyvas, A. (2002). 'The Stateless Theory: Poulantzas's Challenge to Postmodernism', in S. Aronowitz and P. Bratsis (eds), *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered* (Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press): 105–42.
- Kalyvas, A. (2005). 'Popular Sovereignty, Democracy, and the Constituent Power', *Constellations*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 223–44.
- Kiely, R. (2005). *The Clash of Globalizations: Neo-Liberalism, The Third Way and Anti-Globalization* (Leiden: Brill).
- Lebowitz, M. (2005). 'Holloway's Scream: Full of Sound and Fury', *Historical Materialism*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 217–31.
- Moore, P. (2004). 'The Second Age of the Third World: From Primitive Accumulation to Global Public Goods', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 87–109.
- Petras, J. F. (2009). 'Latin America's Twenty-First Century Socialism in Historical Perspective', available at <http://petras.lahaine.org> (accessed 14 October 2009).
- Petras, J. F. and Veltmeyer, H. (2005). *Social Movements and State Power: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador* (London: Pluto).
- Petras, J. F. and Veltmeyer, H. (2009). *What's Left in Latin America? Regime Change in New Times* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing).
- Polanyi, K. (2001). *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press).
- Poulantzas, N. (1978). *State, Power, Socialism* (London: New Left Books).
- Poulantzas, N. (2008). *The Poulantzas Reader: Marxism, Law and the State* (London: Verso).
- Saad-Filho, A. and Johnston, D. (eds) (2005). *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader* (London: Pluto Press).
- Sader, E. (2005). 'Toward New Democracies', in B. S. Santos (ed.), *Democratizing Democracy* (London: Verso).
- Sader, E. (2008). 'The Weakest Link? Neoliberalism in Latin America', *New Left Review*, Vol. 52, 5–31.
- Santos, B. S. (ed.) (2005). *Democratizing Democracy* (London: Verso).
- Tilly, C. (2007). *Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Wilpert, G. (2007). *Changing Venezuela by Taking Power: The History and Policies of the Chavez Government* (London: Verso).

5

‘Not Suspended in Mid-Air’: Critical Reflections on Subaltern Encounters with the Indian State

Alf Gunvald Nilsen

Introduction

Relations between subaltern groups and the state have received substantial attention in recent scholarly work on India’s changing political economy.¹ Here, I seek to focus on the arguments made in recent work by Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss. In contrast to perspectives which posit the state as existing for subaltern groups only as a negative source of oppression, and conceive of oppositional politics as deriving from cultures of subaltern otherness, Corbridge and Harriss maintain that the institutions, practices and discourses of the Indian state are at the heart of emancipatory politics in India today (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000; Fuller and Harriss, 2001; Corbridge et al., 2005).

This chapter articulates a critique that points out both theoretical elisions and political circumscriptions in these arguments. Theoretically, these arguments rely on the state theory of Philip Abrams and Michel Foucault, and in doing so they advance the proposition that the state is not an entity separate from society. However, they fail to interrogate the full ramifications of this proposition in terms of the relationship between ‘structural constraints’ and ‘conjunctural opportunities’ (Jessop, 1982: 253) in subaltern encounters with the state. The political circumscription that follows from this elision revolves around a tendency to posit claims making on the state as the only viable route for subaltern politics. There is a concurrent failure to recognize that there are hegemonic projects at play in contemporary India that are unlikely to be successfully opposed through subaltern politics which rely strictly on the institutions, practices and discourses of the state for their fulfilment.

I develop the former argument by drawing on Marxian state theory to show how the embeddedness of the state in the constitution of social relations actually entails that state power will have inherently ‘unequal and

asymmetrical effects on the ability of social groups to realize their interests through political action' (ibid.: 224). The latter argument is developed through an investigation of the trajectory of popular mobilization in the Narmada Valley (see Baviskar, 1995; Nilsen, 2010). I show how, at an early stage in the mobilization process, when Adivasis in western Madhya Pradesh resisted the coercion and extortion practised by local state officials, activists were able to make effective recourse to liberal-democratic institutions, discourses and procedures. This contrasts with the unsuccessful attempt of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) to stop the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam on the Narmada River by holding the state accountable to the liberal-democratic principle of non-biased intervention in social conflicts. This contrast reflects the fact that movements will be embroiled in struggles of different character and at different scales at different conjunctures, and that the state is not likely to be the most suitable conduit for subaltern emancipation regardless of such differences. As the state is a key modality in the reproduction of fundamental structures of power, the trajectory of a subaltern encounter with the state is likely to differ according to whether a movement is appealing for or objecting to a particular form of state intervention without questioning the overarching political system, or whether it is pursuing an anti-systemic oppositional project.

In conclusion, the chapter engages with the strategic and ethical implications of this critique. In terms of strategy the argument will be made that the choice before us is not one between either a principled rejection of all engagement with the state or a principled commitment to such engagement, but rather a differentiated approach which adopts multiple strategies in relation to the state according to the nature of the conflict in which subaltern groups are embroiled at a given point in time. In terms of ethics I will argue that to posit the necessity of radical and transformative counter-hegemonic projects from below in response to certain forms of hegemonic projects from above does not amount to an infatuation with the supposed glamour of revolution, as has been suggested by Corbridge (2007; see also Corbridge et al., 2005). Rather, it entails an insistence that some of the processes that currently cast popular majorities into abject conditions of poverty in India are of a systemic character, that there are structural constraints upon the extent to which state power can be deployed for the amelioration or abolition of such processes, and that it is therefore ethically necessary to discuss political strategies which transcend the parameters of the modern Indian state.

New perspectives on subaltern encounters with the Indian State

Subaltern politics and the reinvention of India

In their discussion of subaltern politics in *Reinventing India*, Corbridge and Harriss (2000: 200–2) engage recent critiques of the ability of the democratic

process in India to advance the interests of subaltern social groups. Whilst recognizing that Indian democracy is marred by shortcomings, they nevertheless maintain its continued relevance for subaltern politics: 'it is misleading to assume that people are always empowered in opposition to the state, or that they fail to seek power from within state structures' (ibid.: 208). Corbridge and Harriss demonstrate the continued relevance of the state and the democratic process for subaltern politics via a multitude of examples around the axis of the concepts of 'empowerment from without' and 'empowerment from within'.

An example of empowerment from without is that of contemporary Dalit and Adivasi politics. For Dalits and Adivasis advancement via the state has partly taken the form of 'empowerment from without' (ibid.: 210) in the form of constitutional provisions for job reservations, reservations in educational institutions and political assemblies, and more generally the extension of the franchise to these groups, secular education and laws aimed at the abolition of caste-based discrimination. Such measures, they argue, have had a significant impact on 'the terms of engagement between India's scheduled and non-Scheduled Communities' by buttressing an awareness of potential collective strength and improving the bargaining position of the Scheduled Communities vis-à-vis dominant groups (ibid.: 210–11).

An example of 'empowerment from within' highlighted by Corbridge and Harriss (2000: 212) is that which has been brought about through subaltern movements that have 'sought power over the state rather than compensation from the state' (ibid.). Such politics is evident in the rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) – a mainly Dalit-based party – to state power in Uttar Pradesh. Corbridge and Harriss stress that they do not equate the electoral success of the BSP 'with an improvement in the living standards of the poor' (ibid.: 215) in Uttar Pradesh but the very fact that it happened nevertheless implies that important changes are afoot in the power equations between dominant and subaltern social groups in India. More generally, these changes are evident in the 'second democratic upsurge' (ibid.: 221–2; see also Yadav, 2000) in which Scheduled and Backward caste and class groups are participating more actively in electoral politics in a way which bypasses the mediation of local elites making them a force to be reckoned with for established political parties.

Corbridge and Harriss (2000: 222) also call attention to how democracy is 'an ideal, which is approached more or less closely according to the balance of class forces in a society and the nature of the state system' and how 'India's states, all of which have formally democratic political systems, differ significantly in terms of the substance of their democracies – according to the balance of class power'. The argument is that a political system characterized by stable political parties who compete for the votes of subaltern social groups is more likely to promote the empowerment of those groups. Indeed, in India, it is 'those states in which the lower castes/classes are

more strongly represented politically [that] have been the most successful in reducing poverty' (ibid.: 223) – with the left-of-centre regimes of Kerala and West Bengal being cases in point (ibid.: 226–7).

Corbridge and Harriss' defence of the continued relevance of the state for subaltern politics in turn has ramifications for their views on the role of social movements in the realm of subaltern politics. Significantly, they argue that 'it is misleading to suppose that citizens' movements, NGOs and community organizations... provide an alternative to the state' (ibid.: 203). Rather, the presence of such movements and organizations positively affect the balance of class forces so that democratic government works in favour of subaltern social groups: 'We contend that citizens' movements are most effective where they put pressure on the state to take the part of the poor, or to protect the poor from some of the abuses heaped upon them' (ibid.).

Encountering the everyday state

The argument that the state is an integral element of subaltern practice and consciousness is subjected to greater elaboration in Fuller and Harris' (2001) essay 'For an Anthropology of the Modern Indian State'. At the centre of their argument are the observations that the state plays an important role in people's practical and ideational lifeworlds and that state-society boundaries are inherently porous. Accordingly the cultural aspects of the everyday workings of the state become a central object of anthropological inquiry (ibid.: 1–2). However, in moving towards an anthropological engagement with the modern Indian state, Fuller and Harris find themselves in disagreement both with attempts in US political science to 'bring the state back in'² and Marxian perspectives on the capitalist state. The former operates with a Weberian concept of the state as a discrete and bounded entity, distinct from society, which errs against the reality of bias and contradiction in the policy-making process. Whereas the latter recognizes the non-entity of the state, they nevertheless fail to follow through on this logic as they seek to identify a structure or agency which lies behind the concrete appearance of the state, thereby over-mystifying the actual nature of the state (ibid.: 2–4; see also Abrams, 1988).

As an alternative point of departure, Fuller and Harris turn to Philip Abrams (1988) and Timothy Mitchell (1991). They follow Abrams (1988: 75) in abandoning the state 'as a material object of study' and focus instead on how 'the state idea' – the idea that the state is a neutral entity, discrete and separate from society – is used in everyday life. From Mitchell (1991) they draw on the Foucauldian notion that rather than being an actual structure, the state is a 'structural effect' that emanates from the practices and disciplines that produce 'modern' institutions such as the state with its institutional boundaries.

Turning to studies of the postcolonial Indian state, Fuller and Harris note that scholarly perspectives – be it the mainstream perspectives of Bardhan

(1998) or the Rudolphs (1987), or the theories of India's passive revolution articulated by Chatterjee (1986, 1993) and Kaviraj (1997) – tend to argue that the state's inability to fulfil its constitutionally defined mandates flows from the constraints imposed upon its functioning by coalitions of dominant classes. This indicates the porosity of the boundaries of the Indian state as it is 'virtually subsumed by the relationships of power among the dominant classes' (Fuller and Harris, 2001: 7). However, this porosity does not extend to India's subaltern groups: many critics of the Indian state assert that there is a disjuncture between the modern discourses of Indian elites, on the one hand, and the vernacular discourses of subaltern social majorities and the lower echelons of the state apparatus, on the other (ibid.: 9).

Seeking to refute the argument that the institutions and discourses of the Indian state are incommensurable to the lifeworlds of subaltern social majorities, Fuller and Harris point to ethnographic studies of practices of corruption and popular attitudes to these practices. Whereas the corruption of local officials testify to the porous boundaries between public and private spheres, popular discourses of corruption as a violation of the state's accountability to its citizens testify to – and reproduce – the idea of the state as an institution which is supposed to act 'impersonally above or outside society' (ibid.: 11). There is, then, 'an everyday understanding of the state and its administrative procedures among ordinary people which could hardly exist if there were such a profound incompatibility' (ibid.: 24). This is an argument with political ramifications as subaltern groups use their everyday understanding of the state and its administrative procedures to demand their share of public resources. The outcome of these practices is normally unfair but it is still significant 'that even the poor, low-status and weak can sometimes benefit from their own adequately competent manipulation of political and administrative systems'. In this sense, subaltern groups 'are mostly not resisting the state, but using the system as best they can' (ibid.: 25).

Subaltern sightings of the state

The argument that subaltern majorities in India can make good use of the institutions and discourses of the state in pursuit of their demands and aspirations has been elaborated at length by Corbridge et al. (2005) in their book *Seeing the State*. Their starting point is that although elites may control the workings of the Indian state and civil society to a large extent, it is still necessary to acknowledge 'the spaces of citizenship that are being created, or perhaps widened in the wake of the good governance agenda and the popular mobilizations to which it can give rise' (ibid.: 5). Much like Fuller and Harris – and partly in dialogue with their work – Corbridge and his colleagues develop a Foucauldian perspective where the state is conceived of as 'dispersed practices of government' and as 'bundles of everyday institutions and forms of rule' (ibid.). It is through encounters with these

practices and bundles of institutions that 'the state comes into view' for subaltern groups, and the case that is made revolves around the assertion that subaltern sightings of the Indian state are undergoing a democratizing transformation (ibid.: 7).

In contemporary India, it is suggested, subaltern encounters with the state 'are now being restructured to some degree by new technologies of rule that seek (or claim to produce) members of the rural poor as clients of the government, and as active participants in their own empowerment' (ibid.: 6). Crucially, these technologies of rule are part of a new approach to development that emphasizes participation and good governance. Drawing on Fuller and Harris' contention that the actual form and impact of technologies of rule will depend on local dynamics leads Corbridge and his colleagues to focus on the specific ways in which bureaucrats and politicians put these development strategies into play in their locales, and the manner in which they are 'seized upon, understood, reworked and possibly contested' by subaltern groups (ibid.: 7).

The political conclusions reached in *Seeing the State* suggest that those perspectives – most importantly, neoliberalism and postdevelopment theory – that share a belief in exit from the state as the way forward to progress are flawed. Corbridge and his colleagues argue that '[p]articipation, accountability, decentralization and democratization have become the new watchwords in a new discourse which promises that poverty will be reduced by good governance, and by people doing it for themselves' (ibid.: 77). Subaltern groups have started to imbibe this discourse to a significant extent, and this is a key part of a process in which 'power is leaching steadily, and in some respects ineluctably, to the lower castes, and has been claimed by them in terms which often resist the presumptions of a benign and disinterested state' (ibid.: 83).

In this context, political strategy should be focused on widening 'those spaces of empowerment that can be found in a world of the second-best', rather than pursuing 'a Jacobin conception of politics which depends upon the idea of perfectibility, or an "ideal outside"' (ibid.: 186). Struggles for subaltern empowerment should instead take the form of 'a vast palimpsest of competing actions and counter-actions that take shape around the multiple capillaries of power that bring poorer people, in this case, into contact with "the state" and its technologies of rule' (ibid.: 248). In this process, the Indian state, the national and international development community and the agenda of participatory development converge in 'providing poorer people with a greater sense of self-worth, dignity and, more rarely, a degree of power over those who would govern them' (ibid.: 282).

A central achievement of the perspectives put forward by Corbridge and Harris is that they help in advancing a relational conception of the dynamics of processes of domination and resistance in contemporary India. Scholars drawing on poststructuralist and postcolonial theory have tended

to posit social movements in the South as the authors and actors of a political project that simultaneously represents and points towards 'an authentic site of autonomous insurrection beyond development' (Moore, 2000: 171–3). An alternative and eminently more tenable approach would view social movements as existing in 'relational spaces of connection and articulation' (Moore, 1998: 347) shaped by the contention between dominant and subaltern groups.⁴ A crucial aspect of this contention is in turn that in an oppositional project, subaltern groups tend to appropriate aspects of the institutions, procedures and discourses that constitute the pillars of hegemony, and put these to use in ways that reflect their interests, experiences and ambitions (see Rangan, 2000; Sinha, 2003; Nilsen, 2008, 2010). It is to Corbridge and Harriss' credit that they advance an understanding of how this dynamic works itself out in relation to the contemporary Indian state. Nevertheless, as I will proceed to show, they fail to interrogate the structural limits to subaltern emancipation that are inherent to the state and the political ramifications that flow from this.

Theoretical elisions and political circumscriptions

Theoretical elisions

The key theoretical question that is elided in the recent work of Corbridge and Harriss pertains to the relationship between conjunctural possibilities for, and structural constraints to, empowerment that subaltern groups are faced with in their encounters with the state. Ultimately, this raises issues about the theorization of the state and in particular the ways in which we conceptualize the role of state power in the reproduction of social formations and unequal power relations.

Abrams (1988) criticized both mainstream political sociology and Marxist theory for conceiving – albeit in different ways – of the state as a discrete and bounded entity standing outside and above society. Rather than studying the state on these terms, he argued that it is necessary to analyse the accomplishment of 'politically organized subjection' (ibid.: 63). This entails abandoning 'the state as a material object of study whether concrete or abstract while continuing to take the idea of the state extremely seriously' (ibid.: 75). Whilst there is a 'state-system' that is 'more or less extensive, unified and dominant in any given society' this does not amount to a state conceived of as a 'concrete political agency or structure' which is 'distinct from the social agencies and structures of the society in which it operates, acting on them and acted on by them' (ibid.: 82, 59). Rather, such a notion of the liberal-democratic state is an ideological construct emanating from the effect of the existence of a 'state idea' in which economic relationships are segregated from political relationships, in which class is posited as irrelevant to the workings of the political machinery and in which the political is constituted as 'as an autonomous sphere of social unification'

(*ibid.*: 75). In this way, the state idea ‘conceals the real history and relations of subjection behind an ahistorical mask of legitimating illusion’ and ‘contrives to deny the existence of connections and conflicts which would if recognized be incompatible with the claimed autonomy and integration of the state’ (*ibid.*: 77). For Abrams, the alternative is to study ‘the relationship between political and non-political power’ (*ibid.*: 82) in the historical processes through which politically organized subjection is constituted and legitimized.

Abrams’ argument is an apposite one, and it compels reflections on the dynamics of power that perforate the constitution and reproduction of social formations. Any social formation is essentially a latticework of social processes and relations which constitute a structured whole and which is ‘consistently reproduced over extended periods of time’ (Sewell, 1996: 842). Reproduction does not entail stasis. Societies may be structured wholes, yet they are subject to ‘constant revision even in the course of reproduction’ (*ibid.*) as dominant and subaltern groups contend over the character and development of the social organization of human needs and capacities. This is in turn expressive of how power in society is relational and conjunctural rather than ‘a fixed sum of resources which can be appropriated by one social force to the exclusion of others’ (Jessop, 1982: 225). Otherwise there would be no dynamic, no contention between dominant and subaltern, no balance of power to strike, as it were. Yet there is a limit to this vacillation – a limit evidenced by the very fact that this revision does not negate reproduction. And the maintenance of the structured whole reflects the differential access of dominant and subaltern groups to resources which affect ‘the extent of their control of social relations and... the scope of their transformative powers’ (Sewell, 1992: 20).

A resource that affects a social group’s ability to control social relations is of course ‘the political power that is pre-eminently ascribed to the state’ (Poulantzas, 1978: 147). In a liberal-democratic context, access to state power is not exclusively controlled by one (dominant) social group. However, it is equally clear that the liberal-democratic state ‘can never be equally accessible to all forces and equally available for all purposes’ (Jessop, 1990: 250). Accordingly, if we are truly to transcend state/society dualisms, we need to recognize and theorize how ‘the structures of political representation and state intervention involve differential access to the state apparatuses and differential opportunities to realise specific effects in the course of state intervention’ (Jessop, 1982: 224). Moreover, we need to investigate how this is a crucial aspect of the workings of the mutually constitutive relationship between ‘political and non-political power’ (Abrams, 1988: 82), and how the mutual constitution of social and political power in the last instance means that a particular configuration of state power will underpin the reproduction of the basal structural framework of the social formation in which it is embedded and of which it is congealed.

The disunity of political power is a key theme in Corbridge and Harriss' work, and it derives in large part from the emphasis put on disunity by Abrams and Foucault. For Abrams (*ibid.*: 79), disunity is obvious from the way in which the different elements of the state-system 'fail to display a unity of practice – just as they continuously discover their inability to function as a more general factor of cohesion'. Similarly, Foucault stressed the dispersed character of the microphysics of power, arguing that 'power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and that constitute their own organization':

Power's condition of possibility... must not be sought in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique source of sovereignty from which secondary and descendent forms would emanate; it is the moving substratum of force relations which by virtue of their inequality, constantly engenders states of power but the latter are always local and unstable.... Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.

(Foucault, 1998: 93)

Nevertheless, both Abrams and Foucault cannot avoid the issue of how the exercise of power achieves a certain unity across dispersed sites. Abrams (1988: 79) argues that unity in the state apparatus is likely to assume the form of 'ephemerally unified postures in relation to transient issues with no sustained consistency of purpose', and when it does, it does so as the result of the impositions of external economic, fiscal and military organizations and interests. Yet, in elaborating this argument, he makes the following crucial statement:

In the United Kingdom, for example, the only unity that can actually be discerned behind the spurious unity of the idea of the state is the unity of commitment to the maintenance, at any price, of an essentially capitalist economy.

(*Ibid.* 79)

In spite of Abrams' wording, this is no small matter; it is precisely the maintenance of this deep structure that qualifies state power as capitalist and which demarcates the balance between conjunctural possibilities and structural constraint (cf. Jessop, 1982: 221). Similarly, Foucault in the later stages of his work increasingly devoted his attention to the 'general line of force that traverses local confrontations' (Foucault, 1976: 94) in such a way as to bind together a vast range of micro-power relations (cf. Jessop, 1990: 234–5, 2008: 151–3). These links 'delineate general conditions of domination, and this domination is organized into a more or less coherent and

unitary strategic form' (Foucault, 1980: 142). Just what this general line was remained unclear in Foucault's work, but it spanned such concepts as 'social hegemonies' and 'hegemonic effects', 'hegemony of the bourgeoisie' and 'class domination', and 'global strategy', and recognized the role of the state in coordinating these linkages (cf. Jessop, 1990: 235, 2008: 152–3).

These concessions prompt us to reflect about how state power comes to function as a vehicle through which dispersed sites of power are codified and conjoined, and how the manifold institutions of the state system itself come to be endowed with a certain measure of unity in its workings. A fecund point of departure in this respect is Jessop's (1982, 1990, 2008) Marxian theory of the state. In this work, Jessop has, on the one hand, sought to develop Poulantzas' (1978: 147) insight that the state 'above all is the condensation of a relationship of forces defined precisely by struggle', and, on the other hand, to overcome the reductionism of his assumption that the unity of the social division of labour and the class struggle is given, and reproduced through the working of the state.

Jessop's 'strategic-relational' perspective starts from a rejection of a conception of the state as an agent in and of itself; the state, Jessop argues, is not 'an originating subject enjoyed with an essential unity' (Jessop, 1982: 222). Paralleling Abrams' discussion of the state system, Jessop argues that the state is a specific institutional ensemble with a multiplicity of boundaries, devoid of institutional fixity and unity, and – crucially – which cannot 'qua institutional ensemble, exercise state power' (ibid.: 221). The substantive unity of the state, then, derives from specific political projects and struggles to impose unity or coherence on that system, and state power must be understood as 'the power of the social forces which act in and through it' (Jessop, 1990: 256). The structuration of a given state system and its institutions, procedures and discourses is to be understood historically 'in terms of their production in and through past political strategies and struggles' (ibid.: 261) – an argument which again is very close to Abrams' call for a study of the historical processes through which politically organized subjection is constituted and legitimized.

The structuration of the state system will impact differently on the extent to which different social groups are able to advance their interests and projects via the state. The state is not a neutral instrument that can be wielded in equal degree by all groups for any purpose. Rather, the state is endowed with a strategic selectivity, which means that:

a given type of state, a given state form, a given form of regime, will be more accessible to some forces than others according to the strategies they adopt to gain state power; and it will be more suited to the pursuit of some types of economic or political strategy than others because of the modes of intervention and resources which characterize the system.

(Ibid.: 260)

This strategic selectivity is of course a key dimension of the mutually constitutive relationship between what Abrams calls 'political and non-political power'. This relationship implies that the way in which a particular state system is constituted will tend to shape the strategies and interactions of those social forces working through it in such a way as to underpin the reproduction of the basal structural framework of a given social formation.

Jessop's perspective is highly relevant for understanding the political economy of the postcolonial Indian state. The nation-building project that took centre stage with the coming of independence has been credibly analysed by Chatterjee (1986, 1993) and Kaviraj (1997) as a case of 'passive revolution' in which the state's key development strategies – designed under a mantle of scientific objectivity and political neutrality – worked so as to concentrate command over means of production with an uneasy coalition of industrial capitalists, rich farmers and the politico-bureaucratic elite. Consequently, the access of subaltern and popular classes to their social means of subsistence was abrogated. However, this was done without launching a frontal attack on traditional elites or subaltern social groups. The end result of this process was 'to enhance the power of those who were the most important holders of property rights – in the first place, the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie and the rich peasantry – and of the bureaucratic office holders whose discretionary powers were increased with the greatly expanded role of the bureaucracy as a whole' (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000: 65). India's passive revolution did not come about due to the compulsions of inexorable historical laws; it was the outcome of a complex dialectic of mobilization from above and below originating in the struggle for independence that I can only sketch briefly within the confines of this chapter (see Sarkar, 1983).

India was propelled towards national sovereignty and modern statehood by a popular mass movement, but this mass mobilization occurred to a large extent under the aegis of the Indian National Congress, which originated as an elite pressure group and in its early years exhibited 'a studied distance from popular mobilization and mass organization' (Chibber, 2003: 113). When mass mobilization set in, it did so under the tutelage of Gandhi, who had earned the trust of the right-wing elements of the Congress due to 'his own particular brand of elite paternalism' and 'his staunch defence of property and wealth' (113; see also Bose, 1997). The thrust towards radicalization of the Congress from the 1920s onwards was effectively undercut by the defeat of the All-India Kisan Sabha which sought to unite small landowners, tenants and landless labourers around an agenda of radical land reform in the late 1930s, the demobilization of a restive labour movement in 1947 and the departure of the socialists from the party in 1948 – the sum effect of which was to weaken leftist elements in Congress (Chibber, 2003: chapter 5, 2005; Frankel, 2005: 58–62). After 1947, the chief political task for the Congress leadership 'was to demobilize its own movement, not to radicalize it further' (Kaviraj, 1997: 60).

Similarly, whilst India emerged as an independent state with a constitutional commitment to redistributive justice draped in socialist rhetoric, Nehru's socialist leanings were of a Fabian kind, favouring the uplift of the poor by the state rather than their emancipation through self-activity (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000: 29). Moreover, as Frankel (2005: 24) has pointed out, Nehru's reform agenda was bureaucratic, accommodative and piecemeal. Compounding this was the fact that from 1947 to the mid-1960s social movements from below generally ceded their autonomy to 'the strong hand of the Nehruvian state' (Katzenstein and Ray, 2005: 14).⁵ This dynamic was in turn emblematic of the 'dominant party system' in which Congress 'came to occupy not only the centre ground of Indian politics but also much of the terrain to the left and the right' through its national political organization and its network of political affiliations, thus 'assimilating divergent interests upward to the centre' (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000: 53). A central aspect of this system was the denial of unmediated access to the state apparatus by subaltern social groups, a fact that reduced pressures towards the radicalization of reform efforts. Indeed, Congress rule by and large left local power structures intact and poor social majorities thus remained dependent upon local notables in accessing the state. The result was the failure to convert 'the superior numbers of the poor into a powerful political resource' (Frankel, 2005: 25).

Finally, and as a compelling contrast to the lack of capacity for autonomous mobilization from below, the coming of independence in India was marked by intense collective action among the elites. Mukherjee (2002: 19) notes the striking capacity of Indian capital to constitute itself as a 'class-for-itself' on an all-India basis after the First World War (see also Markovits, 1985). Prior to independence in 1947, Indian capital effectively mustered up substantial resistance to an industrial policy centred on disciplinary planning and intervention (Chibber, 2003, 2005). The resultant scenario was one in which state agencies were incapable of monitoring and directing investments and thus also incapable of securing that public funds were deployed in socially useful ways. This initiated 'a half-century long primitive accumulation' (Chibber, 2005: 239) in which capitalists privately appropriated the gains whilst they simultaneously socialized the risks and losses of industrial investment. Similarly, the ambition towards thoroughgoing agrarian reform was undermined and abandoned due to 'a combination of feudal resistance, judicial conservatism and connivance of state Congress leaderships' (Kaviraj, 1997: 59; see also Byres, 1981; Frankel, 2005).

It could be argued that this analysis of the Indian state is past its sell-by date as state-led development gave way to neoliberal restructuring in the early 1990s. However, as Corbridge and Harriss (2000: 121) note, the reforms that define this phase in the political economy of India's development 'have worked to the advantage of India's business and financial (and even agricultural) elites – those elites who have been in revolt against

some aspects of the state-managed capitalism that served their interests previously – and have not yet empowered the majority of Indians' (ibid.). The dynamic of resource transfer aided by the development interventions of the state seems to continue unabated (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh, 2002).⁶ Moreover, resource transfer in the neoliberal period is increasingly buttressed by the Indian state's willingness to unleash the force of its coercive apparatus on social movements, particularly against those groups which find themselves most frequently the victims of dispossession as a result of the state's accumulation process (see Baviskar and Sundar, 2008). In Jharkhand, nine Adivasis involved in the protests against the Koel Karo dam were shot dead in February 2001; in Mehendikheda village in the Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh, four Adivasis who were part of a movement protesting police oppression and claiming their rights to forest resources were shot dead by police in April 2001; in Kalinga Nagar, Orissa, 20 Adivasis were killed in January 2006 when their communities protested a large-scale mining project of the Tata group, one of India's leading industry houses; in West Bengal – a state held up by Corbridge and Harriss as an exemplar of how left political parties acting through the state can advance popular empowerment – at least 14 people were killed in Nandigram in March 2007 as peasant communities launched protests against the acquisition of land for the establishment of a Special Economic Zone by the Indonesian Salim Group. At the time of writing, the Indian government is planning a large-scale military offensive to wipe out Naxalite resistance in the so-called 'red corridor' which stretches from Maharashtra to Bihar. The corridor covers thickly forested regions that are both home to a number of Adivasi groups and repository of substantial mineral resources coveted by Indian and transnational capital. As a recent statement by activists and intellectuals indicated, there is due reason to fear that the offensive in fact constitutes an attempt to wipe out all popular resistance to dispossession and pave the way for corporate exploitation of the natural resources and the people of these regions.⁷

What is striking in the work of Corbridge and Harriss is the fact that there is very little discussion of how the capitalist nature of the Indian state impacts upon the possibilities and constraints that subaltern groups face when they pursue and frame their projects through and in terms of the institutions, procedures and discourses of the state. Whereas *Reinventing India* puts forward a trenchant critique of India's passive revolution and reveals how neoliberal reform works to the advantage of a reconstituted coalition of dominant social groups, their analysis of subaltern politics does not question whether the embeddedness of the state in such structures of class power and elite projects may limit the impact and scope of oppositional politics from below. Similarly, Fuller and Harris admit that the poor will frequently find themselves at a disadvantage in their dealings with the state, but fail to relate this experience to structural constraints that originate in the way that dominant social groups have moulded the workings of India's state system.

Similar admissions of the disadvantages faced by the poor can be found in *Seeing the State*, yet Corbridge and his colleagues insist that subaltern resistance will have to revolve around 'a politics of the possible which is expected to broaden the canvas on which a more committed pro-poor politics can be played out' (Corbridge et al., 2005: 187). The structural constraints to what is politically possible and what is politically impossible within the confines of the Indian state, and how these constraints flow from the ways in which the hegemonic projects of dominant social groups have given a specific shape to the form and functioning of the Indian state are left unexplored. This is an inevitable consequence of relying on theoretical perspectives which privilege the dispersed and disunited nature of the state and neglect the crucial question of how state power is structured by hegemonic projects from above in such a way as to underpin the reproduction of a given social order. That this is a theoretical elision with profound political consequences will become clear through the following analysis of subaltern politics in the Narmada Valley.

Political circumscriptions

The struggle against the Narmada dam projects was spawned by social action groups working among the dam-affected communities in the Narmada Valley. In the Adivasi communities of the sub-district of Alirajpur in Western Madhya Pradesh, it was the trade union Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath (KMCS) that played this role (see Baviskar, 1995; Nilsen, 2010).

The KMCS emerged through a process in which urban-educated activists joined hands with village communities in challenging a condition which can be referred to as everyday tyranny – that is, a range of violent, coercive and extortive practices meted out by the local representatives of the state (Nilsen, 2007, 2008, 2010). Everyday tyranny essentially revolved around forest rangers, police and revenue officials exacting bribes – both in cash and in kind – from Adivasis in order to turn a blind eye to their use of state-owned forests for cultivation, timber and fuel collection, and other related livelihood activities. Demands for bribes were in turn underpinned by a very real threat of violence; as one KMCS activist explained to me, if local police officers discovered a villager walking along the road carrying an axe or a sickle, they would often bring the person to the police outpost where he would be beaten up and then made to pay a bribe in order to avoid criminal charges (see Nilsen, 2010).

Everyday tyranny, then, was a local state–society relationship far removed from the liberal-democratic ideals of citizenship enshrined in the Indian constitution. Indeed, one could say that the local state in Alirajpur was not encountered as a set of agencies and functionaries that provided services to, and were accountable to, the citizens of a political community. On the contrary, Adivasi 'sightings of the state' (Corbridge et al., 2005: 5) were centred on seemingly all-powerful 'tyrants' who imposed a cruel regime of extortion

upon their 'subjects' with a heavy hand, and who responded to defiance with violence.

Everyday tyranny, however, came to be challenged when urban, educated activists came into contact with the Adivasi communities in the early 1980s. In a series of confrontations with local state officials, activists and villagers pointed out the illegality of coercion and extortion. Whereas the initial response was one of violence – several of the activists were beaten up severely – the mobilization process gathered pace when activists and villagers staged a *dharna* (a non-violent sit-down demonstration, typically staged in front of administrative buildings, where an aggrieved group present demands on officials and maintain the demonstration until a response is elicited) in protest against the violent practices of the local representatives of the state outside the administrative headquarters in Alirajpur town. The media picked up on the protest, and it quickly became news. As a response, the Chief Minister intervened and suspended several forest guards who were responsible for the beating of one of the activists. The Forest Conservator of Madhya Pradesh was sent to Alirajpur to discuss the problems that villagers faced in their encounters with local forest rangers, and in the meeting he stressed that forest rangers were not entitled to demand bribes, and that any further malpractice should be reported directly to him. In the context of widespread repression that reigned in Alirajpur, this of course constituted a major victory, and it became the basis for further mobilization in the region.

Through the eventual formation of the KMCS as a trade union, activists proceeded to create in the Adivasi communities an awareness of constitutional rights and entitlements, and to defend the communities' customary rights to the forest (see Baviskar, 1995: 195). The result of the process was a profound transformation in the character of subaltern 'sightings of the state' in Alirajpur. Where Adivasis had once seen state officials as well-nigh all-powerful figures, they came to see public servants whose powers were defined and circumscribed by law and who were accountable to them as citizens; where the villagers had once seen a state apparatus whose activities centred on the forceful exaction of tribute, they came to see an institution that was supposed to provide services and safeguard rights, an institution upon which they could make rights-based claims and demands, and in which they could participate in the running of it. It was, then, a process through which subjugated communities emerged as agents who were capable of engaging 'with the state as citizens, or as members of populations with legally defined or politically inspired expectations' (Corbridge et al., 2005: 13) and in which they did so with a great deal of success.

However, if we turn to the trajectory of the NBA's campaign against the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP), we encounter a different scenario. The NBA put forward its demand for a review of the SSP in 1990, hoping to create a situation in which the project was found to be technically unfeasible or in

violation of social and environmental regulations, so that it would have to be abandoned. This strategy eventually proved to be a cul-de-sac.

The trajectory of the demand for review exhibits a clear pattern: at state level, promises to implement a review were first made and then reneged on due to internal differences in the state government, or simply not followed up at all; at the federal level also, promises were made and reneged on, but here as a direct consequence of the pressure levelled by the government of Gujarat. Indeed, even Prime Minister V. P. Singh – who nurtured close relations to India's new social movements – shied away from implementing a review in the face of the counter-mobilization staged by Chimanbhai Patel, Chief Minister of Gujarat and a leading representative of the dominant Patidar landowning classes in the southern and central parts of the state.

The process culminated in one of the NBA's most spectacular and dramatic protest actions: the Jan Vikas Sangharsh Yatra (March of Struggle for People's Development) in December/January 1990–91: 6000 people marched from Badwani town in Madhya Pradesh towards the SSP dam site in Gujarat. The march was stopped at the border to Gujarat, and a protracted standoff unfolded where several activists went on a 21-day hunger strike. The central government announced that a review would be carried out, and in 1993, following further dramatic actions by the NBA, a Five Member Group (FMG) was assigned the mission of reviewing the project in 1993. Its efforts were effectively undermined both by central politicians and the government of Gujarat. The report of the FMG, which was made public in 1994 and lent credence to the NBA's case, was largely inconsequential. This occurred even in a context of elite fragmentation as, in Gujarat, Chimanbhai Patel had passed away and, in Madhya Pradesh the Congress and Digvijay Singh, brandishing a pro-civil society agenda and arguing for a reduction of the height of the SSP, had won the state elections. Throughout this trajectory, it is quite possible to tease out cracks and fissures in the state system, but the significant dynamic is that of the closing of the ranks that occurred at every juncture where the push of the dominant proprietary classes and their representatives came to shove.

A similar pattern can be found in the NBA's engagement with the Supreme Court. In May 1994, the NBA submitted a case of public interest litigation against the SSP to the Supreme Court, claiming that the execution of the project constituted a violation of people's basic right to life and livelihood. An important part of the rationale for doing so was the fact that India's Supreme Court had obtained a reputation for its pro-activist leanings. The initial experience with the NBA's case seemed to confirm this reputation. The Supreme Court imposed a stay on the SSP in 1995, and when senior Members of Parliament expressed their dismay over the Supreme Court's meddling in inter-state affairs during hearings in 1997, the Court staunchly refused to lift the stay on the dam. Once again, then, a chasm can be identified in the state system. However, this chasm was effectively brushed aside with the

Supreme Court verdict of October 2000, which stated that the SSP should be completed as quickly as possible, and the clear statement accompanying the verdict that the Court was not to serve as an arena for contesting state development strategies. Once again, the ranks of the state system – ironically enough with a clear reference to the separation of state powers – were closed, and the closure was in favour of dominant social groups.

In these two encounters with the state we have two very different outcomes to grapple with. The case of the KMCS certainly illustrates the potential for empowerment that resides in subaltern appropriations of what Abrams (1988: 82) calls the 'state-idea' – that is, the representation of the state as a coherent body external to society, which neutrally arbitrates in conflicts between equals. It also demonstrates that the 'state system' – that is, the 'palpable nexus of practice and institutional structure centred in government' (ibid.) – is not a tightly sutured leviathan, and that it may well be 'made to do the bidding of India's lower orders' (Corbridge and Harris, 2000: 239). In the case of the Andolan's struggle for review of the SSP and its turn to the Supreme Court, however, the state system appears more as 'a committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie', and the state-idea as an ideological veil which 'contrives to deny the existence of connections which would if recognised be incompatible with the claimed autonomy and integration of the state' (Abrams, 1988: 77).

The explanation for these different outcomes must be sought, I believe, in the different character of the oppositional projects pursued by the KMCS and the NBA, and the way in which the latter levelled a challenge against the capitalist nature of the Indian state and the way in which it had authored and executed a passive revolution. The KMCS offensive against the everyday tyranny of the local state – significant though it was for the communities involved – was centred on a claim to which the higher echelons of the state system could concede without undermining its own authority and without going against the interests of extra-local proprietary elites. The NBA's campaign against dam building, however, was pitted directly against the vested interests of the proprietary elites of South and Central Gujarat, whose capacity to influence the workings of the state outshone that of the Adivasis and petty commodity producers mobilized by the NBA in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

This can of course be read as testimony to Corbridge and Harriss' argument that the extent to which subaltern groups can make claims on the state is subject to conjunctural fluctuations related to regional and state-specific balances of class power. However, I would argue that in the case of the NBA's anti-dam campaign it is also possible to detect constraints to subaltern claims making on the state that are of a more structural character. This is so because the campaign was not only directed against one particular dam project. It was deeply embedded in a generic opposition to dam building as a development strategy, as well as a critique of the wider model

of development of which this strategy was a part and concerted attempts to constitute a nationwide alliance of social movements around this critique – most clearly evident in the National Alliance of People’s Movements. Thus, the NBA challenged one of the chief modalities through which the state – despite its liberal-democratic pretensions to neutrality – has secured the constitution and reproduction of accumulation in the passive revolution that has expanded and entrenched capitalist relations in postcolonial India.

The virtue of these examples is that they push us to think about questions of power and politics that we can ill afford to displace from our analytical gaze if we are concerned with subaltern empowerment. Accordingly, whilst, on the one hand, it is necessary to acknowledge ‘the possibilities for empowerment that might exist within India’s polity’ (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000: 238), it is, on the other hand, equally imperative to give serious thought to the limits that might exist to those possibilities and what this entails in practical and strategic terms for new social movements in contemporary India. My concern with the perspectives that are under critique in this chapter is that the political strategies that are posited as being relevant to subaltern empowerment do not encompass the radical counter-hegemonic projects that might be necessary to successfully challenge certain forms of exploitation, oppression and marginalization that are intrinsic to capitalist development. Nor do these perspectives interrogate how the maintenance and reproduction of capitalist development is related to the political economy of the state and how this imposes limits upon what social movements can achieve when they seek to use ‘the democratic spaces of India to contest the violence of the state’s accumulation process’ (ibid.: 206). The concluding section of this chapter presents some further reflections on these questions.

Concluding remarks

State power ‘is not suspended in mid-air’ (Marx, 1984: 108). This is an insight which lies at the heart of a range of new perspectives on subaltern encounters with the Indian state, and which has been advanced convincingly in the recent work of Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss. Their work constitutes a definite advance over those perspectives which see in the Indian state merely a behemoth that is strictly controlled by the country’s upper classes and upper castes and alien to the lifeworlds of its subaltern groups. The concurrent insistence that the institutions, procedures and discourses of the state can function as vehicles of empowerment for these subaltern groups is also an advance on those perspectives which posit India’s social movements as the bearers of an authentic and insurrectionary otherness that is mobilized in opposition and from a position of exteriority to the oppressive couplet of development and modernity.

However, there is a weakness in these perspectives – a weakness that is simultaneously theoretical and political. The theoretical weakness lies in a

failure to acknowledge that whereas hard and fast boundaries between state and society cannot be drawn, and that as a result, the state cannot be viewed simply as an instrument that can be captured and used by elites to secure their domination and enrichment, the embeddedness of the state in society also means that state power remains a crucial modality in the reproduction of extant social relations and power structures, and that this in turn imposes structural constraints upon the extent to which its institutions, procedures and discourses can advance subaltern emancipation. This does not entail reverting to a notion of 'the hidden existence of a substantial real structure' in the state, as Abrams (1988: 69) criticized Marxists for doing, but rather a view of the state as an ensemble of institutions through which social forces act in their attempts to advance projects that will reproduce and extend their hegemony. As a result of this, the state assumes a certain form in which 'the structures of political representation and state intervention involve differential access to the state apparatuses and differential opportunities to realise specific effects in the course of state intervention' (Jessop, 1982: 224).

The concurrent political weakness is a failure to acknowledge that certain forms of subaltern empowerment push against and defy 'the permanence of existing structures and relations' (Kamat, 2002: 158) and the way in which state power is used to secure this permanence. By arguing that social movements in contemporary India should remain within the ambit of political opportunities offered by the state, these perspectives circumscribe the possible scope of movement strategies at a conjuncture where subaltern livelihoods are coming under increased pressure from an increasingly coercive, elite-driven process of neoliberal restructuring.

What, then, is the alternative to this view? My immediate suggestion would be to steer a course between the ultimately state-centric view of Corbridge and Harriss and 'the simplistic notions of anti-institutional purity' (Poulantzas, 1978: 153). An awareness of the limits to the changes that can be achieved via the institutions, procedures and discourses of the state does not translate into a principled rejection of any engagement with the state. If social movements are seen as developing relationally and historically vis-à-vis the hegemonic projects of dominant social groups, then the trajectory of those movements will naturally tend to involve some kind of recourse to state-centred practices, institutions and ideational representations. Given the relational nature of state power, such recourse might also bear fruits. This, however, does not entail positing interaction and negotiation with the state as 'the be-all and end-all of movement activity' (Geoghegan and Cox, 2001: 7). Rather, it entails the advocacy of a position which explicitly seeks to take account of both the potential and limits of political action within the state system. In other words, what is advocated is an *instrumental* rather than a *committed* engagement⁸ with the state – that is, an approach to interaction with the state based on limited expectations of what can be gained and a clear perception of what is risked in pursuing this avenue. It also entails an

awareness that a challenge to the structures of power on which the state rests and which it is instrumental in reproducing is a bet best placed on the construction of a counter-hegemonic project which seeks to develop the mobilizational capacity and oppositional practices of subaltern groups to the point where it can successfully challenge extant power structures and their entrenched institutional manifestations.

Stuart Corbridge (2007: 199, 201) has recently argued that to speak of such counter-hegemonic projects militates against ‘the morality of critique’ – firstly, because of ‘the impossibility of the dreams of perfection on which they are based’ and secondly, because ‘their proponents refuse to consider the likely costs of these regimes, and of the social upheavals that would be required to get there’. I am not convinced by this argument. As I have shown in this chapter, there are structural constraints to the extent to which the Indian state can be harnessed for emancipatory political projects, and these limits in turn flow from the ways in which India’s dominant proprietary classes have been able to mould the postcolonial state as a vehicle for the expansion of capitalist relations. These limits are arguably being enhanced with the increasingly aggressive implementation of neoliberal restructuring. Whereas I fully accept that critics should be held responsible for the consequences which follow from thinking and acting in certain ways, it is equally important that those who call for restraint consider the consequences and effects of not engaging with the structural limits of the extent to which subaltern groups can make use of the state to contest the violence of the capitalist state and market – at the current conjuncture more than ever before.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Sara Motta for instructive comments on draft versions of this chapter.

Notes

1. See, for example, Gupta (1995), Hansen (2001), Harriss-White’s (2003), Chatterjee (2004) and Sharma (2008).
2. They are here referring to the work of scholars such as Theda Skocpol, Peter (1979), Evans (1979) and Adam Przeworski (1986). See Cammack (1990) for an incisive criticism.
3. The key representative of this trend is of course Arturo Escobar (1995). In the Indian context, Parajuli (1991, 1996), Mies and Shiva (1987) and Pablo Kala (2001) have advanced related perspectives, p. 110.
4. For critiques along similar lines, see Hall (1983), Sarkar (1998), Steinberg (1999), Moore (1996, 1998, 2003), Pieterse (1998, 2000), Kiely (1999) and Nilsen (2009).
5. Kerala is an outlier case in that it witnessed significant mobilization from below in this period (see Heller, 1999, 2005; Katzenstein and Ray, 2005; Desai, 2007).

6. Whether or not this means that neoliberal restructuring in India can be understood as a continuation of the passive revolution is a question I shall leave unanswered here. Chatterjee (2008) has argued that it does, but I am not convinced by his argument, as neoliberalism in India has entailed a rupturing of established truce lines between old and new dominant social groups (see Nilsen, 2010).
7. See also Roy (2009).
8. I owe this distinction to Laurence Cox.

References

- Abrams, P. (1988). 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 58–89.
- Bardhan, P. (1998). *The Political Economy of Development in India: Expanded Edition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Baviskar, A. (1995). *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Water in the Narmada Valley* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Baviskar, A. and Sundar, N. (2008). 'Democracy Versus Economic Transformation?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, No. 46, 87–9.
- Bose, S. (1997). 'Instruments and Idioms of Colonial and National Development: India's Experience in Comparative Perspective', in F. Cooper and R. Packard (eds), *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press): 45–63.
- Byres, T. J. (1981). 'The New Technology, Class Formation and Class Action in the Indian Countryside', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 405–54.
- Cammack, P. (1990). 'Statism, New Institutionalism and Marxism', *Socialist Register 1990*, 147–70.
- Chandrasekhar, C. P. and Ghosh, J. (2002). *The Market that Failed: A Decade of Neoliberal Reforms in India* (New Delhi: Leftword).
- Chatterjee, P. (1986). *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Chatterjee, P. (1993). *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Chatterjee, P. (2004). *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Chatterjee, P. (2008). 'Democracy and Economic Transformation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, No. 46, 53–62.
- Chibber, V. (2003). *Locked in Place: State-Building and Late Industrialization in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Chibber, V. (2005). 'Reviving the Developmental State: The Myth of the National Bourgeoisie', *Socialist Register 2005*, 226–46.
- Corbridge, S. (2007). 'The (Im)Possibility of Development Studies', *Economy and Society*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 179–221.
- Corbridge, S. and Harriss, J. (2000). *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Corbridge, S., Williams, G., Srivastava, M. and Véron, R. (2005). *Seeing the State: Governance and Governmentality in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Desai, M. (2007). *State Formation and Radical Democracy in India, 1860–1990* (London: Routledge).
- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

- Evans, P. B. (1979). *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Foucault, M. (1976). *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (London: Pantheon).
- Foucault, M. (1998). *History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (London: Vintage).
- Frankel, F. (2005). *India's Political Economy: The Gradual Revolution 1947–2004* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Fuller, C. J. and Harriss, J. (2001). 'For an Anthropology of the Modern Indian State', in C. J. Fuller and V. Bénéï (eds), *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India* (London: Hurst and Company): 1–30.
- Geoghegan, M. and Cox, L. (2001). 'Outside the Whale: (Re)thinking Social Movements and the Voluntary Sector', paper available at www.iol.ie/~mazzoldi/toolsforchange.
- Gupta, A. (1995). 'Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 375–402.
- Hall, S. (1983). 'Notes on Deconstructing "the Popular"', in R. Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul): 227–39.
- Hansen, T. B. (2001). 'Governance and Myths of State in Mumbai', in C. J. Fuller and V. Bénéï (eds), *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India* (London: Hurst and Company).
- Harriss-White, B. (2003). *India Working: Essays on Society and Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Heller, P. (1999). *The Labour of Development: Workers and the Transformation of Capitalism in Kerala* (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Heller, P. (2005). 'Reinventing Public Power in the Age of Globalization: Decentralization and the Transformation of Movement Politics in India', in R. Ray and M. F. Katzenstein (eds), *Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power and Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Little): 79–106.
- Jessop, B. (1982). *The Capitalist State: Marxist Theories and Methods* (Oxford: Martin Robertson).
- Jessop, B. (1990). *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in its Place* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Jessop, B. (2008). *State Power: A Strategic-Relational Approach* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Kala, P. (2001). 'In the Spaces of Erasure: Globalisation, Resistance and Narmada River', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 22, 1991–2002.
- Kamat, S. (2002). *Development Hegemony: NGOs and the State in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Katzenstein, M. and Ray, R. (2005). 'And in the Beginning there was the Nehruvian State', in R. Ray and M. F. Katzenstein (eds), *Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power, and Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).
- Kaviraj, S. (1997). 'A Critique of the Passive Revolution', in P. Chatterjee (ed.), *State and Politics in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Kiely, R. (1999). 'The Last Refuge of the Noble Savage: A Critical Assessment of Post-Development Theory', *European Journal of Development Research*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 30–55.
- Markovits, C. (1985). *Indian Business and Nationalist Politics 1931–39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

- Marx, K. (1984). *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (London: Lawrence and Wishart).
- Mies, M. and Shiva, V. (1987). *Ecofeminism* (London: Verso).
- Mitchell, T. (1991). 'The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 1, 77–96.
- Moore, D. S. (1996). 'Marxism, Culture, and Political Ecology: Environmental Struggles in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands', in R. Peet and M. Watts (eds), *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements* (London: Routledge): 125–47.
- Moore, D. S. (1998). 'Subaltern Struggles and the Politics of Place: Remapping Resistance in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1–38.
- Moore, D. S. (2000). 'The Crucible of Cultural Politics: Reworking "Development" in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 654–89.
- Moore, D. S. (2003). 'Beyond Blackmail: Multivalent Modernities and the Cultural Politics of Development in India', in K. Sivaramakrishnan and A. Agrawal (eds), *Regional Modernities: The Cultural Politics of Development in India* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press): 165–214.
- Mukherjee, A. (2002). *Imperialism, Nationalism and the Making of the Indian Capitalist Class 1920–1947* (New Delhi: Sage Publications).
- Nilsen, A. G. (2007). 'On New Social Movements and "the Reinvention of India"', *Forum for Development Studies*, Vol. 2, 271–93.
- Nilsen, A. G. (2008). 'Political Economy, Social Movements and State Power: A Marxian Perspective on Two Decades of Resistance to the Narmada Dam Projects', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 2–3, 303–30.
- Nilsen, A. G. (2009). 'Autonome Domener eller Relasjonelle Praksiser: Makt og Motstand i Indisk Historie og Samtid', *Agora*, Vol. 1, 126–65.
- Nilsen, A. G. (2010). *Dispossession and Resistance in India: The River and the Rage* (London: Routledge).
- Parajuli, P. (1991). 'Power and Knowledge in Development Discourse: New Social Movements and the State in India', *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 127, 173–90.
- Parajuli, P. (1996). 'Ecological Ethnicity in the Making: Developmentalist Hegemonies and Emergent Identities in India', *Identities*, Vol. 3, 15–59.
- Pieterse, J. N. (1998). 'My Paradigm or Yours? Alternative Development, Post-Development, Reflexive Development', *Development and Change*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 343–73.
- Pieterse, J. N. (2000). 'After Post-Development', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 171–95.
- Poulantzas, N. (1978). *State, Power, Socialism* (London: Verso).
- Przeworski, A. (1986). *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Rangan, H. (2000). *Of Myths and Movements: Rewriting Chipko into Himalayan History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Roy, A. (2009). 'This Land is Mine', *Outlook*, 9 November.
- Rudolph, L. I. and Rudolph, S. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Sarkar, S. (1983). *Modern India, 1885–1947* (New Delhi: Macmillan).
- Sarkar, S. (1998). *Writing Social History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Sewell, W. H. (1992). 'A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 98, No. 1, 1–29.

- Sewell, W. H. (1996). 'Historical Events as Transformation of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 6, 841–81.
- Sharma, A. (2008). *Logics of Empowerment: Development, Gender and Governance in India* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).
- Sinha, S. (2003). 'Development Counter-Narratives: Taking Social Movements Seriously', in K. Sivaramakrishnan and A. Agrawal (eds), *Regional Modernities: The Cultural Politics of Development in India* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press): 286–312.
- Skocpol, T. (1979). *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Steinberg, M. W. (1999). 'The Talk and Back Talk of Collective Action: A Dialogic Analysis of Repertoires of Discourse Among Nineteenth-Century English Cotton Spinners', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 105, No. 3, 736–80.
- Yadav, Y. (2000). 'Understanding the Second Democratic Upsurge: Trends of Bahujan Participation in Electoral Politics in the 1990s', in F. Frankel, Z. Hasan, R. Bhargava and B. Arora (eds), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 120–45.

Part II

Epistemologies of Resistance: Social Movements, Collective Learning and the Politics of Knowledge

6

The University and the Landless Movement in Brazil: The Experience of Collective Knowledge Construction through Educational Projects in Rural Areas

Sandra Maria Gadelha de Carvalho and José Ernandi Mendes

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the collective construction of knowledge in educational programmes developed between the State University of Ceará (UECE), Brazil, the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) and the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), through the National Institute for Colonization and Land Reform (INCRA/EC) under the National Programme of Land Reform Education (PRONERA). We conceptualize the university as a contested and contradictory space of hegemony and counter-hegemony. Our analysis of the struggle to develop counter-hegemonic forces focuses on the branch of university life called 'university extension',¹ which is an important dimension to the university-in-the-making, as it involves the university linking its work to society and the community.

The development of PRONERA has occurred in the context of the shift from dictatorship to democracy in Brazil. In this period the state's capacity, particularly in relation to public services and goods, including extension projects, has disintegrated due to neoliberal restructuring under the Cardoso government (1994–2002). PRONERA, which opened the space for the collective construction of education programmes between the university and MST, can therefore be situated in the battleground within public universities to halt neoliberalism and reconstruct public spaces of education and new forms of politicization via popular education in the community. We analyse the programme itself, and the process of exchange of academic and popular knowledge which occurred between academics (lecturers and students) and MST activists during the implementation of an innovative project that sought to develop '*educação do campo*' as opposed to '*educação rural*'.²

We analyse the spaces of knowledge production that resulted and also the challenges and tensions that emerged during the implementation of the project.

The chapter is organized as follows. Firstly, we delineate the historical context that shaped the development of a branch of university work called ‘university extension’, which from the 1960s became associated with social movement struggles and organizations. Next, we focus on the recent demand for education in the struggle for land reform, drawing attention to the work of the MST and how this impacted upon the possibilities of rearticulating ‘university extension’ in the neoliberal period. Finally, we discuss the educational projects that were the result of the collaboration between a group of popular educators and the MST in the UECE under the PRONERA umbrella, focusing on the successes, challenges and questions raised by the different experiences of collective knowledge construction for social change and political transformation that were developed.

Brazilian universities: extension and the path towards social movements

In the Spanish colonies of Central and South America, universities were established in the sixteenth century, such as the University of Lima, Peru in 1551 and the University of Córdoba, Argentina in 1613 (Luckesi et al., 1995). In Brazil, only after 1808 were the first higher degree courses organized in faculties, such as the Faculty of Medicine, Bahia, in 1808, followed by the Faculty of Law in São Paulo, and Recife in 1854. These faculties functioned as isolated courses that had as their objective the training of professors that would support the process of Brazilian modernization. The formation of universities in the modern sense was only legalized in the 1930s when faculties were allowed to merge. This was the model followed by the University of Minas Gerais, founded in 1933, and the University of São Paulo (USP), founded in 1934.

The history of the foundation of Brazilian universities was characterized by positivist conceptions that regarded scientific knowledge as neutral and also viewed it as essential to the needs of modernizing Brazil. The three main branches of university work institutionalized in university statutes were research, teaching and extension – with extension revolving around the practical engagement of the university with society and community (ibid.). The centrality of this branch of the university’s mission was concretized in two historical landmarks: firstly, the establishment in 1938 of the National Union of Students (UNE), and their support for the dissemination of culture to the popular classes and, secondly, the first National Conference for University Reform, sponsored by UNE in Salvador, Bahia, in 1961, when the Bahia Charter was drawn up expressing concern about the ‘liberation of the people’. The first event gave the university the mission of bringing ‘culture’

to the people by extending its activities through seminars and courses to the community. The Bahia Charter that followed expressed the politicization of popular movements; discussion and legislation within the university moved from bringing culture to the people to questions of people's liberation and politicization through educational practices.

However, during the military dictatorship (1964–84) university extension programmes became associated with *assistencialismo* (welfarism) (Melo Neto, 2001). Programmes such as the Rural University Centre for Training and Community Action (CRUTAC), the Rondon Project in which students provided health services to impoverished communities of the north and northeast, and Operation Mauá, more directly linked to technological developments. Their political content was to maintain the legitimacy of the military regime, and they were placed under strict political and ideological control. Nevertheless, economic failures and continued political crimes created fractures in the legitimacy of the regime so that by the late 1970s popular democratic mobilization had resurfaced. Amongst the demands of the protestors was a general and unrestricted amnesty for political prisoners and the return of political exiles. This process intensified so that the 1980s are characterized as a decade marked by the political reorganization of society. New movements formed such as neighbourhood associations, women's movements from the urban periphery, as well as rural and urban union movements that were the result of the exclusionary industrialization policies of the dictatorship.

As the regime began to liberalize political exiles returned, including former lecturers and university students who resumed their work within the university. This reignited the debate about the social and political role of the university and the need for a re-democratization of university space. As part of this debate there was a strong critique of the 'American organizational model of a rational, capitalist university-enterprise focused on productivity' (Orso, 2007: 79). This discussion included old and new political forces such as student activists, former political prisoners, social movement activists and clergy advocates of liberation theology. The consolidation of these political and social forces enabled a conceptualization of the university as a field of hegemonic struggle between conservative and transformative political proposals and projects.

As a result of the politicization of the university, extension activities were also re-politicized and a number of projects were organized which focused on popular education literacy programmes in rural and urban areas. These were inspired by the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, who returned to the country in 1979 to teach at the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) of São Paulo. This conjuncture enabled the appearance and consolidation of popular education in postgraduate courses which fostered the development of research groups whose work related to new configurations of labour and capital and how this resulted in social movement formation

whose actions and theoretical perspectives were linked to pedagogies of popular education. A view of university teaching in which pedagogy was directly linked to strengthening democracy and social movements became popularized. Thus collectives of university teachers were formed in which many were also activists in student and university movements, members of the National Union of Teachers in Higher Education Institutions (ANDES), and/or involved in popular education activities associated with the liberation theology branch of the Catholic Church. In this period the politicization of society fostered the politicization of the university, which then helped strengthen the development of popular movements in both urban and rural contexts as educators became politicized. Whilst the overall hierarchical and elitist character of Brazilian universities did not change (Chauí, 2001) these processes did open up spaces for the development of critical political praxis within the university space and between the university and community.

However, the strengthening of neoliberalism in the 1990s brought drastic consequences for Brazilian higher education. The governments of Fernando Collor de Melo (1990–02), Itamar Franco (1992–03) and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–8 and 1999–2002) implemented educational policies in tune with guidelines from international bodies, notably the World Bank (Segundo, 2005). In this context, privatization and outsourcing of university activity increased, and, as Chauí (2001: 35–6) explains, the university came to be defined ‘as a service provider to private companies’ (ibid). This commercial logic also colonized university extension programmes as outsourcing became commonplace, and academic voice and participation in the preparation and discussion of extension activities and projects was eroded (Mendes, 2007). The political and public model of extension came under attack as the logic of market imperatives predominated.

The Lula government (2003 onwards) thus inherited a university model framed within the logic of marketization. Yet the Workers’ Party (PT) was a party of the popular classes and had a commitment to including these sectors in Brazilian development and politics. Thus, the first Minister of Education, Cristovam Buarque, gave priority to youth and adult literacy programmes, which have historically been part of the university extension branch of university activity. He also abolished the Literacy Programme (1998–2003), which through partnership between universities and business, aimed at teaching youths and adults in the poorest municipalities in the north and northeast of the country. In its place he inaugurated the Literate Brazil Programme which had as its key objective the eradication of illiteracy through the establishment of partnerships between universities, civil society associations and social movements.

Whilst this attempt to reinforce a public understanding of education was limited to one federal programme with limited resources it nevertheless reopened space to question the market logic that had dominated public

education debate and policy during the Cardoso period. It is from within this context that debates about the role of extension resurfaced within the university, including the development of extension projects with popular class participation. This was the case at the UECE, the institution that supported the development of the education projects we analyse in this chapter. This reopening of the debate about the public university and the role of extension helped stimulate collective political organization amongst professors and students which led to pressures being put on the UECE senior management to accept projects with a more public character as a guarantee of its mission to society to 'train professionals [and] produce and disseminate knowledge for sustainable development, as a public and free university'. Parallel to this the MST had pushed for the development of rural education relevant to its needs and struggles, manifested in the development of PRONERA in 1998. This conjuncture from outside the university and within the university reopened the space for the development of projects with social movements. Of course, the national PRONERA programme was riddled with conflicts between the marketized logics of the neoliberal university and those of a popular public university. The launching of our PRONERA project in 2005 was enabled by the coming together of some UECE academics who were activists and popular educators and MST representatives who proposed the development of educational projects as part of PRONERA. Thus, even within hegemonic neoliberal logic, the struggle of social movements that resonated with some lecturers and students linked to the student movement, led to the development and consolidation of educational projects that sought to contribute to the development of counter-hegemonic struggle against neoliberalism.

The MST and rural education in agrarian reform

The Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) was formed in southern Brazil in 1979 against the agricultural policy of the dictatorship and as part of the rearticulation of popular democratic protest against the dictatorship. As Fernandes (1999: 65) explains, 'the MST was born in a process of confrontation and resistance against the policy of agricultural development, set up during the military regime, which favored the expansion of capitalism in the countryside, and a consequent concentration of land.' Occupation of abandoned and unused hacienda land is one of the main strategies of the movement. However, in the process of ensuring the sustainability and sociability of MST settlements, communities were faced with constant challenges. As protagonists of their own survival, communities had to actively define a politics of development, and key elements of the process through which they did this built on traditions of liberation theology and popular education (Carvalho, 2006). As MST communities constructed a collective identity and new subjectivities through their everyday lives and struggles,

it became evident to the movement that education had to enter more centrally into their project. Thus the Education Sector of the MST was created in 1987 and in 1995 education was included in their Land Reform Programme. As the specific resolution notes, the MST has as one of its aims 'a rural development that ensures better living conditions, education, culture and leisure for all' (MST, quoted in Fernandes, 1999: 82). In Caldart's (2004) words, the Movement caused 'an occupation of the school' in the sense that families in MST settlements began to mobilize for their right to schooling, began to develop a specific pedagogical proposal for teacher training, and argued that it was essential that schooling and education was part of every stage of a community's occupation of land – from occupation camp to recognized settlement.

The MST therefore began to mobilize around state-supported education for land reform. The first national meeting on Land Reform Education (ENERA) took place in this context, in Brasília, in July 1997. The MST, with the support of the University of Brasília (UNB), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB), organized the event. There, social movements challenged 13 professors who were present to think about a 'rural education' project. The result was the proposal for the National Programme of Land Reform Education (PRONERA), launched by the then Extraordinary Ministry of Agrarian Policy (MEPF) in April the following year. It was aimed at young people and adults in MST settlements and would be implemented in partnership with universities, social movements and the Ministry, through INCRA. PRONERA was developed within an educational framework focused on: (a) the social struggle of the rural landless; (b) the culture of rural communities; and (c) the development of a national popular development project to strengthen family agriculture and foster land reform. The educational proposal was developed collectively between university representatives, government representatives and MST representatives and was based on debate, dialogue and creativity.

Although PRONERA was established in an unfavourable political climate as Cardoso was implementing a neoliberal agenda there are some factors that contributed to its implementation. Firstly, the mobilization and increasing politicization of the MST acted as a counter-hegemonic force to neoliberalism from above. This was reflected in the composition of the Working Group to Support Land Reform that was established after the first ENERA meeting in which the Dean of Extension of the UNB played a key role in pushing for a national rural educational project that would conduct 'broader work on education from a rural perspective' (Kolling et al., 1999). This was motivated by a proposal from the representative of UNICEF, Ana Catarina Braga, who also attended the event. The proposal was taken to the Third Forum of Higher Education Institutions to Support Land Reform,

and was later supported by the Council of Rectors of Brazilian Universities (CRUB). The then Rector of the University of Brasília, João Carlos Todorov, took up its defence and later, at the Minister's request, its coordination. Nevertheless, despite the continued mobilization and engagement of the MST and the active support of some universities, the government often acted as though its involvement and the institutionalization of the project gave it a constitutional right to monitor and control the actions of rural social movements.

The Lula government (2003–06) and (2007–10) differs from, but at the same time preserves similarities with, the previous government. The privatization process that was characteristic of the neoliberal Cardoso era ceases with the new government; however, the privileges to financial capital in economic policy are maintained and contracts are kept. During Lula's presidency there has been an expansion of education projects in land reform; however, this has been accompanied by the strengthening of agribusiness and agro-chemical farming, and export production, contrary to the family farming process advocated by rural social movements. Despite identification with social movements, the ambiguous character of the government has generated two divergent positions. On the one hand, social movements have focused on maintaining their autonomy, which demands they fight their corner when threatened by conservative forces that form the basis of the government's allies, such as the National Democratic Movement Party (PMDB). On the other hand, clashes with the government have been avoided, as it is considered an ally, based on the belief that being critical and creating major disputes would strengthen the right, which is always eager to weaken Lula's position.

Thus, the MST has been caught in the ambiguous and contradictory terrain opened up by the Lula government. Whilst it has supported the Lula government, its focus has been on maintaining its independence and strengthening the autonomy of its settlements whilst also mobilizing for land reform, better living conditions in the settlements and policies to promote family farming. A key moment in this strategy to be in, against and beyond the Lula government was the national march to Brasília in 2006, when MST leaders negotiated with the government and were able to secure improvements in educational funding, including an increase in funding for PRONERA. Therefore the struggle for popular development during the Lula period is highly contradictory, suggesting that the state will remain inexorably linked to conservative interests in defence of the status quo, whilst also maintaining fragmented spaces of access and openings to agents that seek social transformation, such as the MST.

The implementation of PRONERA reflects these contradictions. Carvalho (2006) estimates that it is slowly becoming an accepted and recognized public policy, with stipulated budget allocation and the consolidation of its educational activities in 22 federal states. By 2008 the programme involved

more than 49 public universities, offering courses in education, secondary school vocational education, higher education and areas of expertise to approximately 400,000 young people and adults from MST settlements (see <http://www.mda.gov.br>).

However, given its political nature, it has suffered from defamation in the media and from parliamentary conservatives who are allies of the Lula government. This led to a 62 per cent cut in the programme's 2009 budget preventing the creation of new courses. Against this onslaught, the MST responded on 8 June 2009 by occupying eight buildings of the Superintendent of INCRA in several Brazilian states, demanding and, eventually, winning back the initial budget for the strengthening of rural education.

There were also other legislative changes in 2008 that ruled that state university teachers working in PRONERA projects could no longer receive any payment for their participation as their work was defined as technical assistance as opposed to pedagogical activity. Occurring in the middle of the project many teachers have not received payment for nearly 18 months. This acts as a disincentive for continued university involvement. However, a group of teachers of the project entered into a judicial appeal against the ruling in the State University of Ceará (UECE). The first stage was within the University which in 2009 gave a favourable judgement for the payment of outstanding monies. The teachers have now taken the appeal to the legislative level. However, some professors did not wish to enter the appeal process for fear of reprisals, illustrating the tensions that arise for teachers who enter into pedagogical projects that are politically orientated. Therefore, the creation and maintenance of PRONERA was, and still is, a struggle of rural social movements and popular educators in the university.

Today, the MST understands that there is no land reform without education, and there is no sustainable development in rural settlements if the settlers and their children do not have schooling and technical training to ensure their sustainability. Along with popular educators, the MST therefore defends the right to a distinctive rural education linked to the needs and demands of communities in struggle.

The collective construction of knowledge in youth and adult educational projects and in teacher training projects in MST settlements

In UECE, where the authors are based, the debate around PRONERA started in 2005 with the MST's demand for educational programmes and the politicization of extension within the university. A group of six lecturers took on the responsibility of coordinating three extension projects in youth and adult education (EJA) and a teacher training project entitled Earth Teaching Training. The first two are at the elementary school level and have been completed by approximately 1700 young people and adults living

in MST settlements. The third project completed at the time of writing this chapter resulted in the graduation of 107 secondary school teachers, many of whom have been involved in the youth and adult education programmes as popular educators. Thus, all projects have been developed and delivered in an integrated manner. The projects are rooted in methodologies of popular education, which understand that the process of collectively building knowledge happens within the university and within the communities where classes take place. There are several spaces in which the process of the construction of collective knowledge has occurred, and which help illustrate the challenges and innovations that are opened up by a project of this kind.

Collective knowledge production in the elaboration of a curriculum that integrates university and popular knowledge

The preparation of the Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP) for the Earth Teaching course was jointly undertaken between teachers, university scholars and representatives of the collective educational board of the MST. This was an innovative experience due to its conceptual and curricular methodology which was premised upon dialogue between the movement, the university and popular educators about the content of the curriculum.

We agreed that the four year course be organized into eight stages, with a total workload of 3316 hours per year. Each stage, in turn, consists of two major teaching allocations: School Time and Community Time. School Time takes up 80 per cent of the workload through direct contact with students. The time allocated to each curricular component is 48–64 class hours, a range that varies from six to eight continuous days. This timing is coordinated by a collective of educators, guided by a project methodology. Community Time represents 20 per cent of the workload and takes place in the students' own home.

The PPP of the Earth Teaching course attempts to negate the logic of the hegemonic curriculum by creating an integrated curriculum that overcomes the fragmentation of knowledge that structures most teacher training courses. A prerequisite of this process is the recognition of the different knowledge of the subjects involved in the process of teacher training. Therefore, the school curriculum is embedded in the social reality of the students and teachers. This is premised upon developing a 'view' from the position of the disenfranchised as opposed to the powerful. The Earth Teaching course aims to develop teachers who can think critically and work in elementary education with children, youth and adults from rural settlements, strengthening the idea of peasant and family farming as opposed to agribusiness, deemed as ecologically destructive to the mode of life in the countryside. The PPP of the Earth Teaching course goes beyond the one-dimensional scientific basis that is inherent in the systematic knowledge of the formal school environment. It does so by aiming to open up teachers with a

scientific bias to the political, social, cultural and technical aspects of teaching, which are contextualized in rural education and in the experience of students.

As Caldart (2004: 27) explains: 'It's not enough to have schools in the countryside, we want to help build rural schools, that is, schools with a political-pedagogical project linked to causes, challenges, dreams, history and culture of the working people of the rural areas.' Therefore we decided that the PPP of the Earth Teaching course should be the outcome of collective discussions held by the MST educators, teachers and scholarship students at the university. The structure of the curriculum was divided into four themes: (1) Earth and Work, (2) Rural education, (3) Culture and Way of Life and (4) Social Struggles and Collective Subjects. The choice of these themes was the result of long discussions. We agreed upon these themes as they enable a merging of diverse knowledge linked to sciences, humanities, biosciences and rural communities. This results in an articulation between theory and practice, or between science and the realities of rural existence. Each year, emphasis is given to one of the themes, which is then problematized. Presentations are given in thematic seminars, after which workshops are held in which activities that are to be developed in their communities from the learning acquired in each of the themes are planned.

An example of the types of discussions that we had when defining the themes that would orientate the Earth Teaching course is the discussion about the theme related to land use. Words had to be carefully chosen in order to clarify that land use was conceptualized as something connected with peasant farming and not to the needs of capital. For this purpose a meeting was held and a university student suggested 'Land and Agrarian Reform' as the title of the theme, but others argued that a focus on land reform would suppress important discussions related to geography, ecology and literature. Our thinking was concerned with how to introduce the human element in relation to discussions about land. We returned to the word 'land' and asked ourselves: what other term would identify its relationship with peasant agriculture? 'Struggle', we suggested. But perhaps this word would shift the focus of the theme to the actions of social movements when we wanted the discussion to be broader than this. An MST representative suggested the word 'labour', arguing that it was a concept that enabled an analysis that linked the working class to capitalism. We then decided that by adding the word 'land' it would point to peasant farming and those who work and live off the land. We intensified the debate in this direction and, after eight hours, consensus was reached and we agreed that the theme's title and orientation would be 'Earth and Labour'. Our aim is through interdisciplinarity to enable dialogue between the different components of the curriculum to build a vision of knowledge in its totality. This depth of framing is translated into a concrete knowledge of reality in

each theme. Each theme focuses on different dimensions of this process of creating integrated knowledge that supports the struggle for agrarian reform and family agriculture.

The theme 'Earth and Labour' assumes that the Earth is a finite resource that must be used for the benefit of society and community. However, the hegemonic development of rural Brazil has been based on the agribusiness model – that is, export-oriented monocultures – and closely linked to the international financial system. The counter-hegemonic struggles of rural social movements, on the other hand, present an alternative proposal for national development, prioritizing family farming. As part of this theme we aim to locate processes of social transformation and political struggle within an historical analysis of the situation of land and labour in society, interlinking general with local analyses. This framing of the theme builds student reflections about the resilience of communities and the potential of constructing sustainable agriculture through political, social, economic and cultural struggle.

The theme 'Culture and Way of Life' derives from a conceptualization of culture as not only material production through work, but also symbolic representations that are constructed collectively. This approach goes against the homogenization and erosion of cultural identity and related process of exclusion promoted by globalization. The types of questions that orientate this theme are: What is the dominant (hegemonic) cultural project? What is the cultural project of the dominated? What conceptions of culture exist in our society? How is Brazilian culture characterized? What is the relationship between culture and social classes? What characterizes the culture and way of life of rural communities? This theme's intention is to strengthen an orientation to culture that understands it as a way of life linked to the cultivation of memory and art, and linked to the histories and practices of peasant resistance and struggle.

The themes and how they are implemented are not fixed. They are often adapted in light of the dialogues opened up between students and teachers. For example, in the class of the Settlement Bernardo Marin II students who were discussing the theme of culture reflected that young settlers were losing traditional knowledge from their families about how to produce artifacts required in their daily lives from materials in their local environment. They decided to organize a vegetable and herb garden and learn from the elders and the more experienced how to make brooms out of palm leaf. This constituted an important experience in the rescue of their community's culture and linked theoretical reflections with concrete outcomes related to the strengthening of communities in struggle.

The premise of the theme 'Social Struggles and Collective Subjects' is that the history of the Brazilian countryside is forged by the struggles of people who inhabit it, starting from the indigenous nations – the *quilombos* – to peasants and others who even today resist projects of exclusion

and domination. The focus of this theme is to recuperate these histories of individual and collective struggle.

The Rural Education theme challenges us to think of education from the social, political and cultural interests of those living in MST settlements with the objectives of training educators in land reform. The questions addressed and generated in this theme include: What is the historical trajectory of rural social movements in Brazil? What perspectives on education do rural social movements claim? The focus of this thematic area is on the training of educators in 'land reform' who are engaged in social struggles, and who seek to construct a new educational method that is focused on social emancipation and geared towards the formation of autonomous subjects.

This theme explores education as one of the processes of human development, based on the interests, politics, culture and economy of various groups of rural workers and peasants. 'Rural education' is the bedrock of a new, knowledge-based concept of development linked to alternative technologies of livelihoods in the semi-arid region, to the ecological matrix, to the diversification of production for one's own consumption and for supplying the local market.

In assessing the course of 'Rural Education', it is interesting to highlight the testimony of a student, who as a parent herself, spoke about the education of her daughter:

Despite my participation in the Movement and my awareness of 'rural education', I did not know that it covered so much about schooling. The reading and discussion were important because I now have more arguments to put forward to my daughter's teachers. I am deeply worried about the schooling of children who are not receiving this kind of education.

On the basis of this evaluation we developed the idea of an exercise in which all the students in the class would collectively build a proposal of what a school for children living in the settlements would be like. The questions we derived from our discussions and that orientated the collective project included: What would they study? What type of activities? What would the relationship be between curricular content and reality? How would planning and assessments be structured? The discussions generated were complex and rich in meaning, questioning the origins and intensions of school or official knowledge, and how this historically, and actually, devalues popular knowledge. This exercise also highlighted the difficulty of building an interdisciplinary curriculum, geared to the interests of those who work and live in the countryside.

During the implementation of the Earth Teaching course we have faced a number of distinct challenges. The interdisciplinarity of themes was new

to many of the university lecturers who participated in the projects, as they had been trained to work in particular subject areas. To ensure that their participation supported the objectives of the project it required in them a willingness to engage with the new forms of collective planning and the holistic construction of curriculum and specific lessons. Sometimes this was successful. On other occasions, however, teachers reverted back to traditional methods of teaching that were not in the spirit and methodology of the course structure and curriculum.

About 80 per cent of university lecturers who have participated in the projects had no previous knowledge of the settlements. When they came to teach at these rural sites they had to adapt to precarious accommodation, simple food, water shortages and problems with the infrastructure of the teaching rooms, such as poor ventilation, inadequate lighting, lack of computers and internet access. Nevertheless, in spite of all these challenges, the richness of the debates and the interest shown by students motivated these lecturers to continue their work and deepen their participation in the project.

The classroom learning of lecturers, university students and students

The teacher training project was based where the educators worked and lived. There were thus six classrooms located in rural settlements in the following municipalities within the state of Ceará: Crateús, Amontada, Russas, Itatira, Canindé and Quixeramobim. Each classroom held an average of 30 participants, including university students on scholarships and local coordinators of the MST who delivered the follow-up activities.

Debates occurred both in the classrooms of the teacher training project and of the schooling project, based on scholarly essays whose themes focused on the confrontation between popular knowledge built into their work experiences, life and struggles and the established knowledge of academic texts. This confrontation enabled critical reflection about established knowledge. These texts were then reworked by lecturers, university students and social movement agents, resulting in papers that expressed newly constructed knowledge.

As a coordinating team of the Teacher Training course we were careful to select teams of specialists who had some affinity and identification with the struggle for land reform and hopefully a non-discriminatory view of the MST. However from time to time there was conflict over political and cultural ideas between lecturer and student. We found that teacher trainers who had not participated in the design of the course sometimes demonstrated a lack of engagement with the integrated curriculum and methodology of combining academic with popular knowledge.

It can therefore be argued that in overcoming difficulties, participants paved a dialectical path in which knowledge brought by students from their

realities was confronted with the academic knowledge of university lecturers and selected texts, resulting in a reconfiguration and learning on both sides. This was a result of the synthesis obtained by the systematic process of reflection embedded in the course. The debate on access to education, for instance, from the 'rural education' strand, produced discussions and readings from which the students reported they learnt new political and methodological elements of the problem and theme. The lecturers, in turn, were surprised by the drop-out rates due to the political pressures on students in relation to their movement commitments. The teachers previously assumed that they did not study for lack of access or incompatible times with their rural work schedules, but later found that there were also strong political reasons for this. Thus, both sides acquired new knowledge about different aspects of rural education.

Learning generated in planning and evaluation meetings with educators and learners

The academics linked to the campus of UECE, near the municipality where the work was taking place, would meet with the project coordination team and representatives of the MST to plan educational activities and to define the texts that would make up the teaching packs for each curriculum component. In these meetings, a survey of the knowledge and concepts that students already brought to each topic was made. After the classes, new meetings were conducted to evaluate the work done during classroom time, focusing on further developing the integrated nature of the curriculum and the thematic areas covered.

The participation of local coordinators linked to the MST was essential in bringing the socio-cultural reality of the settlers to academic knowledge. This way, the lecturers had a chance to listen to the reality and read the research documents brought by social movement participants, generating educational work that produced 'really' useful knowledge based on concrete reality. Following this logic, new issues were raised by movement participants in relation to scientific knowledge, through the collective evaluation of its relevance for the reality they experienced. This provided the opportunity for arguments and counter-arguments to emerge from the reflections on the debate and raised questions as to how they related to popular knowledge and to their own teaching practice. Course contents were written following this logic, such as: Portuguese language, world history and Brazilian history, biology, geography of the land, literature, the sociological, psychological and philosophical fundamentals of education, geography, pedagogy, art education, political literacy, chemistry, mathematics, physics, literacy, environmental education, teaching practice and so on. Thus a rich exchange of experiences among educators, students and other participants was enabled through the process.

Learning generated in occupations of public institutions

The contradictory terrain of the Lula government meant that there were many problems in the implementation of the projects such as delays in the release of funding and non-provision of essential resources to enable the running of the projects. Thus MST activists began to occupy public institutions such as the UECE and INCRA in order to demand the funds and resources for the projects. The process of occupying the university and undertaking negotiations with senior management allowed MST militants and project participants to break the geographical and social barriers that kept the university 'apart' from their lives. Not only therefore did the university reach out to the community, but the community began to enter the university.

The ability to prove to themselves and to those who make up the university that they were able to fight for their rights and to negotiate facilitated a learning experience for all involved, including civil servants, lecturers, students and the board of governors. This revolved around notions of citizenship, autonomy and the demystification of the notion that the landless are unable to stand up and struggle in this type of elitist space from which they are normally excluded. During the occupations all educational activities were maintained and cleaning, subsistence and overnight accommodation were collectively organized. Political meetings were also held to evaluate the process of negotiations and adapt/develop tactics and strategy.

The occupation of the rectory building in the university generated different responses. The student movement immediately showed solidarity with the landless people. Elements of the senior management of the university blamed the PRONERA coordination team, attributing to them responsibility for the MST's actions. This fact alone demonstrated the prejudice against the ability of men and women of the people to make their own decisions. On this occasion, the significance of the project coordinators and partners as interlocutors was important in overcoming the impasse in negotiations. The negotiations always involved the university (senior management and PRONERA coordination), representatives of the MST and other organs of the state involved in land reform. The occupations involved moments of negotiation, debate and confrontation. These experiences helped to ensure the establishment of the project's infrastructure and strengthen the projects. Telles (1999) reflects that the claiming of social rights in the public arena introduces dissent when made by subjects normally excluded from the public arena. This allows the expansion of the horizons of the political field and a diversification of the possible fields of experience (Telles, 1987).

In order to ascertain the extent to which this learning process has impacted on the communities of the learners/teachers would require further research. However, Carvalho (2006) identified statements in the discourse of some educators and coordinators of the MST that supported an analysis that suggests that in the settlements where there was greater opportunity

to enter one of the educational projects, political and social organization became more effective.

Improvement of assessment tools with a focus on the reality of the students

Due to the particularities of the 'extensionist' experience, evaluation is not framed as it is in the official system, in which the level of acquisition of an end product and results are emphasized. In the elementary Earth Teaching course, the assessment has a procedural character, committed to improving the training experience of the subjects involved. Teachers assess the participation of students during the discussions in class, their presentations of collective work and written work developed during the learning time in the community and between one and the other during school time. Teachers always ask students to relate the specific content of the course to the educational practices that occur in and outside the classroom. The students receive their certification after passing all the subjects and preparing their graduation assignment – the Memorial³ of Political and Educational Practice. This addresses the educational, political and cultural experiences of students, contextualizing them historically, and taking into consideration the reflections produced by the subjects.

According to Paulo Freire, the educator-to-be must have an understanding that the educational practice they are involved in demands political clarity with respect to their commitment to a project of human emancipation. As he argues,

It is not enough to say that education is a political act, as well as it is not enough to say that political action is also educational. One needs to embrace the political nature of education thoroughly. One cannot recognize the limits of the politico-educational practice in which one is involved in if one does not know clearly in favor of whom one practices.

(Freire, 1997: 25–7)

Therefore the training of educators is constructed from the perspective that in Brazil the neoliberal model deepens social, economic and political exclusions and inequalities and that therefore a critical educator seeks to understand this reality in order to transform it. One can argue that this form of teacher training is beyond the conceptualization and understanding of the normal curriculum and education practice in the classroom. It requires that the educator develops ethical-moral educational practices and knowledge in relation to the needs of rural communities, has a commitment to political interventions that forge the construction of a new, popular national project, has respect for rural communities' cultures and forges practices that recover and recreate the knowledge of rural communities in struggle. The Earth Teaching course offers an integrated curriculum to

facilitate the formation of such a critical educator committed to the issues of rural Brazil.

Conclusion

University extension in Brazil involves a meeting between the academy and society. It has taken on new configurations and meanings dependent upon the historical context in which it develops. Thus it had a radical content in the 1960s, reflecting the organization of the popular sectors, had a conservative and legitimating aspect during the military dictatorship and is caught between the logic of popular and democratic education, and in our case *educação do campo* and *educação rural*, since the mid-1900s and the ascent of neoliberalism. It is therefore a site of struggle over societal projects; the neoliberal hegemonic project or popular counter-hegemonic projects. However, the coming together of popular educators, university students and MST leaders and militants in the development of extension projects has helped to restore a sense of the public realm in which the political terrain is extended to include the dreams, histories and struggles of the oppressed. These experiences resulted in a significant process of learning for all parties and helped foster the construction of a more just and democratic society in Brazil.

The experience of the authors of coordinating the projects Teaching and Earth Education under PRONERA at UECE involved curriculum development which included different subjects with their distinct knowledge that constructed the project from conception to implementation. This process enabled a deepening of the relations between the university and social movements, between university and popular knowledge, between urban and rural realities, and finally, between theory and practice. This has contributed to the development of counter-hegemonic struggle in the university space and the rural community space. However, these interrelationships have not occurred without conflict, showing that the clash between different political and academic conceptualizations is inevitable when attempting to confront the neoliberal logic of knowledge and the university. It is not possible to maintain a fragmented and de-contextualized curriculum in the process of strengthening a popular and democratic politics of knowledge and constructing a university with political and social commitment to this project. The understanding of these contradictions and of the importance of praxis and dialogue from a Gramscian and Freirian perspective leads teachers and university students to work with social movements for the expansion of democracy and social transformation through such educational practices.

The methodology of popular education developed enabled lecturers, students and popular educators to critically reconceptualize rural education, the role of institutions of higher education, the action of social movements, and the education of youth and adults which has resulted in more than 30 papers presented at regional, national and international academic events

that create ‘really useful knowledge’ (see Mukherjee et al., this book) out of the dialogue and exchange between academic and popular knowledge. About 40 students and 80 lecturers experienced the realities of the settlements, leaving their essentially urban lives to face poverty in rural areas. The experience contributed to the demystification of the MST as a violent political movement, as it is frequently portrayed by the Brazilian media. The lecturers involved in the project got to know the social life of the people, their practices and their values in everyday life and perceived that the unilateral view of those settlers presented by the media made absolutely no sense. This experience prompted a re-examination of their assumptions about the validity of knowledge when confronted with the political subjects of the MST who had great argumentative ability, discipline and willingness to confront undemocratic teaching methodologies. While the subjects (students) of the MST gradually recognized the importance of the different scientific readings of reality, the university specialists, on the other hand, realized the insufficiency of their interpretative models.

For us, the experience of coordinating projects demanded, and at the same time strengthened, our academic and political commitment to the causes advocated by the MST, thus extending the concept of the university-in-the-making towards commitment to the development of counter-hegemonic struggle. This growing commitment helped us to persevere for five years in a project which has been marked by conflicts and contradictions. The learning gained by confronting the conflicts and dilemmas that arise in relation to neoliberal bureaucratic processes has given the projects and our struggles a new meaning; to ensure the right to education, the strengthening of social movements and the struggle for land reform. It is possible therefore to conclude that the knowledge produced in the aforementioned projects have contributed to the training of critical teachers and educators with a greater critical consciousness of their rights and the world they live in and a deeper commitment to the struggle for social justice and popular democracy.

Acknowledgements

Our sincerest thanks go to Laiz Chen for the first round of translation from Portuguese to English and to Sara Motta for subsequent translation and adaption of the chapter and our thoughts into English.

Notes

1. In Brazil, ‘extension’ is one of the pillars of education alongside ‘teaching’ and ‘research’, as written in the Federal Constitution, Article 207. It makes the bridge between the university and the community and translates theory into practice through academic/scholarly action.
2. *Educação rural* is the hegemonic neoliberal understanding of rural education, which seeks to train peasants and rural communities in the skills necessary for market

participation. *Educação do campo*, conversely, is an attempt to create an education for and with rural communities that helps to foster the development of agrarian reform, family farming and a popular, democratic development project for Brazil.

3. This is a reflection about the educational life of the student and what they have learnt during the course. Its analytic focus is how the experiences of learning during the three years of the course have contributed to broadening their understanding of their reality, their *campamento*, their educational life, society and their role as a critical educator.

References

- Caldart, R. (2004). 'A Escola do Campo em Movimento', in M. G. Arroyo, R. S. Caldart and M. C. Molina (eds), *Por uma Educação do Campo*, pp. 55–69 (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes).
- Carvalho, S. M. G. (2006). 'Educação do Campo: PRONERA, Uma Política Pública em Construção', Doctoral Thesis, Programa de Pós-Graduação, Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC), Fortaleza, Brazil.
- Chauí, M. (2001). *Escritos Sobre a Universidade* (São Paulo: Editora Unesp).
- Fernandes, B. M. (1999). *MST: Formação e Territorialização* (São Paulo: Editora HUCITEC).
- Freire, P. (1997). *Política e Educação*. (São Paulo: Cortez).
- Luckesi, C., Barreto, E., Cosma, J. and Baptista, N. (1995). *Fazer Universidade: Uma Proposta Metodológica* (São Paulo: Cortez).
- Kolling, E. G., Nery, I. and Molina, M. C. (eds) (1999). *Por Uma Educação Básica do Campo* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília).
- Melo Neto, J. (2001). *Extensão Universitária: uma análise crítica*. João Pessoa: Editora Universitária/ Universidade Federal da Paraíba.
- Mendes, J. E. (2007). 'O Lugar da Extensão na Universidade: Diferentes Projetos em Disputa', trabalho apresentado no II Encuentro Latinoamericano La Universidad como Objeto de Investigación, Tandil, Argentina.
- Orso, P. (2007). 'A Reforma Universitária dos Anos de 1960', in P. Orso (ed.), *Educação, Sociedade de Classes e Reformas Universitárias*, pp. 63–84 (Campinas: Autores Associados, Coleção Educação Contemporânea).
- Segundo, M. (2005). 'O banco mundial e suas implicações na política de financiamento da educação básica do Brasil: O Fundef no centro do debate', Doctoral Thesis (Educação), Programa de Pós-graduação, Universidade Federal do Ceará, Fortaleza.
- Telles, V. (1987). 'Movimentos Sociais: Reflexões Sobre a Experiência dos anos 70', in I. Scherer-Warren and P. Krischke (eds), *Uma Revolução no Cotidiano? Os Movimentos Sociais na América do Sul*, pp. 54–85 (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense).
- Telles, V. (1999). *Direitos Sociais: afinal do que se trata?*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG.

7

Generating Theory in the Bhopal Survivors' Movement

Suroopa Mukherjee, Eurig Scandrett, Tarunima Sen and Dharmesh Shah

Introduction

There is increasing interest in social movement literature which takes seriously the critical analytical work of movement activists themselves. Bevington and Dixon (2005) have called for *movement relevant theory*, and Cox and Nilsen (2007) have argued for the recognition of the theory generated from within social movement literature such as email debates, blogs and wikis. These calls resonate with a tradition of radical adult education with its origins in the nineteenth-century working-class movement for *really useful knowledge* (Johnson, 1979; Griffin, 1983). Really useful knowledge was selected, generated and critiqued from the standpoint of a class-conscious workers' movement. Movement relevant theory requires the same critical reflexivity and collective self-consciousness of movement activists when engaging with knowledge and in generating theory from an epistemic standpoint of oppression and experience of engagement in struggle. However, social movement literature tends to be situated in the context of literate movements, predominantly in the global North. There are important methodological questions relating to theory generation and analysis amongst non-literate movement activists and leaders, which is more typical in the global South.

The work of generating theory involves generalizing from particular experience, comparatively, historically and conceptually, which activists do in assessing strategies, justifying to supporters and enemies, and finding meaning in their mobilizing and campaigning. In the absence of written literature, this is conducted through oral and embodied practices, often in relation to text-based knowledge and those who have the capacity to access it, through the theatre of protest but also in everyday performance within the movement and, significantly, out with it. Researchers require appropriate methodologies to access this theory generation, and more importantly to

participate in the work of generating movement relevant theory. This theory demands sensitivity to the different forms of non-literate knowledge and theory generation, a selective recognition of the potential value of literate and elite-generated theory and a mechanism of critical reflexivity which stimulates dialogue between these two types of knowledges. This chapter describes work in progress from the Bhopal Survivors' Movement Study, which draws methodologically from oral history, ethnography and radical adult education in an attempt to highlight insights from theory generation by Bhopal activists. It is an exploration of theory generation through generative themes in a movement whose praxis and culture is non-literate. The details of non-text-based literacies is beyond the scope of this chapter, and likewise the specific levels of literacy of different individuals is less significant than the collective knowledge generation amongst a movement dominated numerically by non-literate people.

This is work in progress. Fieldwork commenced with the anniversary protests of December 2007 and continued intensively for ten months followed by periodic visits to and contacts with activists in Bhopal and elsewhere. This period of research involved generating themes (Freire, 1972) which were further analysed though follow-up work with the movement and will provide a framework for ongoing analysis. Several themes have been selected for presentation here: gender, the state and knowledge distribution; not as an exhaustive list but as an indication of the location of theory generation explored by the research.

Bhopal and the Survivors' Movement

Since the devastating release of gas from the Union Carbide pesticide factory in Bhopal, 1984, a campaign for justice has been sustained by organizations of survivors. At the time of the disaster, female literacy in Bhopal was less than 20 per cent and a significant proportion of movement activists are women with minimal levels of education. Whilst literate leaders and solidarity activists have played an important role in the movement, they have depended on sustained support from strata of non-literate grassroots leaders, opinion formers and mobilizers as well as rank and file supporters. Indeed for many such women, and some men, engagement in the struggle for justice has been a vehicle for developing analytical skills cultivated through oratory, oral debate and physical embodiment. Even amongst literate activists, there is a dependence on discourse within the movement which is not literacy based. Such contributions to movement relevant theory from non-literate activists is important but methodologically challenging since they leave no analytically amenable textual record.

In the early hours of 3 December 1984, a cloud of toxic methyl isocyanide (MIC) gas leaked from a pesticide factory owned by US multinational Union Carbide, leading to the deaths of an estimated 8000 people over the next

few days, and over 23,000 to date. The factory was part of a growing global economic regime in which, in the notorious words of Lawrence Summers, 'the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable'.¹

Bhopal 1984 was a landmark in global capital expansion. The gas leak which caused the massacre was caused by successive, explicit cost shifting exercises in which value was extracted from the poorest in the name of development. The factory was established in 1969 to provide Sevin and other pesticides for the High Yield Varieties (HYV) of crops which were introduced in the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution itself was an exercise in dispossession, as the HYVs depended on capital investment in agrichemicals, so favouring large landowning farmers over small peasants, many of whom went into debt, lost land and joined the migration to the cities for work. Bhopal, already an expanding city since independence, saw a rapidly growing population during the 1960s and 1970s, especially men looking for work and bringing wives and families later. In this context the Union Carbide Company (UCC) established the Bhopal pesticide factory under its majority-owned subsidiary Union Carbide India Ltd (UCIL) (Eckerman, 2005; Hanna et al., 2005). Initially designed for formulating and distributing pesticides from imported concentrates, the factory expanded in the 1970s and in 1975 UCIL was granted permission to upgrade the procedures to manufacture pesticides on site from imported raw materials. In 1979 the plant was permitted to manufacture MIC, from which both Sevin and Temik pesticides could be produced (Chouhan, 2004).

The wider political economy of India was going through transition at this time: 1984 was also the year in which Indira Gandhi was assassinated. The relative stability of Nehru's India National Congress politics of patronage from an alliance between urban intellectual leadership, rural landowners and industrial capitalists had started to break down and be replaced by a volatile personality-based populism aimed at the poor. Indira Gandhi appealed to the rural poor over the top of the traditional rural elite who had become the Congress political class. The Nehruvian technocratic vision of development was sustained in shell only, without even the accountability of party discipline. The instability provided opportunities for international capital expansion even before the official policy of neoliberalism in the 1990s (Chatterjee, 1999; Corbridge and Harriss, 2001). 'Development' was therefore up for grabs. In the post-Nehruvian, pre-neoliberal context, the Green Revolution required pesticides and the expanding city of Bhopal needed industry. Indian industry needed multinational corporations for capital and know-how, and multinational corporations needed new markets, cheap labour and pliant states.

This was the context in which the gas disaster occurred. The events leading up to 3 December 1984 were an exercise in cost shifting. The Bhopal plant had already been constructed using materials which were below the

standards of the US company's own safety requirements. Demands for cost cutting from the US headquarters led to reductions in maintenance staff, training and partial dismantling of the plant. In December 1981, a worker, Ashraf Mohammed Khan, died from exposure to toxic gas. Pressure was put on the company's management and Chief Minister by a trade union at the factory and local lawyer Shahanawaz Khan, and a campaign waged in the press by journalist Rajkumar Keswani. In an article in Bhopal's *Rapat Weekly* in October 1982, under the headline 'Bhopal Sitting at the Edge of a Volcano', Keswani warned of the dangers of Union Carbide: 'For now Bhopal sleeps, till the next morning and possibly to never get up some morning' (Hanna et al., 2005). By December 1984, the refrigeration unit on the MIC tank was off and the temperature gauge was malfunctioning; a safety vent gas scrubber had been switched off for two months and the emergency backup tank, which should have been empty in order to receive excess gas, was itself full of stored MIC. When the gas leaked, there was nowhere for the gas to go except out into the local area. Emergency features were inadequate: a flare tower had been dismantled, the water spray system was not strong enough, there was no automatic alarm and the manual alarm, which was sounded too late, was inaudible outside the factory. This is not the place to describe the horrors of the event, which is the backdrop to the movement, the memory of which is still vivid in the minds of the activists we interviewed. The focus of this study is, however, the movement itself as it developed in several waves, starting the day following the disaster, shifting and adapting with changing events, to the present day. The experts in the movement are the activists themselves, a few educated outsiders who have stayed the course, a number of local activists with education and the many non-literate women who have formed the body of the movement. The objectives of the study, therefore, were to document the remembered and ongoing experiences of the movement activists in a way which facilitated critical understanding and interpretation by both researchers and the movement itself, thus generating knowledge which is reflective of the interests of the movement without being constrained by these interests.

Methodology and methods

Embedded in knowledge are material interests. The assumption of this research is that the generation of knowledge – and the more systematized, conceptual knowledge which we call theory – must build in a process of accountability to the movement which is both object and subject of the research. This is not to say that elite knowledge of the academic canon is useless, but rather that it is potentially corrupted by implicit interests of elite classes. It is 'merely useful' as opposed to 'really useful' until such time as it is assessed and critiqued through engagement with those with the 'epistemic advantage' of oppression and struggle. Moreover, this epistemic

advantage relates not to superior knowledge so much as superior standpoint from which to assess knowledge, mediate forms of knowledge (oral, embodied, practised, rather than literate) and generate the conceptual building blocks of theory through a discipline of critical reflexivity. Methodologically, therefore, this research derives from materialist standpoint epistemology and critical realism.

This approach involves a modification of classical ethnographic methods such as interview and participant observation in order to build in critical accountability to movement activists. Each member of the research team was already to various degrees a participant in the wider movement for justice for Bhopal, as well as an observer. We joined in rallies and *dharanas* (vigils) organized by the various campaign groups during our research, and used our connections across India and the UK to support particular demands. Whilst the research team clearly lacked the epistemic advantage of a standpoint of oppression and struggle, our ethnographic practice sought to position ourselves close to those who do. This practice involved methods of systematization of observations and collective, critical reflexivity. Semi-structured interviews were adapted to generate dialogue between researchers and survivor-activists in order to involve both in critical reflection as research contributors. Video recordings of interviews were cross-examined jointly by interviewees and interviewers together. This approach draws on the educational methods of Paulo Freire, designed to value and build on the knowledge and interests of non-literate people in literacy campaigns (Freire, 1972).

Non-literate people do not just lack a skill – literacy – they are oppressed by a social context which produces power relationships, including that between literate and non-literate. Freire argued that for literacy work to be liberating the educator must study, along with the oppressed, their ‘thematic universe’ – the interconnected web of knowledge, experience, meaning, symbols and priorities. Themes which emerge through this investigation are represented as ‘codes’ which can be interrogated to reveal a deeper understanding of their social context, with a view to changing it. Freire’s thematic universe appears to resonate with the concept of frame which has become popular in social movement research. However themes relate more to their potential for developing critical understanding and emerge in closer relationship to the material, social conditions of the knower. They are both more class conscious and more dialectical than frames. In our research the aim was to identify themes from the thematic universe of the survivor-activists of Bhopal, and to present these themes back to the movement, with the addition of potentially useful knowledge from academic theory, in a way which may be put to use in their struggle.

After building an informal relationship of trust with campaign group activists, research assistants videoed semi-structured interviews in Hindi. Interview questions had been developed around themes identified from

prior experience and early discussion with campaign leaders: questions relating to movement participation, decision making, knowledge exchange, gender roles, development and so on. A summary of the interview was prepared in English and discussed amongst the research team, and a copy of the video on disk given to the interviewee. Later, the survivor-activist would be reinterviewed with more searching questions informed by the researchers' and interviewees' analysis of the videoed first interview. This second interview was also videoed, leading to an accumulation of critical analysis of themes. Thus, through a dialogue between the researchers and the survivor-activists, a progressively more interpretive and analytical picture of the movement emerged, and data accumulated on digital video.

In order to account to the movement, emergent themes were fed back to activists collectively through a number of group sessions, including a symposium with 25 survivor-activists from all the major campaign groups and a workshop with women from three key organizations. The video-interview-dialogue process formed the core of the data collection and has amassed over 80 hours of interview data. With interviewees' permission, extracts from some interviews have been published in a non-academic publication *Bhopal Survivors Speak* (Bhopal Survivors' Movement Study, 2009) and anonymized transcriptions of all interviewees in Hindi and English will be made available in public archive (<http://edata.qmu.ac.uk/>).

From the onset the Study Group was very conscious of the dimensions of gender in the methodology. Standpoint epistemology has its origins in feminist social theory and the insight that knowledge and research methodology is gendered: a methodology which values relational knowledge emerging from oral dialogue between researcher and researched inevitably confronts gender hierarchies in the valuing of knowledge. There were also practical problems of interviewing a large number of women who came from an orthodox background, and had virtually no experience of talking in front of a camera. Two of us, Tarunima and Dharmesh, formed a male/female interviewing team in the field with, at times, divided responsibilities to help put interviewees at ease. The initial plan to do video recording in studio conditions fell through, as women found it difficult to break free from household responsibilities and many were shy and tongue-tied before the camera. Homes became the venue so that the one-to-one technique of video recording was often disrupted with other family members joining in the discussion. It became necessary to engage women in pre-recording sessions to build trust. They spoke candidly, often in a confessional tone about the nature of their involvement in the resistance movement, and the difficulties they faced at the ground level. The very nature of these preambles, the way key issues were tackled in the actual video recording and the reflective dialogue with the researchers provided the data for the emergence of generative themes. The value of generative themes is that they are more than narratives and have material significance which can be identified in the historical

and lived practice of the movement. Three themes; gender, state vs people and knowledge distribution, have been selected for discussion later in this chapter, but before discussing these, an account of the movement's history over 25 years as recounted by activists is presented.

History of the movement

The first wave: educated outsiders and the *Zehreeli Morcha*

The Bhopal Survivors' Movement developed through several waves of protest. In the immediate aftermath of the gas disaster, amongst the chaos of overflowing hospitals, finding lost children and disposing of the dead, there was a great deal of anger which exploded into spontaneous and unfocused protests around the factory. At this stage the priority was on basic needs: emergency medical help, clean water, food, shelter and the collection of basic information on those affected. An influx of educated outsiders travelled to Bhopal to help with the relief effort, many with experience in political organizing in a wide range of left and religious organizations. Most of these activists quickly organized themselves into the *Zehreeli Gas Kand Sangharsh Morcha* (Poisonous Gas Event Struggle Front)² and set about establishing neighbourhood committees for the effective distribution of relief, communication between service providers and the grassroots, and political mobilization. *Zehreeli* led the early waves of protest which brought thousands onto the streets behind a set of demands including basic provision of food, shelter and health care, compensation, rehabilitation and retribution. The group established a People's Health Clinic in the grounds of the abandoned factory and mobilized popular pressure over a series of months until it was suppressed by state repression. Organizers and doctors volunteering at the People's Health Clinic were arrested and valuable data confiscated. In June 1985, the police violently broke up a demonstration of about 3000 leaving the movement in disarray. Political and tactical differences amongst the *Zehreeli* leadership also began to impact as activists were expelled and the organization fragmented.

One of the areas of conflict related to the relationship between the educated outsiders and the gas-affected people. This issue cuts across themes such as gender and knowledge distribution as the male-dominated leadership inevitably had privileged access to specialist information, experience of organizing, the means of communication and decision making. Alok Pratap Singh was the leader of the *Zehreeli* and tells of the early development of the movement and the expectations of different forms of expertise:

With the formation of the *Zehreeli Gas Kand Sangharsh Morcha* on 7th December 1984 we decided on the following lines of action: to save survivors; to struggle for relief, rehabilitation and medical care; formation of people's committees at grassroots level; mass awareness and education to

the victims for their right to life; survey and data collection; building up national and international support networks; and legal interventions.

All of us [educated outsiders] already had experience working with various forms of mass movements before the gas disaster and had used the locality committee structure, where key people were identified and given responsibilities at grassroots level. We were aware that these people are the real back-bone of any mass movement, and sometimes better than us or any Government official, to understand the complexity of the situation. We knew that this was going to be a long struggle and it was evident that it had to be done by the organised, conscious and disciplined local people. We had decided during the inception of the [*Zehreeli*] morcha that this would be a people's movement: it would be fought by the organised people and the mechanism would be designed by the people with our assistance.

The first demonstration of victims was led by us at *Rajbhawan* (Governor's House) on 18th December and the State Government was compelled to establish centres for free distribution of basic rations, food, milk, tea, cloth etc. at neighbourhood level. Recognizing the need of the situation, we immediately organised people's committees at neighbourhood level to make the distribution system smoother by ensuring effective people's participation. It was the beginning of the people's committee as an instrument of struggle.

(Bhopal Survivors' Movement Study, 2009, emphasis added)

This interpretation of the movement as a vanguard leadership constructing the organizational space for grassroots expertise to emerge was not universally held, however, as explained by Satinath (Sathyu) Sarangi, another educated outsider involved with the *Zehreeli*.

The *Zehreeli Gas Kand Sangharsh Morcha* was founded within a week of the disaster in a meeting of social and political activists and social workers from within and out of Bhopal who had gathered to provide support to the survivors. Most of us were from privileged backgrounds and except one or two there were no 'victims' in that meeting. While the organisation and its three leaders were named, objectives and activities defined and plans and strategies chalked out with near total exclusion of the actual survivors, the *Morcha* presented itself to the survivors as a democratic organisation that encouraged and supported participation of ordinary survivors. Survivor activists participated in the *Morcha* as representatives of their individual communities and their participation were mostly sought in mobilising survivors for demonstrations and rarely if at all in important decision making in the organisation. As some one working in the community (as opposed to the leaders who seldom visited

the affected areas) I was always troubled by the lack of democracy in the organisation but those were such firefighting times that there was very little time ever for discussions on organisational questions. The repression by the state and the practical need for secrecy in the organisation further legitimised the top down structure. Thus a few of us middle rankers were helpless when a group of out of town activists, all very dedicated workers, were falsely charged with planting bombs within the Union Carbide factory by the leaders and thrown out of the organisation.

(Ibid.)

Issues of democratic organization and attitudes to Naxalite armed struggle, for example, reflected some of the ideological differences amongst the leadership. Other conflicts included the tension between reformist and radical aims and the role of militancy and conflict with the state. However the state's failure to adequately respond to the movement's most basic demands coupled with the level of repression, and the increasing mobilizing strength of the movement sustained a degree of unity for the first, crucial months. However, a major rally in June 1985 became the turning point as the movement led by *Zehreeli* was out manoeuvred, as told by Alok Pratap Singh.

All the other leaders were detained in the control room so the rally headed there first to get them released and then headed to the *Vallabh Bhavan* (Secretariat). We went there to meet the Chief Minister but he had already fled to Delhi so no policy decisions could be made. The Chief Secretary called in a delegation of 35 people for discussions... Finally the Chief Secretary agreed to direct the Collector to sort out within a week all of the most basic demands of the people like surveys and medical care.

When we returned down stairs to talk to the people all we saw was a sea of footwear. There had been a heavy *lathi* (police baton) charge on the people. The movement had been tricked.

(Ibid.)

After this event, many outside activists returned to their careers, others were expelled or formed rival factions, and the divided leadership lost the trust of many from the grassroots. Whilst the remaining educated outsiders focused on legal, medical and information campaigns, including links with Indian power bases and a network of international supporters, a new front opened amongst the grassroots.

The relationship between educated outsiders and grassroots community is a generative theme which will be subject to further analysis. Opinions amongst activists vary considerably and are given as justification for later divisions. This is often expressed strongly, not least to us as researchers who are educated outsiders by definition. The imperfect correlation between

education and class is a further complicating factor. Access to technical knowledge on chemical engineering, medicine or law has made some dependence on educated outsiders essential. This is managed in different ways and with varying success but never completely overcoming the power embedded in education. However, for Abdul Jabbar, leader of the Women Workers' Union, 'The intellectuals are always with the rulers. So I would say that the uneducated people who do not possess "literary" knowledge are the ones who can bring justice, much more than the educated... I strongly believe that all the major problems of the world have been created by the educated class' (ibid.).

The second wave: workplace conflicts and women workers' struggles

The second wave of mobilization was workplace based. During 1985 a number of government and non-governmental economic rehabilitation workshops were established in Bhopal. The majority of the people affected by the disaster were low paid, daily-waged labourers, petty traders, piece workers and others in the unorganized informal sector. There were many families in which breadwinners had died, and the impact of the gas on the respiratory system, physical strength and eyesight of those that survived often depleted their capacity for manual, dextrous or fine work. The economic impact was immediate and left many destitute. Those who were incapable of work became directly dependent on state pensions and rations. An advocacy campaign of pension-entitled people already existed in Bhopal, led by Balkrishna Namdeo, and responded to the increased demand by forming the *Gas Peedit Nirashrit Pension Bhogi Sangharsh Morcha* (Gas-Affected Destitute Pensioners' Struggle Front = Pensioners' Front). As a communist, Namdeo became involved in *Nagarik Rahat aur Punarvaas Samiti* although the organization remained independent.

For the able, the model of economic rehabilitation was short-term training workshops directly imposed by the state, primarily aimed at unskilled women, whose wages were expected to improve family welfare. Corruption was endemic throughout the supply chain, wages were low and conditions very poor. After minimal training, work sheds were closed and the women were expected to take out loans to establish themselves as traders in a weak market. Women tell of their increasing politicization as they started to question, challenge and organize resistance to these injustices. The women, often with little or no experience of work, or even human contact outside the home let alone organizing, negotiating and political campaigning, in a space of a few months had learned the tools of industrial class conflict: established trade unions, been on strike, prompted lock-outs, carried out vigils, sit-ins and hunger strikes and undertaken a long march (*padyatra*) to Delhi. This struggle emerged largely independently of the educated outsiders, knowledge being generated through working-class institutions and organic intellectuals, and a developing reflective political consciousness amongst the

women. Through trial and error, advice from trade union members, amongst relatives, strangers and left party activists, there emerged a skilled leadership that established a new wave of political activism. Starting with direct workplace issues such as those of wages, conditions and job security, the unions then took up compensation, health, environmental and communal issues and direct legal challenges to the company.

Rabiya Bee, the first convenor of *Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan* (Bhopal Gas-Affected Women Workers' Union) describes its formation amongst a workforce of women with little formal education.

After the gas leak, Nirmala Buch, who was the wife of a government bureaucrat, started an organisation named *Swavalamban* to generate employment for poor women and widows of the gas disaster. The centre provided stitching, knitting, embroidery and jute work to the women; this ran for one and half years. There were around 300 women in this centre and around 75 staff members who were divided into various departments.... The whole system at the centre was corrupt. People at the top made money everywhere, they got commissions at every level. There was chaos when tenders for goods were opened; people would find ways to get commission on the smallest things like buttons....

When Nirmala Buch began exploiting us it would make me very angry but I somehow continued to work despite the exploitation because I had a small baby to feed.... So I began talking to these women to motivate them to join me. The women slowly began to get my point and we spoke about this more regularly at lunch/break time.... A proposal to stop the cutting for a day was presented in one of the conversations and it was accepted because that way the centre would come to a standstill and work to all 300 women would stop....

Then we began getting ideas, the first one was to go to the Chief Minister but we had no idea how to approach him, we had no petition, no banner, nothing. We still went ahead with the plans, we reached the CM's residence and met the security guards who did not permit us to enter the premises. We insisted, so he asked what we were there for and he explained the whole concept of a CM to us. He also explained to us the concept of the union and advised us to form a union.

They chose me as president because I had the oratory skills, it was Gods' gift, and I could speak effectively, and we went to Indore for registration. We needed money for that so we went to where the heavy machinery stores were located and begged for donations.

Then we stopped all work and there was a lock out at the *Swavalamban* centre. Then the women from the silai [sewing] unit also joined us because they were anxious to know what had led to the lock out. Some

supported us and we went ahead with our plans and registered the union.

(Ibid.)

The Women Workers' Union recruited women and men from neighbouring work sheds and across the community, signing people up to demand compensation, and quickly expanding to a membership of thousands. Today the union continues to be at the forefront of compensation, and work-related campaigns as well as wider issues, and runs its own training and economic rehabilitation centre *Swabhimaan Kendra*.

A smaller union, the *Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmchari Sangh* (Bhopal Gas-Affected Women Stationery Workers' Union), was established under the leadership of the non-literate activist Rasheeda Bee and her colleague Champa Devi Shukla. Rasheeda Bee tells how it was established.

They registered 50 Hindu and 50 Muslim women. We would get to the work sheds at 10 in the morning and come back after 5 in the evening... By the 3rd month they gave us some proper work and at the end of that month we were paid and asked to go home and just do what we had done in training, work from home and sell the finished products.

The women hardly knew each other but we were aware that we had not been trained enough to make our own products and sell them... so the women asked me and *Didi* ('Sister' = Champa Devi Shukla) to speak to the Collector. Well I had never spoken to any man or boy since my childhood since this was the custom that I was taught and had always followed in the early days. The Collector, Mr Pravesh Sharma came to the shed on the day it was due to close. We spoke to him and gave him the women's views about how they had still not learned the skill properly and that they didn't want the shed to be closed. The Collector replied that training has been given as planned... we would have to go and speak to the Chief Minister... At the time, I wasn't aware of who the Chief Minister was or even what a Chief Minister did. That same day we walked straight from the sheds up to the CM's house....

[after months of struggle]... the Collector received a letter and the women from the work shed were handed over to *Raj Udyog Nigam* (State Industries Department). We were to get work from the *Udyog* and get paid by them at piece rate... We protested. In our opinion, be it piece rate or not we should be paid the usual Rs. 150/- a month. We decided to refuse to take the money that was being paid. Mr Gupta who was the accountant then, encouraged us in our decision when he said that if we did not take our pay but still keep coming to work the *Udyog* would be forced to increase the amount of work for us to do.... Every day about 15-20 women would

go to *Raj Udyog Nigam* and shout slogans and demonstrate, demanding work....

It was around the time of the wages boycott that Jain Sir of the Communist party suggested that we register a Union under our names.... We were told that forming the union would help them fight with more strength....

The women tended not to tell anyone about anything, so no-one knew about what was being done to register the union. So when we showed the registration letter to Raj Udyog and demonstrated that we were a properly constituted union, they were shocked.

The registration of the union worked well for us. All the letters that we put in were received and most of our demands were met easily. Registering the Union had created a sense of fear amongst the officials.

(Ibid.)

The Stationery Workers' Union, Women Workers' Union, Pensioners' Front and fragments of *Zehreeli* continued to struggle spasmodically over the next few years. Then in 1989, the Supreme Court announced that Union Carbide and the Government of India had agreed a 'settlement' of \$470 million, effectively bringing legal proceedings for compensation to a halt. The amount was a small fraction of the \$6 billion originally demanded and was accepted without reference to the survivors and their organizations, who subsequently instigated a new wave of militancy and challenge. Following appeal by the organizations, the Supreme Court revoked immunity from future prosecution but the settlement itself was accepted. The funds were disbursed amongst the, by then, desperate survivors in gas-affected wards in the early 1990s. Although minimal, the initial payouts constituted a considerable increase in the income of the poorest. The movement again saw a reduction in militant action. Some collective challenges were mounted but the movement was successfully divided and its capacity reduced.

The third wave: environmental justice

A third wave of movement activity emerged later in the 1990s. Greenpeace analysed drinking water from hand-pumps used in neighbourhoods close to the Union Carbide factory site and discovered organochlorine and heavy metal contamination (Labunska et al., 1999). Symptoms of lethargy, dizziness and breathlessness were identified amongst non-gas-affected people who had moved into the area since 1984 and connections were made to the contamination. A new category of *Pani Peedit* (water-affected) people were mobilized around access to clean water, safe remediation of the factory site and compensation for those affected by the ongoing pollution. A new front

opened in the struggle, that of environmental remediation, which also led to a restructuring of the movement.

Greenpeace's involvement became part of a re-internationalization of the movement – and a further cause of realignment and division amongst campaign groups. The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) formed around a coalition of Stationery Workers' Union and Bhopal Group for Information and Action, which had been established by one of the original *Zehreeli* activists, Sathyu Sarangi. ICJB developed a network of activists amongst students and intellectuals throughout India and in Europe and North America, and raised the international profile of the movement. Sarangi describes the changing relationships between the Bhopal-based and international solidarity groups.

While the leaders in [*Zehreeli*] Morcha were aware that a corporation that operated worldwide could not be confronted without international solidarity they were wary of being vilified by the government for their foreign connections and failed to make use of the spontaneous outpouring of international support. The Bhopal Group for Information and Action [BGIA] built upon what remained of the international support two years after the disaster through its periodic newsletters and much correspondence. It became part of the International Coalition for Justice in Bhopal (ICJIB) that was formed mainly through the efforts of Ward Morehouse in USA who set up the Bhopal Action Resource Centre immediately after December 1984. The Coalition had members from USA, UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Japan and other countries. It grew in strength... through the organisation of the Permanent Peoples Tribunals in Bhopal, Yale, Hong Kong and London from 1992 to 1994....

Later, Bhopal survivors' organisations and the BGIA collaborated with Greenpeace International on several projects. However, this association was ever fraught with tensions because Greenpeace's corporate structure offered no space to the needs and opinions of local organisations. The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) formed in 2003 was a significant improvement on the ICJIB in terms of contacts and solidarity actions and has a much wider base particularly in USA. Whilst all members throughout the world contribute to information sharing and campaign decision-making, the campaign distinguishes itself in having the Bhopal based survivors' organisations as the final arbiters of all decisions influencing their lives and struggle.

(Bhopal Survivors' Movement Study, 2009)

In 2004, Rasheeda Bee and Champa Devi Shukla were jointly awarded the Goldman prize for environmental campaigning, a remarkable feat for a non-literate (in Rasheeda's case) union leader. However, this split the Stationery

Workers' Union and exacerbated differences between ICJB and other campaign groups. Additionally, new points of contention emerged, such as where responsibility for site remediation lies. Madhya Pradesh state government proposed a remediation plan which involved removing contaminated soil and incinerating it at a facility either within the state or in Gujarat. Many of the campaign groups accepted this pragmatic solution (see Hamida Bee's comments later in this chapter). The ICJB's instinctive mistrust of the state and principled positioning has led it to oppose the plan on the grounds that the technical competence does not exist locally, and that thereby the scheme invites corruption, that it simply moves the problem to another community and that it lets Union Carbide – and its new owners Dow – off the hook.

The international focus of ICJB has encouraged a presentation of the movement as an environmental justice struggle. Amita Baviskar (2005) has described how Indian environmental movements have framed their self-categorization through negotiation with powerful allies through a process of 'discursive encounter'.

The politics of naming movements as 'environmental' or otherwise... emerges from a discursive encounter between different groups within the movement and their supporters. The multiple contending meanings that different groups bring to the terrain of struggle are negotiated and new understandings created in an ongoing process of dialogue between unequally situated actors.

(Ibid.: 165)

The Bhopal Survivors' Movement's international framing as an environmental justice movement (or Environmentalism of the Poor (Martinez-Alier, 2002) has occurred through this relationship between survivors' groups and international supporters, between Bhopal-based campaigns and Greenpeace, and in the successful promotion of local leaders as environmental campaigners. This has clearly benefited the ICJB in terms of international media coverage, political support and financial backing. This has not been a smooth process however. The corporate structure of Greenpeace militates against the long-term grassroots accountability of the Survivors' Movement, and the receipt of foreign funds and personal international recognition of Rasheeda and Champa Devi have exacerbated divisions in the local movement.

The discursive encounters of ICJB are a complex process which occurs in relation to the generation of knowledge. ICJB currently constitutes both a coalition of smaller survivors' groups with locally based educated outsiders in BGIA, and a network of electronically connected, educated Indian, North American and European supporters. Locally, the group relies on an oral, non-literate Hindi culture of loyalty and solidarity, increasingly amongst second generation survivors affected more by contaminated water than by the original gas leak. It is also dependent on access to information about the

contaminated water through the few highly educated and technically literate intellectuals in the leadership who, for example, use Right to Information legislation to access monitoring reports on pollutants and interpret these data on parts per million of organochlorines with respect to international health standards for exposure. At the same time, internet-based networking continues amongst supporters who discover information on corporations, pollutants, financial institutions and international relations, and carry out coordinated solidarity actions in their own countries against Dow or Indian consulates.

Knowledge generation and distribution at the micro-level is focused on the concrete and the specific but makes sense within a meso-level framing of the movement in conceptual terms such as environmental justice, class, economic development, state relations or human rights. This dialectic between the micro-level concrete knowledge and the meso-level conceptual frame, along with the material interests which are embodied within it, can be explored through the emergence and interrogation of generative themes.

Generative themes

The Study Group went back to the semi-structured interviews to interrogate codes. We found a number of potential themes but running through them as a central motif was the role played by women's activism in 'scripting' the fight for justice in Bhopal. In a sense gender was the nodal issue. The very nature of women's exclusion and dispossession in the context of an industrial disaster made them twice victimized. Already marginalized in a patriarchal society, the disaster killed and maimed male earning members of the family, thus making women dependent on state-sponsored welfare schemes that were not gender sensitive. Women are conspicuously absent from official documents, both legal and medical that were used for classification of injuries for determining the quantum of compensation to be paid as part of the settlement, and the research to be done by the Indian Council of Medical Research for medical rehabilitation of the victims. As a recording tool video was particularly useful for documenting the voices of women who were otherwise marginalized, thus countering the official 'absence' with their large 'presence' in the social movement that was shaped by women's individual/collective consciousness (Mukherjee, 2010). In an important sense women have carved out their relevant position within the movement by reinstating gender as an important component of the discursive practice of the social movement. Both the Women Workers' Union and ICJB have chosen women as lead 'faces' of the movement (sometimes alongside men), making them the chief spokesperson, negotiators and key figures for purposes of propaganda and dissemination of lay knowledge to the larger constituency of gas survivors.

Right from the beginning women have been in the forefront of the Bhopal Survivors' Movement in their capacity as grassroots leaders, campaigners and rank and file workers. The study opened up interesting areas of research for reconstructing the history of the movement from a gender perspective. Whilst class represented an important factor in a movement based on mass mobilization and middle-class intervention, we were drawn to the way in which women were prime movers from within the movement, transforming both movement praxis and their everyday domestic lives. Data were generated from periodic meetings held by survivor groups, each of which set up its own protocol on decision making, keeping records, taking necessary information to the people, formulating demands and placing it in the public domain through press releases, alongside interviews. We spoke to a wide range of women; many of them had been part of the movement right from its inception, others were able to trace their involvement at various stages, and some spoke candidly of the ideological and personal differences that led to the breakup of groups and the forming of new alliances. Oral history as an important tool for making heard marginal and 'silenced' voices was used by the study to unravel the dynamics of a movement that was initially spearheaded by men who came from outside Bhopal with previous experience of activism and different political affiliations, but soon created space for women from the *bastis* [poor neighbourhoods]. Women provided the numbers and the sustaining power of a movement that was caught in the wedge of middle-class activism and local, grassroots affiliations. Interestingly enough, except in one or two cases, middle-class women activists associated with the early movement had mostly moved on. Over a period of time the local constituency took over the groups, both in terms of the actual organization through the rank and file workers, many of whom were women with contacts in the neighbourhoods, but also as the think-tank, which took up issues and forged demands. Today the Women Workers' Union, the Stationery Workers' Union and the Pensioners' Front are the oldest surviving groups that are women-centred in terms of their identity, the membership and issues taken up, even where leadership figures are male. The Women Workers' Union originated amongst women in the cutting and sewing worksheds and although led by a man, Abdul Jabbar Khan, and has successfully recruited men, it remains mostly a female membership and leadership. The Stationery Workers' Union is entirely female and led by two women, Rasheeda Bee and Champa Devi Shukla. The Pensioners' Front's main constituency is older widows although the group's leader is male, Balkrishna Namdeo. Public protests of all groups are peopled almost entirely by women and, with the exception of the leadership, male support tends to be less visible and vocal.

The Study Group was particularly interested in tracing the cognitive aspects of the movement and the ways in which the creation of the

knowledge base and its praxis were gendered. A timeline emerged that saw the resistance movement work its way through the immediate post-disaster scenario ending with the settlement in 1989, and then moving through the 1990s into the new century, which saw a sea change in India's role in the global economy. Bhopal caught the attention of worldwide solidarity groups that were battling against the ills of increasing corporatization and globalization, which put profit before people and polluted the environment. Survivor groups in Bhopal had to negotiate the gap between local and global concerns, which in turn led to tensions about whether to prioritize issues of livelihood and health care that were seen as purely localized, over demands for corporate accountability and justice that had a broader international appeal. It created faultlines that opened for scrutiny what movement relevant theories have tried to recognize – theory generated from within movements by non-literate grassroots activists.

Two crucial areas were identified for the task of rebuilding lives – economic and medical rehabilitation. Survivor groups had to work with government agencies, for a disaster of this magnitude could only be tackled by resources generated by government welfare schemes, and specialized knowledge commissioned through high-powered research institutions. Bhopal was caught in a prolonged legal battle which ended in the 1989 court-ordered settlement. Survivor groups were left with the onerous task of overseeing the distribution of settlement money and the proper functioning of rehabilitation schemes that kept closing on the grounds of non-feasibility. They set themselves up as vigilance groups, a role marked by their efficacy and functionality. At another level, strategic planning had to be done keeping different targets in mind, which ranged from the Madhya Pradesh government, to the government at the centre and the corporation in India and abroad. Who became the arbiter of the knowledge base, the leaders or the campaign managers that negotiated the dynamics between a need-based and rights-based activism (Mukherjee, 2010)? The interview method we adopted offered a flexible research tool for juxtaposing theorizing with practice from different trajectories, helping to expose these contradictions and the implications for external praxis and internal power dynamics. Therefore, generative themes raised by the study became part of a theorizing process that made research relevant to the movement.

An industrial disaster like Bhopal puts specialized technical knowledge in the hands of professionals who use it to yield power, by putting such knowledge outside the reach of ordinary people. Thus the findings of scientific surveys done by apex government bodies have not been made public, and policy decisions have continued to circulate within the state corridors of power. The survivor groups have had to fight against class discrimination in the appropriation and dissemination of knowledge and deliberate attempts to spread lies and misinformation. In doing so, the state has

colluded with the industry, which has used the 'corporate veil' to prevent the truth from coming out in the open. Fundamentally, activism in Bhopal has had to grapple with monolithic power that used knowledge as an instrument of oppression. This has been systematically countered by the creation of an alternative knowledge base that is radical, gendered, empirically sound and politically enabling. Survivor organizations have mobilized resources to carry out their own surveys, invited non-government groups to do data collection and filed public litigations in court so as to bring to public notice glaring discrepancies in official statistics. In this way they have used alternative knowledge as a weapon for emancipation. Today, one of the major demands of the groups is for the setting up of an empowered National Commission that will work in close collaboration with representative survivor organizations. It is this long, arduous and often conflict-ridden battle for justice that we have tried to capture through the key voices from within the movement. Our study was endorsed by the various groups as an important contribution to the self-reflexive process of understanding the nature of the social movement in Bhopal. Activists spoke in personal and generic terms about conflicts between the hegemony of knowledge in the system and the knowledge demands of a mass movement.

Sathyu Sarangi, founder member of the BGIA, describes the process of creating a forum consisting of intellectuals, academics and professionals from different walks of life that saw the need to yoke information and action together:

When a few of us formed the BGIA we decided we would not be part of any survivors' organisation but would support all organizations from outside. Our role though limited to gathering and sharing information and advising on strategic matters became critical for the several survivor led organizations that sprung up following the demise of [*Zehreeli*] *Morcha* as a mass based organization. In our relationships with these organizations we did our best to empower the rank and file members and increase their participation in decision making within their organizations. The leaders of these organizations were never comfortable with our approach but they tolerated us because they needed us. After staying in the background and supporting survivors' organizations for several years, the BGIA decided to be more visible and work in coalition with survivors' organizations. While little changed within the organizations, we were able to establish democratic participation of the leaders of the organizations in the coalition and install a culture of collective decision making. The coding of interviews offered an insight into how group coalitions constituted a structure that was organised primarily around knowledge. As pointed out, this included technical, scientific, medical and legal knowledge to which few had access and the majority had to depend on a handful of

intellectuals for interpretation. Was the BGIA then alienated from the mass movement?

Saranghi disagrees:

Issues of health and health care have remained among the most bitterly contested political matters of the ongoing disasters in Bhopal. For the survivors and those exposed to contaminated ground water, access to medical facts on deaths and actual and potential injuries including in the next generation are critical for their survival. They have indeed fought a very sophisticated and protracted political battle in the face of suppression, manipulation and destruction of medical facts and figures by Union Carbide and the state and central governments in India.

From 1985 to 1995 while I worked through BGIA on publications of newspapers and newsletters, generating information, taking legal actions and supporting survivors' organizations I was never far from matters of health care. Almost every day I would meet a family or two where one or more persons were suffering chronic exposure induced illness and had got only temporary relief, if at all, despite prolonged treatment at the government hospitals. The studies we carried out showed that treatment in the hospitals was potentially causing more harm than good to the survivors and that the ongoing disaster had become a windfall for multinational pharmaceutical corporations who had a captive market in Bhopal.

The Sambhavna Trust and Clinic that I helped set up in 1995 came out of the grief and frustration I endured for 10 long years as the health and health care situation of the survivors steadily deteriorated. We saw the failure of the state government as an opportunity to create and legitimise an alternative approach to health care that integrated non toxic and drug free therapies and laid stress on health education and community participation. While we are aware that with our limited resources we can only provide health care to a fraction of those in need of medical attention we have been able to influence the dominant system of health care in significant ways.

(Bhopal Survivors' Movement Study, 2009)

Saranghi rubbishes the claim that BGIA and later Sambhavna Trust and clinic were receiving international funding and thereby diluting Bhopal issues for the sake of an international audience. He makes it very clear that technical knowledge was being contested in the public domain, and the Right to Information legislation was widely used to unearth classified information with international bodies being invited by non-governmental organizations in Bhopal to undertake scientific surveys that would strengthen the hands of the movement.

Rashida Bee joins Sarangi in outlining the important role played by a grassroots organization like Stationery Workers' Union, in putting a coalition like ICJB in place. Here again there were divided responsibilities of gathering and disseminating knowledge. While Sambhavna was conceptualized as a documentation centre, knowledge was extended into legal, financial, political and tactical areas that was made accessible through a discourse associated with education, literature, political engagement and the forming of a worldwide network. Here again, the idea was to use the alternative knowledge base not simply for purposes of a legal battle or protesting policy decisions but to take reform to the community; therefore, alternative medical therapy through yoga and growing ayurvedic plants in the bastis became as much a part of rehabilitation. Women played a big role in spreading knowledge about ecological balance and the need to protect the environment. Rashida Bee's growth as a woman leader, right down to her winning the Goldman Award is linked to her role both as grassroots leader and cultural emissary. Here she recounts her own experience:

Greenpeace came in 2000 and it was after this that we in the Stationery Sangh joined hands with Sathyu. After hearing about the contaminated water, and from what I had learned over the years, I started to realize that this is about saving the world. What happened in Bhopal has already happened, but we need to join forces to stop it from happening again anywhere else in the world. I also came to know about the law that says the polluter must pay, which strengthened us all the more because we now knew that we had the law on our side. We found out about lots of things that were happening throughout the world from working with Sathyu. Then in 2004 the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal was formed.

In 2002 I went to South Africa for a conference regarding Environment and its safety – the World Summit on Sustainable Development. There too I saw and heard more about Dow's atrocities. But many of these chemical companies were also present at the conference and this made me uncomfortable. What was the purpose of this façade at the United Nations in front of the prime ministers of all the world's countries? It made me doubt whether the UN was in reality ready to work, or wanting to work for the environment, when I saw that companies like Dow were a part of such conference.

Environmental issues came up. How I found my way through them all, God only knows. Mostly I just thought it was right, that I could do something about it and did it. When the black water came out of the hand pumps, some refused even to touch it and there were other people who had to drink it every day. The people who came to test the water wore gloves. All this just pushed us to believe that change is necessary and the justice we were struggling for could save thousands of lives.

This fight is not for the gas survivors or compensation but a fight for the world. And the fight is against the companies which even with all the knowledge are still spreading toxics across the globe. And to save the world from this the struggle in Bhopal has to spread across the world.

(Ibid.)

Clearly the ICJB was dependent on her ability to internalize and then interpret technical knowledge in lay terms. The expertise of movement leaders was drawn from experience, organizing and interpreting skills. Moving beyond the leaders was a tier of mobilizers who interpreted knowledge for a wider group of rank and file and peripheral participants. While these divisions were not so clearly defined or exclusive, there was a sense of shared responsibilities within the movement on the basis of knowledge.

Abdul Jabbar Khan was recruited as an advisor to the newly established Women Workers' Union and subsequently the union's leader. He claims a different kind of organizational structure that is based less on knowledge generation and more on taking issues to the streets. His organization is backed by professionals who raise issues of inadequate compensation and providing jobs for the next generation survivors. Jabbar's strength lies in mass mobilization. He proclaims to be a leader who has grown from the grassroots on his own merit without outside support. He gives us his perspective on the trials and tribulations of working from inside the survivors' organizations:

Immediately after the gas release, when [*Zehreeli*] *Morcha* was formed, I was the only one in the group who was from a poor, less educated background. So in the *Sangathan* [Union], I feel that we somehow could relate to the everyday problems and hardships of the victims, we touched those problems in a way that the others could not. The others looked for ways to give issues political twists and attract national and international attention. Issues of prosecuting UCC and Anderson were on top of the agenda for them, in that scheme of things, the issues that we raised, about employment, rations, medicines, they were dwarfed or incongruous.

The four years from 1986 to 1989, were the best years of the movement. At its peak, the Women Workers' Union was truly a mass movement. We used to have 10,000 or more women who had very little money for food who would make a point of participating in our meetings. We would have huge numbers of people turning up for our events and we had demonstrations almost every day. The police would have to keep a constant vigil over us because they would never be certain when we would do what. There was opposition to us but we survived this mainly because of the faith people had in us, women more than men.

(Ibid.)

Off camera Jabbar was willing to admit that the large numbers of supporters had been dwindling and many of the survivors had begun to withdraw from agitational politics because times were changing. But it was largely a matter of trust that had its inception in the organizational history of the Women Workers' Union and its campaign victories, which got them mass support. In a sense Jabbar was vouching for the sort of lay knowledge that newspaper cuttings, pamphlets and community posters could build on, for the purpose of running a campaign and enlightening and empowering people at the grassroots level. He rued the fact that such knowledge was discounted by the educated middle class when it came to acknowledging the real contribution of the Women Workers' Union to the movement. Jabbar made it a point to cultivate the local media so as to keep his organization and its spokespersons in the limelight. He approved of our study precisely because it democratically brought out in the public domain the different methods of knowledge generation. The fact that elite research institutions like Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi and Queen Margaret University, UK were backing such a project was for him a matter of pride. He encouraged the women in his organization to come forward and speak to us, though he did discourage dissenting voices. Every leader we interviewed was conscious of their constituency and what they frequently termed as 'the truth about the movement' which must come out in the open. Bhopal has to be remembered correctly they insisted, and they rued the fact that a lot of middle-class appropriation of images had happened. This they blamed on the media, but Jabbar was insistent on blaming those who were selling Bhopal to the Western world to gain political mileage. Many leaders spoke about their lifelong sacrifices for a cause. Internationalism was matched by a certain rootedness, which constituted both memory and nostalgia.

Jabbar took pride in the fact that his organization ran on the money it generated from the nominal sum members paid as fees:

The *Sangathan* is very committed to independence, especially when it comes to resources. When we started, members donated 50 paisa and now after so many years we take only Rs.5 and that only from those who are able to pay. When an organisation takes money from outside, then it becomes dependent on others and this distorts what it does and how it does it. I am not against resources coming from abroad, but it is a big risk and we have decided to rely on our own resources.

What he posited as independence was his distrust of how knowledge can be used for furthering the divisions between the literate and non-literate activists within the movement. He fell out with Greenpeace because he felt as an international organization it overstepped its role in Bhopal:

We have refused to work with Greenpeace in Bhopal for various reasons. We would have been quite happy if they had limited their involvement to

technical and scientific expertise, and let the grassroots movement take the lead. But Greenpeace started to make statements on behalf of the movement with the intention of taking a lead. They have made Bhopal into a commodity and destroyed its importance.

(Ibid.)

At the end of the day, funding was a thorny issue about keeping an organization afloat not just in terms of the work being done for survivors, but getting backup from big organizations that in turn would keep Bhopal alive in the global context. While most people we spoke to were vocal about the need for transparency, a lot of it was based on rumour rather than facts. There was a lot of pride centring on organizational identity and whether it was getting proper recognition.

The women who lent Jabbar support spoke of loyalty to the cause despite the fact that they had little understanding of technical issues. Hamida Bee is strident in her rejection of Sambhavna; she blames the government more than the company, and she feels that her experience of campaign work has provided her with practical knowledge of what she needs to do to improve the quality of life. She is now willing to take that knowledge back to the streets:

We do not think that health care can be adequately provided by NGOs, and we will not take gas victims to *Sambhavna*. We will continue to beat and straighten the system in the government hospitals, we prefer to go back to them because they are established and run with the money that belongs to the gas victims.

As for the factory site, the principal responsibility for the clean up is the government that has ignored the issue for so long. Now if Dow has purchased UCC then it is also its responsibility to clean it up. However when clean up demanded by some organisations on the one hand, and then when it is proposed it is blocked by other organisations, I am angry with that attitude. I strongly feel that the government has to clean up because it has received so much help from UCC in the past 23 years. Dow came in later, first the government gave permission to such a dangerous factory and then it betrayed the people of Bhopal consistently.

We boycott chemicals in our daily life. We boycotted Coke, soaps, toothpaste, liquor and plastic bags. People use plastic bags to fill hot food which is very harmful when the poisons from the bag leak into the food. We have protested and shut down liquor stores and also held *dharnas* against lotteries, because they were spoiling family relationships. In short we will fight against any kind of injustice and we will be present in solidarity to causes that need our help.

(Ibid.)

Mohini Devi echoes similar ideas on how the campaign has given her a better understanding of the way systems of oppression work and how this knowledge in turn has empowered her to fight such systems:

Issues picked up by the women were never restricted to workplace issues, they were open to the problems that people face over all. So their voices were raised for everything from medical health care, economic rehabilitation, compensation, environmental, social etc or for that matter the continuing rise in prices. For every problem, if you look at it on a larger level, there is a problem that relates all other humans not just the ones suffering in that place and time. This is why our solidarity went out to other campaigns also and likewise got the same back from them. Perhaps the most important fight that we are still fighting is to bring Warren Anderson back to India to face justice.

She answers tactfully to the question of infighting between groups, which we realize is her interpretation of how systems work towards breaking up the solidarity underlying people's movement:

There were around 15 gas victim organizations at one time and they all had their own agenda, they died out after their objectives were met and some just gave up. I feel that the differences between the campaign groups are not set in stone. The fact is that every *Gas Peedit* group is raising its voice for some issue or the other. The differences that arise come from their ideology and ways of working. Some may want to do things in one particular way and another may differ. The differences don't relate to the issues raised, the ways of fighting etc. The organizations have never united but they have worked together over issues of mutual relevance and then split up again. In 2001 Pensioners' Front, Stationery Workers' Union and Women Workers' Union came together to do a survey, they all agreed to work on that issue, came together and split once the work was concluded.

(Ibid.)

Most of the women we spoke to dismissed differences as being due to fighting on an uneven playing field, where different facets of state repression had to be met by strategic planning. We were shown press releases brought out by different groups; we were told how groups were united principally on certain demands and how a monolithic knowledge base could best be countered by creating plural discourses.

Over the period of the struggle, the Indian state has transferred from the populist authoritarianism of Indira Gandhi to the neoliberal security state today (with strong strands of Hindu fundamentalist nationalism, especially at the Madhya Pradesh level). The relationship of movements of oppressed

people to the changing nature of the state is complex and disputed (Fuller and Benei, 2001; Nilsen, 2006). Many activists made reference to the independence struggle and the narrative of a people's state, even the Nehruvian, big state, 'democratic-secular-socialist' development state. Some saw their own movement as a continuation of the independence struggle for control of the state, as with Hamida Bee's invective to 'beat and straighten the system in government hospitals'. Pensioners' Front's *raison d'être* lies in a welfare state which, when pressurized from below, provides adequately for its most vulnerable citizens, and part of the Stationery Workers' Union's struggle has been for recognition as state employees with the enhanced terms and conditions that brings. A narrative is present of a beneficent, albeit corrupted state which yet can be salvaged through people's demands.

On the other hand, most experiences with the state have been in the day-to-day encounters with corrupt doctors, officious bureaucrats, two-faced politicians and brutal police. State repression has ranged from police action against street demonstrations, and arrests and beating up of men, women and children in lock-up; rampant corruption in dispersal of compensation, running of gas relief hospitals and providing jobs for survivors; in opening up Special Economic Zones and chemical hubs in India as part of the neoliberal drive to bring in foreign investment; in the denial of justice by allowing the erring companies to go scot-free and finally by propagating the false ideology that survivors need to leave their memories of the disaster behind and move forward in life. Activists also deploy a narrative of the oppressive state in which occasionally good people can be found as allies, but whose *modus operandi* is repression.

Activists from all groups entered into larger debates on whether the state was at fault or the corporation, or whether they saw the state as complicit with the corporation and therefore both had to be blamed, what the role of the state might be in a democratic India, and whether corporations can be accountable to the state or to the people directly. The contradictory discourse of good-but-corrupted state or inherently corrupt state is played out in the strategic praxis of the groups, ranging from the alliance of small and more anarchistic inclined groups in ICJB which deploys foreign funds in challenging the state through constructing alternative provision and open confrontation, through to the Pensioners' Front which practices a constant battle with the state as legitimate yet errant benefactor.

Conclusions

The methods deployed through video-dialogue interviews have generated themes which require further analysis. Clearly, knowledge has played a decisive role in the movement which has been almost defined by the systematic denial of access to specialist knowledge in the interests of capital. As a result, alternative forms of knowledge have been generated and distributed

in the messy context of political struggle and movement praxis. Alternative knowledge develop which make use of the specialisms of technically educated outsiders who have achieved a loyal constituency through practices of accountability to the grassroots. The knowledge is also highly gendered, drawing on the embodied experiences and oral narratives of non-literate women who have lived with chemical violation through their own health and the integrity of their children. This knowledge is not united and forms contested discourses as praxis leads to encounters with the state, multinational corporations and international allies. The practice of generating knowledge is pedagogical and empowering, as engagement in struggle has connected concrete particularity with general principles and conceptual interpretation. Such is the stuff of theory generation. It is hoped that our research is contributing in some way to this process through its inbuilt accountability to individual activists and collectively to the movement. In the resultant dialectic between theory and practice, reality and knowledge, both the researcher and the researched are jointly engaged in the praxis of theory generation and political change.

Notes

The Bhopal Survivors' Movement Study Group comprises Suroopa Mukherjee, Eurig Scandrett, Dharmesh Shah, Tarunima Sen and other named and unnamed survivor/activist contributors to this research.

1. In 1989, Lawrence Summers was a senior employee at the World Bank. An internal memo which he had signed, and which was subsequently leaked to the press, endorsed the 'economic logic' behind multinational corporations shifting polluting industries and toxic wastes to low-income countries.
2. Activists associated with the Communist Party did not join *Zehreeli* but formed into *Nagarik Rahat aur Punarvaas Samiti* which at various times collaborated with or competed with *Zehreeli*.

References

- Baviskar, A. (2005). 'Red in Tooth and Claw? Looking for Class in Struggles Over Nature', in R. Raka and M. Katzenstein (eds), *Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power, and Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield): 161–78.
- Bevington, D. and Dixon, C. (2005). 'Movement-Relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism', *Social Movement Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 185–208.
- Bhopal Survivors' Movement Study (2009). *Bhopal Survivors Speak: Emergent Voices from a People's Movement* (Edinburgh: Word Power Books).
- Chatterjee, P. (1999). 'Introduction: A Political History of Independent India', in P. Chatterjee (ed.), *State and Politics in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press): 1–39.
- Chouhan, T. R. (2004). *Bhopal: The Inside Story*, 2nd edn (Goa: The Other Press).
- Corbridge S. and Harriss J. (2001). *Reinventing India*, 2nd edn (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

- Cox, L. and Nilsen, A. G. (2007). 'Social Movements Research and the "Movement of Movements": Studying Resistance to Neoliberal Globalisation', *Sociology Compass*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 424–42.
- Eckerman, I. (2005). *The Bhopal Saga* (Hyderabad: Universities Press).
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin).
- Fuller, C. J. and Benei, V. (2001). *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India* (London: Hurst and Company).
- Griffin, C. (1983). *Curriculum Theory in Adult and Lifelong Education* (London: Croom Helm).
- Hanna, B., Morehouse, W. and Sarangi, S. (eds) (2005). *The Bhopal Reader* (Goa: The Other Press).
- Johnson, R. (1979). "'Really Useful Knowledge": Radical Education and Working-Class Culture, 1790–1848', in J. Clarke, C. Critcher and R. Johnson (eds), *Working Class Culture* (London: Hutchinson of London): 75–102.
- Labunska, I., Stephenson, A., Brigden, K., Stringer, R., Santillo, D. and Johnston, P. A. (1999). 'The Bhopal Legacy: Toxic Contaminants at the Former Union Carbide Factory Site, Bhopal, India: 15 Years After the Bhopal Accident', Technical Note 04/99, Greenpeace, Exeter.
- Martinez-Alier, J. (2002). *Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation* (Cheltenham and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar).
- Mukherjee, S. (2010). *Surviving Bhopal: Dancing Bodies, Written Texts, Oral Testimonials of Women in the Wake of an Industrial Disaster*, Palgrave Studies in Oral History (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Nilsen, A. G. (2006). 'The Valley and the Nation – the River and the Rage: A Study of Dispossession and Resistance in the Narmada Valley, India', Unpublished PhD Thesis, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Bergen.

8

Notes Towards Prefigurative Epistemologies*

Sara C. Motta

In a rundown community centre in *La Independencia* neighbourhood of La Vega shanty town, Caracas, in August 2006, members of *Comités de Tierra Urbana* (Urban Land Committees, CTUs) came together to develop an analysis of their experiences of participating in the CTU and the successes and barriers they had encountered in their strategy to ‘democratize the city’¹. The meeting lasted for two consecutive weekends during which the 20 or so participants began by discussing their history of involvement in the CTUs. These histories were written up and displayed around the room. Facilitators then began discussions orientated towards identifying the major themes that united participants’ experiences in order to develop a strategic orientation and understanding of the CTU project in La Vega. This would also form the basis of a document to be taken by elected participants to a regional level meeting to be held a number of months afterward. The key themes that came out of that meeting were the relationship of the CTUs of La Vega with the *Oficina Técnica Nacional para la Regularización de la Tenencia de Tierra Urbana* (National Technical Office for the Legalization of Urban Land Ownership, OTN) – the state institution to which the CTUs are attached, especially around the question of the granting of funds to the *Campamiento Pionero* project of La Vega, the tensions that arise in light of the different demands and logics of CTU members working in the community and those working in the state, the problems in moving from the gaining of individual land title towards democratic control over land and services, and the problems of maintaining community participation in CTU projects. Discussions around these issues and the causes for the problems as well as potential solutions were debated. Thus by the end of the meeting a number of key themes as well as a variety of potential solutions to these problems had been identified. This same process was happening amongst CTU communities all over Venezuela, first at the local level, then at the regional before finally moving on to the national level (not without many hiccups and therefore unevenly across the national space). These multiple processes of a systematization

of experience would form the basis of the movement's theorization of its identity, objectives and strategy for the medium term.²

This experience and the multiplicity of such experiences that it is part of constitutes the attempt by the CTUs to develop collective knowledge-forming processes through which to forge the movement's strategy, identity and analysis. It is explicit in its aims of breaking with the patterns of traditional Venezuelan politics, as well as those of the orthodox left, wherein political strategy, identity and analysis were developed by movement intellectuals. Their epistemological practice is linked to a political practice which problematizes a politics led by vanguards or organized in a hierarchical manner in which individuals delegate their intellectual and political powers to a political leadership. For the CTUs, this political practice reinforces a politics which disempowers ordinary people. They instead seek to develop their utopias as part of the process of creating alternative logics of being and doing. The CTUs project is relational and open, always moving, adapting and evolving. It is a prefigurative post-representational politics, a politics that is intellectual, affective, subjective and collective. As Sitrin illustrates in relation to Argentina – but which can also be used to express a dominant strand in the political realities within the CTUs:

The movements... see their everyday experiences and creations as the revolution they are making. It is the use of *horizontalidad* as a tool and a goal, along with self-organized autogestion, taking place in territories, both geographic as well as in the imaginary, that come together to help in the process of creating dignity and freedom in the now.

(Sitrin, this book: 271)

This also illustrates a number of important processes for academics whose aim is to work with such movements to co-produce epistemological practices that are also prefigurative and post-representational. It suggests that movements based in particular places can develop theoretical knowledge via a systematization based on their political experiences, that knowledge for social transformation and political change can be relational and open, and that this process is immanent to these concrete experiences as opposed to territorially or intellectually transcendent. Such experiences cannot be engaged with sufficiently by many of the traditional radical epistemological categories that have been used to research social movements due to their rootedness in transcendent (territorial and intellectual) conceptualizations of the nature of theoretical knowledge. A classic example of this is the use of critical realism as the epistemological and ontological foundation of social movement research. This mismatch between epistemological categories and post-representational forms of politicization in the CTUs (and other similar movements) suggests the need for epistemological reflection (Escobar, 1992; De Sousa Santos, 2007, 2008; Shukaitis, 2009; Motta, 2009). Thus in this

chapter I seek to think through an epistemological praxis that can complement such new forms of subaltern politics. I thus take the critique of the politics of representation (Holloway, 2002a, 2002b; Bonefeld, 2003; Tischler, 2008) to the epistemological realm.

I develop this critique by engaging with the work of social movement researcher Hilary Wainwright, who bases her research in the methodology of critical realism. I argue that Wainwright's engagement with new social movements *does* move our engagement forward by conceptualizing the multiple forms that knowledge can take, embedding theory making within the concrete experiences and histories of communities in resistance, and visibilizing the practical, concrete knowledge produced by social movements. However, this engagement re-inscribes a vanguardist and disempowering division of labour in its conceptualization of how theoretical knowledge is created and the limitations on the role that she gives to social movements in this process; a re-inscription, I argue, that can be traced to the epistemological and ontological assumptions of critical realism. The ontological premises of her research are that structures and structural processes are hidden to concrete experience, and require a transcendent mediation to uncover them as their ontological origin is outside of concrete places and in the space of the national and international (Wainwright, 1994, 2003). This introduces an externality and dualism between structure and agency, which suggests different levels of being which result in different types of knowledge. Epistemologically, then, local communities produce concrete practical knowledge (congruent with the level of being they experience), which, whilst necessary, is unable to develop the abstract knowledge that can uncover and challenge structural processes and power relations and thereby produce systemic political change and social transformation. Accordingly, for Wainwright, the process of theoretical knowledge production occurs at a different level of abstraction and is developed with the use of qualitative methods, testing and trusted frameworks of theoretical knowledge (Wainwright, 1994, 2003, 2005, 2009). Thus theoretical knowledge is conceptualized as an object that can be created away from the concrete and then used to orientate the concrete knowledge of movements. By positing this understanding of theoretical knowledge and of the knowledge produced by social movements, a division of labour is re-inscribed in which there is intellectual labour and practical labour; and an epistemological and ontological dualism erected between the concrete knowledge (of particular places and communities) which is relational, and universal knowledge (in the space of structures by intellectual experts) which is fixed. Critical realism and its use in social movement research is thus unable to transcend an epistemology (and politics) of representation.

I argue that it is necessary to build on the insights of such engagements with 'other' types of knowledge by recognizing their ability to produce negative critique: to throw a brick in the window of normality and

destabilize the mystification and naturalization of capitalist social relations (Holloway, 2002b; Dinerstein, 2003). However, I also suggest that it is necessary to transcend the framework of critical realism and move towards a distinct ontological and epistemological conceptualization which opens up the possibilities of relational forms of theoretical knowledge construction immanent to the concrete political experiences of movements, knowledge as a verb, or a practice as opposed to a noun, or a thing (Gilbert, 2009). This builds and transcends negative critique, and moves towards the construction of positive critique (Bonefeld, 1992; Mohanty, 2003; Charnock, 2008; Tischler, 2008) as a prefigurative moment of social transformation. I suggest that the practices of knowledge construction as illustrated above by the CTUs, particularly their 'methodologies of democratic practice', are a useful starting point to begin to systematize and make visible ways of making knowledge that turn the ontological and epistemological assumptions of critical realism on their head. Their praxis suggests that it is not through individual abstraction away from movement struggle that universal/systematic knowledge able to support a post-representational politics can be constructed. Rather, it is constructed as a process of critical collective reflection within the moment of struggle. It is a form of theoretical knowledge that is relational and immanent, rather than fixed and transcendent. This suggests something about the nature of social reproduction and the relationship between structure and agency. Structures become theorized as processes comprised of alienated human practice, fundamentally reproduced because of the repeated performance of such inverted human practice. Therefore the local is the global as the global is a web of alienated social relations. Accordingly, the universal and systematic are immanent to the concrete.

The ontological and epistemological reflections about such processes of collective knowledge construction and theorization push towards the need for us to develop epistemological practice (as opposed to conceptual formula) in which the academic's role is destabilized and can lead (dependent on the processes of which she or he is a part) to a variety of reformulations of the practice and self-identity of social movement researchers seeking to co-construct such forms of politics. Potentially, she or he becomes a node in the construction of a dialogue between and within movements that results in the development of 'movement' relevant research. The types of relationships formed in this process challenge traditional conceptualizations and practices of theoretical knowledge creation, of the relationship between academic and community and of the privileged theoretical and epistemological role of the academic. When talking to Andres Antillano, one of the founders of the first CTUs in La Vega, he used a verb that captures the orientation that structures the search for such an epistemology orientation; the verb is *desaprender*³ – to unlearn. In unlearning my training as a critical realist I seek to tentatively contribute to the epistemological foundations of the growing

scholarship about movement relevant research (Barker and Cox, 2002; Bevington and Dixon, 2005; <http://www.interfacejournal.net/>), stretch our understanding and practice of such research and suggest another way of thinking about epistemology and the categories of analysis with which we engage with post-representational forms of subaltern politics. It is from these movements' practices that we can begin to unlearn our academic privilege and transform epistemology into a prefigurative practice of everyday life.

Activist academics, critical realism and post-representational politics

Social movement activist and academic Hilary Wainwright represents a strand of engagement with social movements that is complex and committed, and that captures many elements of new forms of popular political practice that challenge 'old' ways of thinking about and making politics. As she argues, such 'new' social movements

are insisting that the power to change society is not something that you can delegate to others, to a political party; it is something that lies within yourself, working with others first to refuse to be complicit in existing power relations and therefore to find and invent the means of resistance and second, as we resist to create alternatives, to struggle to pre-figure in the present what we are trying to achieve in the future. Change is therefore something that we make in our everyday life, in our own relationships, economic, social and political.

(Wainwright, 2004: 3)

Wainwright's engagement with new forms of community politics challenges narrow functionalist understandings of politics, in which popular political agency is conceptually limited to the delegation of power to elected and non-elected elites. She makes visible the practical critique of such forms of political and social transformation occurring in many popular social movements. She thus widens our analytic and conceptual gaze. This opens a window upon subaltern politics that brings legitimacy and visibility to new forms of popular politics.

The development of democratic and inclusive political practices is premised, as she rightly argues, upon a challenge to traditional progressive understandings of knowledge which assumes that 'the party and its leadership would develop, and disseminate this knowledge' (ibid.: 4). New movements have developed 'a radical critique of that understanding of knowledge and pointed, even in the way that they organize, to the importance of knowledge embedded in experience and in practice' (ibid.).

Accordingly, Wainwright develops a critique of Leninism and traditional social democracy for its narrow conceptualization of power, knowledge and

political change. In terms of knowledge, she criticizes the idea that there is one type of knowledge, produced by party leaders and intellectuals, which can lead the masses on a path to transformation. She therefore conceptualizes a variety of knowledge produced at different levels of abstraction and with different forms; those produced in everyday life, such as tacit, practical and empirical, and those developed through research, such as theoretical and abstract. She concludes that in order for political parties and intellectuals to recognize and engage with other types of knowledge requires a 'genuine recognition of practical knowledge, of both tacit and ephemeral kinds, and a commitment to its expression' (ibid.: 97). This, she argues, prevents the suppression, invisibilization and exclusion of workers and ordinary people's creative capacities, experiences and contributions to knowledge.

She defends this from the methodological position of critical realism (CR). For Wainwright CR has the capacity to harmonize and clarify the practice of movements, aiding in the development of structural critique and transformation. In particular, it provides the tools to theorize the practical insights of movement activists. This is because, as she explains,

Critical realists have conducted a philosophical investigation which helps us to ground some of the insights implicit in movement practice, and to make use of them . . . In its most radical form, critical realism argues that there exist several levels of being, or reality. Already this implies the likelihood of different kinds of knowledge: the existence of different forms of being requires different kinds of knowing if these distinct levels are to be understood.

(Ibid.: 103–4)

Her embrace of CR methodology therefore implies a particular conceptualization of the ontology of social reproduction. It is based on the ontological claim that social reality is constituted by underlying social structures and causal mechanisms which we can identify and explain through scientific investigation (Bhaskar, 1998: 21–2). Scientific investigation allows the development of causal explanations and concepts. Accordingly, events are considered to have real 'structural' causes, whereby a particular configuration of social relations enables the production (or 'generation') of a particular observed event (Bhaskar, 1975, 1998). Thus, any attempt to explain the occurrence of such an event requires the identification and conceptualization of the social relations that generated it (and the 'generative' mechanisms that are part of these relations). Structures are external to events and agents, despite ultimately being changeable and reproduced by agents, this capacity for transformation being dependent on the development of their understanding of such structural processes and forces (Wainwright, 1994; Bailey, 2009). Social movement struggle therefore unfolds within the structures of the capitalist market and state.

The process of scientific discovery is therefore to identify, conceptualize and improve upon existing conceptions of generative social relations and the process through which these relations generate observed events. These causal explanations are largely explicated via qualitative research that seeks to uncover the structures, mechanisms and emergent properties of the social world. The conceptual and explanatory validity of CR theories is based upon those that most accurately depict real social relations and mechanisms and, as a result, are also those that will be most 'usable' over time precisely because they are (more) true. Thus, whilst accepting that 'truth' is ultimately a matter of established conventions between social actors, 'not just any conventions will do: they must be usable in practice' (Sayer, 1992: 69). Realists accordingly reject the fact-value divide. They therefore argue that they can expose the ideological distortions of the social world (together with the reasons for the prevalence of such 'false consciousnesses'). CR social researchers aim 'to make the mundane exotic and the exotic mundane' (Wacquant and Bourdieu, 1992: 68) by showing the complex processes that explain the world of appearances comprised of facts and events, and therefore demystify normality. Scientific knowledge takes the form of an object that can be used to understand the production of specific events of exclusion, for example, concrete experiences of disempowerment and exploitation. It can be combined, therefore, with the concrete knowledge derived from communities' experiences of the specific manifestations of these processes in everyday life.

Wainwright's praxis visibilizes other forms of knowledge, stretches our understanding of politics and social transformation and supports an open, experimental and creative theory and politics of knowledge. In this she does indeed engage with elements of new social movement practice and knowledge creation. However, Wainwright conceptualizes the categories of knowledge that movements create in a way that, whilst recognizing their creative capacities, also infantilizes those capacities by limiting them to a certain form: practical, tacit and empirical. For Wainwright, movements are based in particular contexts within which they experience the effects of broader social processes and attempt to find ways to overcome the particular form of these power relations in their local communities. As she argues,

In their ways of organising – whether it was the consciousness raising groups of the women's movement or the multi-union, multi-workplace committees of the radical trade union movement – the social movements lived out their rejection of existing views about knowledge. They valued practical, often tacit knowledge not available in codified, written form but embedded in people's skills, emotions and creative activity.

(Wainwright, 2005: 3)

However, she goes on to argue that such emotional and practical knowledge, in order to become strategic and global, needs to be combined with

theoretical research-based knowledge. This dualism between the global and the local, between structure and agency, and between types of knowledge, how these different types of knowledge are produced differently and the different agents they are produced by, re-inscribes ontological reification and epistemological vanguardism. This re-inscription is premised in a particular division of labour in which theoretical and strategic knowledge is produced at a distance from social movement struggle with the use of particular tools of analysis. It is a conceptualization of theoretical knowledge and concurrent practice that is non-relational and transcendent; knowledge as a noun, or a thing (Gilbert, 2009).

CR's claim to be a form of emancipatory critique is therefore limited, as its epistemological framework and ontological conceptualization is unable to move away from elitism and a reification of the categories of social reality as they are. CR's elitism is based in the claim that conceptual abstraction away from the observable and lived experience of ordinary people is at the heart of critical theory. As Wainwright argues,

It shows how experimental activity in social science presupposes the existence of social structures or mechanisms which generate or produce more or less directly observable phenomena. These structures and mechanisms are not themselves necessarily directly observable – though in some cases they can be. They need to be discovered, through experimentation, through investigation following various clues and with empirical controls of different sorts.

(Wainwright, 1994: 104)

Consequently, a dualism between theory and practice is embedded within the epistemological premises of CR research. This leads to the construction of theory which is based on the process of the reification of categories of analysis. This is premised upon a conceptualization of ontology in which structures have an externality to agency. Agency works within structures which have internal contradictions (in the case of capital) or are distinct from capital (in the case of the state). This form of structuralism externalizes the relationship between structure and agency and global and local. However, it can be argued that the notion of social objectivity is itself a reified abstraction, as the reality in which humans exist has no independent existence from us. Rather, it is the social practice of labour which constitutes capitalist 'structures'. Therefore structures are conceptualized as practices and processes which must be constantly reproduced through alienated social practices, relations and subjectivities (Bonefeld, 2003; Fedirici, 2004). Understanding the constitution of social reality like this enables us to see the generic as inherent to the specific and the abstract as inherent to the concrete (Bonefeld, 2003; Motta, 2009). This destabilizes the epistemological division of labour suggested by CR as it demystifies the claim of

ontological stratification as itself a reification of perverted forms of social existence.

Thus, CR conceptualization and analysis can uncover structural causes of observable events such as inequality, but it does so in a way that reifies such structures as forms outside of our human practice. It can therefore potentially contribute to negative critique by destabilizing the mystifications and naturalizations of everyday social relations. However, this is not the same as either developing the desire for transcendence or achieving such transcendence in practical negation and constructive critique (MacIntyre, 1994; Amsler, 2009). CR research therefore in practice reproduces capitalist social reality through its rigid stratification of contradictory practice into structures of thought.

The paradoxical theoretical and ontological frame of CR is expressed in the paradoxes of its epistemological contribution. Even as critical realism can affirm the existence of other knowledge, it argues that theoretical knowledge is produced through research and research conducted in a particular way (Wainwright, 1994). This, however, reproduces the practice/theory dualism in a way that is internal to the conceptualization of the theory: that is, the mass produces concrete practical knowledge, whilst the theorist produces universal theoretical knowledge. This is not to claim that communities by the very act of their coming together develop a critique of the social relations through which their experiences of domination and exclusion are manifested. Rather, it is a critique of CR's conceptualization of social reality and the resultant epistemological assumptions about the process and methodology via which communities can and do achieve such an understanding and analysis. This critique opens up the possibilities of thinking through with the communities in resistance in which we participate how we might practice an epistemology that is prefigurative and post-representational.

Wainwright argues that we need a new politics of knowledge and a new epistemology. I agree. Wainwright can help us to negate theoretically the social relations of capitalism, but she falls short of practical negation and the creation of worlds beyond capitalism. We can learn a lot about what a new epistemological practice and politics might look like by engaging with the epistemological praxis of movements like the CTUs. Academics who seek to move beyond epistemological privilege can, in dialogue with such movements, begin to imagine and practice prefigurative epistemologies.

The CTUs and prefigurative epistemologies in everyday life

[T]he masses no longer need [the intellectual] to gain knowledge: they know perfectly well, without illusion; they know far better than he and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves.

(Foucault and Deleuze, 1977: 4)

This intervention seeks to suggest some elements of an epistemology that can contribute to a reflexive and open conceptualization of movement-relevant research able to engage with social movements that develop a post-representational anti-capitalist politics. This suggests a deconstruction of academic epistemic privilege and to some extent an unlearning of what we 'know' (Tischler, 2008; Shukaitis, 2009). The epistemological underpinnings of CR appear unable to escape from the confines of a capitalist division of labour and reification of capitalist social relations. They can contribute to a theoretical negation of social reality, but fall short in their ability to enable practical negation and creation. How do we (as academics seeking to move beyond epistemological privilege) therefore develop an epistemological orientation that enables the development of prefigurative knowledge practices that support the creation of the worlds beyond capitalism that we desire?

I turn here to the reflexive praxis of the CTUs in order to illustrate the ways in which theory is created by ordinary people in struggle and the types of questions and reflections this suggests for researchers who wish to co-construct prefigurative epistemologies. Underlying the politics of the CTUs is the practice of realizing the generic in the concrete, in theoretical analysis and in epistemological practice. This has been developed out of reflection about their experiences with vanguardism in the Punto Fijo period,⁴ which were disempowering and disarming, and the attempts from that period to create more horizontal forms of politics linked to liberation theology and popular education.⁵ Learning from experience and creating from the position of insubordination and negation characterizes the epistemological politics of the CTUs. They illustrate some of the elements of a prefigurative post-representational epistemology, particularly through the development of a methodology of democratic practice, elements of which can be reflectively embedded into our epistemological practices.

The CTUs, created in February 2002 as the result of a presidential decree (1666), now constitute one of most powerful and autonomous organizations of the popular sectors, with over 6000 CTUs nationally. The original decree stated the need, in light of the illegal status of the majority of shantytown dwellers, for the formation of Urban Land Committees based on local community assemblies that would coordinate and organize the struggle for the legalization of their individual property rights. However as Irma⁶ commented, 'This process began as a decree. It is us who have made it real, have given it its meaning and content, through our struggles, our mistakes and our successes.' Thus, whilst initiated by the central government, it has created a context for the development of a praxis that escapes the boundaries of the decree's original intent.

The CTUs' immediate objectives were reached relatively quickly. By January 2003, over 1000 titles had been granted. Many of the CTUs'

founding members of La Vega had worked from the 1980s in popular education projects around culture and literacy, and had been involved in struggles over access to water and education (Ruiz, 2007; Fernandes, 2008). From these experiences, an uneven political culture emerged, in which politics was conceptualized as community self-actualization based upon equal collective participation in the formation of analysis, identity and strategy. Therefore, some key individuals organized regular meetings to discuss problems in the community related to housing and environment. They found that despite their successes in achieving legalized recognition of their property rights, this did not solve the problem of decent housing, as there was a lack of water and electricity, unpaved roads and community problems such as delinquency.⁷ The understanding of their objectives, through a process of reflection and discussion based on their concrete experiences, began to expand. The forging of a post-representational epistemology therefore came out of their negation of vanguardist politics and embrace of *bassista* politics linked to liberation theology and popular education. From their beginnings they thus explored collective processes of systematization of experience from the concrete. At this stage, this focused on developing analysis to understand the limitations of juridical rights in the overcoming of disempowerment and exclusion and the links between education, health and housing in their experiences of domination and forging of resistance.

Central to this was the practice of reflection upon and conceptualization of their history of struggle in order to build the knowledge to move forward with their project. Thus, in La Vega they began to make '*Cartas del Barrio*', a local community history of each *barrio* (neighbourhood), based upon a collective endeavour to collect material from a *barrio*'s founders and to compile that material into a book and/or video form. This is then used as a tool for stimulating reflection and debate amongst the community. They also began to be involved in organizing community assemblies that discussed issues from culture to problems of community disintegration. Through their experiences, as Irma observes, 'We put down roots with our communities. We were searching together for a path, an identity. We began to debate the questions of land, of democracy, of community and to work in assembly in order to improve our communities to democratise land, the city.'

As a result of these experiences in the Metropolitan Region Assembly the CTUs produced a publication, known as '*el librito azul*' (the blue book) or '*Democratización de la ciudad y transformación urbana*' in 2003. In this, the work of the CTU and their objectives were expanded from a narrow notion of legalization of property rights towards a notion of 'democratization of the city', in which access to decent living conditions, democratic participation in the organization of community relations, a dignified life and decent infrastructure within communities were seen as integral to the question of housing and environment (CTU, 2003). In 2004, the *Centros de Participación para la*

Transformación del Hábitat (Centres of Participation for the Transformation of Environment, CPTH) were born – physical spaces to unite the community around an integral, participatory approach to land and environment and deepen and develop the objectives of ‘democratizing the city’.

However, during this period, problems of maintaining participation and overcoming traditional hierarchical relationships within the CTUs surfaced. Thus as Mariela⁸ discussed, ‘I am so used to rallying the community and the community is so used to me speaking for them that when we get to the assembly if I am not there they wait for me. Then when I am there they look to me to structure the meeting.’ In light of such experiences the CTUs, via the OTN, organized an ‘*equipo de formadores*’: a group of individuals committed to using collective reflexive practice as a means of stimulating participation, the creation of emancipatory subjectivities and the formation of analysis by CTU communities. All the promoters are themselves from the communities of the CTUs and entered into a process in which they reflect upon their participation in the community together in order to develop a diagnosis and systemization of the causes of uneven participation and the reproduction of de facto leadership. This illustrates the creative, open and experimental nature of their politics. It also illustrates elements of their theoretical critique of domination; it is not theorized as merely something external but rather as internal, a form of alienating social practice that results in the production of particular subjects and behaviours.

In 2005, a proposal was developed of the *Campamiento Pionero* (Pioneer Community, CP), 13 of which now exist in the country. This proposal is a means of overcoming the individualization of communities that is prevalent amongst the shantytowns and a way to forge autonomous communities based around self-government and a collective identity and practice able to sustain itself over time. The proposal centres on the creation of collective property rights, collective credit and the building of communities in and outside of the shantytowns. This involves not only the building of housing but the construction of self-governing communities.

The methodology that informs the development of a CP reflects and consolidates the principles of popular education as the acquisition of collective knowledge is guided by the needs of communities in their struggle for emancipation. Accordingly, the process of forming a CP community is based upon the gathering of a number of families to discuss how they wish to organize, design and build their community. The principles guiding these meetings are those of equal and horizontal participation and the forging of a collective identity through discussion and reflection. Facilitators from the *equipo de promotores* have worked in the formation of a number of such communities, one of which, Petare, is based in Caracas. Their role is not to tell communities what to decide or think, or how to act, but rather to facilitate the formation of problem-based learning that is orientated towards the

achievement of a strategy for the building of self-governing communities. Nora Machado, CTU facilitator from La Vega, explains:

If we want to talk about projects coming from below, then we can't take the role of leaders who come in and tell communities what, how and why they should do things. We have to create the conditions in which communities develop in equality and together their understanding of their situation, their analysis and their solutions. It is only in this way that we will break the old way of doing things.

The call to participate in the formation of a CP is open to all those who are either homeless or live in substandard or overcrowded conditions. CP meetings include a broad spectrum of people, from families who have been involved in political struggles for two decades to families who have never been involved in any collective organizing. The problems encountered in creating the conditions for equal collective reflection and participation are therefore immense. Many individuals are there in order to get a house, not necessarily to contribute to the formation of self-governing communities. Indeed, many of the conservative ideas that structure shantytown life are reinforced in discussions as individuals place blame on each other and neighbours for problems of crime and delinquency. Discussions about how to create a framework for collective reflection on experiences of impoverishment and reasons for joining the CP are being undertaken. This process, as I can testify, is neither spontaneous nor easily organized, as the political histories of the different communities and families within communities are diverse. Significantly, however, the CTUs are collectively facing and aware of these issues, and are attempting to develop forums and practices to overcome such unevenness. This is testimony to the reflexivity that structures their practice and how theoretical and conceptual knowledge creation is a practice embedded in their everyday political struggles. Such knowledge creation is constructed to prefigure the type of egalitarian post-representational politics they seek to construct. Collective theory making is both a process and an objective of their struggles.

In 2005, the idea of a national conference of the CTUs was proposed. It was agreed that steps towards preparing this meeting would be based on a multiplicity of meetings at a variety of spatial scales based around the methodology of democratic practice as illustrated at the beginning of this chapter. The structuring of collective reflexive practice had the objectives of bringing together the experiences of CTUs nationally, and moving from collective discussion on the successes and failures of political struggle to the development of some uniting strategic principles. As Andres Antillano explained,

the forging of an identity and strategic theorizing is a basis for building a movement of the shanty towns based on the creation of communities as

subjects of change producing knowledge able to forge a distinctive project of social transformation.

The actual experiences of organizing a multiplicity of assemblies starting at the local level, moving to the regional level and then the national was uneven, reflecting the uneven development of CTUs nationally and the experimental nature of the process. However, over 200 meetings were held at the local and regional level in which nearly half of the 6000 national CTUs participated. In these meetings, ideas and proposals for the national event were developed and spokespeople were chosen to attend the national meeting. As Hernan Peralta, a CTU member, said, 'I would say that this is the first [meeting] that begins to construct itself from the base . . . and the idea of the national meeting was to try to jump from the local meeting and to build a more profound discussion in terms of the mission, and expectations, and construction.'

The national meeting, held in November 2006 in Los Teques, Miranda State was described by participants as the 'first of its kind' because of the way it was organized. Approximately 500 spokespersons attended from around the country, representing their local CTUs. The three-day event was loaded with a rigorous schedule as participants split up in to three large working groups, which then broke in to smaller discussion groups composed of just over 15 people, in order to further elaborate proposals, experiences and comments on the three topics of debate: the CTUs' relationship with government institutions; with the local community; and with each other and other organizations. On Sunday morning, the working groups presented their conclusions before the general assembly and in the afternoon met with their fellow regional spokespersons to analyse next steps in their separate regions. Among the many proposals which came out of the working groups on Sunday morning which were put together in a final report discussed in early 2007 were the reform of decree 1666, the creation of a comprehensive school for youth and community work, the creation of more CTU community media (radio and newspaper), direct 'CTU support for the indigenous communities', 'the creation of a land bank' and the 'strengthening of community assemblies in order to offset party-aligned sectors that are not interested in grassroots power' (Fox, 2006). The experimental nature of this process is expressed in the attempt to take the critical reflexive praxis of the creation of prefigurative epistemologies to a qualitatively more developed level.

These experiences have been systematized in the gradual development of what the CTUs call 'a democratic methodology of practice'. Such a methodology illustrates prefigurative epistemologies of post-representational political struggle. The methodology is clearly influenced by the history of political struggle in the 1980s and 1990s, which was shaped by traditions of liberation theology, popular education and a focus on the capacity of communities to develop solutions to their own problems and in so doing create the

conditions for social transformation. The methodology works from the principle that communities are theoretical and strategic knowledge producers and that the role of the CTU facilitator is to create an environment for the formation and development of such knowledge. The ultimate objective is that everyone will be facilitators and all will be able to generate the conditions for the production of emancipatory subjectivities, knowledge and practices.

Beyond academic privilege? Deconstructing radical academic subjectivity through pedagogies of insubordination

The experience of the CTUs (one amongst many) points to the necessity of developing an epistemological orientation in which the conceptual dualism between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge, and the division of labour that accompanies this, is transcended. Their experiences are illustrative of the formation in struggle of a synthesis of theory and practice. Experiences such as these have to be reflexively factored into our epistemologies. They imply a shift away from the hierarchical form of research in which the researcher is the subject creating theory of/for our object of study (the movement) towards a horizontal form of research in which the researcher is a node within a network of emancipatory praxis (Deleuze, 1994). This involves a change in how we conceptualize knowledge, away from its reification and fixation and towards a fluid and open understanding.

Elements of this process involve an epistemological rethink which focuses on a conceptual reimagining that fosters the destabilization of academic epistemic privilege and the subversion of academic subjectivity. This opens up the possibilities of moving towards the co-construction of prefigurative epistemologies with movements in the global South, and also with the communities in which we live and work in the global North.

Conceptually, the split between theory and practice needs to be overcome in a way that views each as complementary elements of a constructive moment in theory production, as opposed to a relationship of dualism in which theoretical knowledge involves academic research, and movement knowledge is based in experience and practice as in CR. Accordingly, this implies problematizing the idea that theory is produced by individuals at a distance from collective struggle, and with this problematizing the subjectivity of the academic. This turns on its head the division of labour within social movement research orientated by CR, in which the expert academic produces theoretical universal knowledge and the movement practical concrete knowledge. Embedded within this is a critique of representation in the formation of knowledge and theory for and about politics. As opposed to trained experts being able to develop concepts and analysis in isolation from collective political struggle, communities' reflexive practice is the

site in which prefigurative collective knowledge practices are potentially created. This involves a shift away from a vertical understanding of theory production and towards a rhizomatic horizontal conceptualization of theory production in which theory is produced as internal to collective political struggle in the moment of reflexive practice about that struggle. In this discussion, I hope to have contributed to transcending this dualism conceptually, but I realize that I have not been able to do this practically.

Critical realists could well argue that what is being suggested is a form of constructivism which conflates ontology with epistemology and ends up romanticizing common sense, and in so doing re-reproduces conceptually and politically the reification and naturalization of social reality. This could be read from the focus here on lived experience. However, central to the epistemological position suggested is the assumption that it is *possible* for knowledge to be produced by communities in struggle when 'common sense' is problematized collectively and as a moment of political struggle. The work of the CTUs does exactly this, using a heritage of liberation theology and traditions of popular education. Thus the members of the CTUs have a political history influenced by the work of Freire and other popular educationalists. This suggests that the construction of prefigurative epistemologies involves questions of methodology and pedagogy, crucially the construction of pedagogies of insubordination. Perhaps the most important elements of this heritage that have impacted upon the CTUs' methodology are the focus on dialogue; the horizontal, collective and political nature of knowledge production; the focus on everyday life as the substance of critical theoretical reflection; and the linkage made between knowledge creation and political transformation. This is not to suggest that such elements of popular education are methodologies that can be placed upon community practice. They need to emerge organically and in relation to the specificities of place, history and political struggles of communities. Rather, this is to suggest that by focusing our attention upon such practices they can become reflexively embedded into our own epistemological practices: thus opening the door to practical experimentation with overcoming the limitations of representational forms of knowledge construction that arguably reinforce the divisions of labour and alienated social relations of capitalism.

The dialogical approach to learning favours dialogue and open communication. In this method, all teach and all learn. The dialogical approach contrasts with the anti-dialogical method, which positions the teacher (or in this case, the researcher) as the transmitter of theoretical knowledge: a hierarchical framework that leads to domination and oppression through the silencing of students' (or communities') theoretical and universal knowledge. According to Freire (2000: 67), 'no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. Men teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are "owned" by the teacher.'

Dialogue isn't just about deepening understanding, but is part of making a difference in the world. Praxis – action that is informed (and linked to certain values) – is central to this process. Praxis involves the steps of application, evaluation, reflection; and then return to theorizing. Social transformation is the product of praxis at the collective level (ibid.: 75). An important element of this is conscientization – developing consciousness, but 'consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality' (Taylor, 1993: 52). Implicit within this is that meaning exists within *ourselves*, rather than in external forms.

Educational activity is accordingly situated in the lived experience of participants. The historically oppressed are subjects rather than objects. As subjects with mastery over their own education, learners become actively engaged in their own education, and ultimately in their own destinies. As subjects, those who live in oppressive circumstances 'find their own voices', and thus rename the world as they know and experience it, rather than in blind conformity with those who wield authority (Freire, 2006).

Central to these ideas is the concept of transformative (political) learning. Popular education aims at getting people to understand their world around them, so they can take back control collectively and develop their autonomy. This involves understanding, intervening and transforming the(ir) world (ibid.). These insights are directly relevant for the creation of prefigurative epistemologies. They suggest that knowledge is produced collectively, via reflection, within political struggle, based upon the lived experiences and struggles of excluded and marginalized communities. Researchers can potentially play a variety of roles within this process: from facilitator of reflexive praxis, to translator of movement theory from a particular context to other contexts, to participant in the process of developing such prefigurative knowledge practices. However, which role is played depends upon a dialogical relationship between researcher and community based upon respect and trust.

These reflections inevitably push us as researchers attempting to participate in the co-construction of prefigurative epistemologies with movements in the global South to deconstruct our epistemic privilege and blur the boundaries between research and politics, public and private, subject and community. They suggest that we cannot be engaged in such a politics of research and ignore the potential relevance of these practices and disruptions in the other spheres we inhabit in our life and work. De-politicizing and reifying our practices and positions within these other spheres, in light of these reflections, becomes increasingly uncomfortable and problematic. These experiences and the reflections and epistemological practices that may result, therefore, also push us to think about how the theoretical knowledge practices of movements such as the CTUs in the global South can teach us something about a politics and knowledge construction that is prefigurative

and post-representational; one which can contribute to the creation of other worlds that we desire *here*. This disrupts not only academic privilege, and the dualisms between concrete knowledge and theoretical knowledge embedded within much social movement research, but also the dualisms between North and South, turning our (the) world upside down.

Conclusion: notes towards prefigurative epistemologies

This chapter does not seek to disqualify the work of social movement researchers such as Hilary Wainwright working in the critical realist tradition. Rather, it seeks to build on the positive elements of their rethinking of the politics of epistemology in order to overcome the limitations of such work: most importantly its reimposition of a traditional conceptualization of how theoretical knowledge is constructed which re-inscribes a disabling and alienating division of labour between theoretical and concrete knowledges practices. Such social movement research is able to develop theoretical negation but unable to engage with practical negation and constructive creation of post-representational forms of politics. My aim has been to build upon Wainwright's insights through an engagement with the CTUs' processes and methodologies of theoretical knowledge construction, in order to suggest some elements of an epistemological orientation that can support the continued development of movement relevant research linked to social movements whose politics is post-representational and prefigurative.

Critical realist research can provide explanations of the causes of events and surface appearances. In its more radical expressions, such as the work of Hilary Wainwright, it also recognizes other forms of knowledge, argues for the need to recognize the knowledge based in the experiences and practices of movements, and accordingly conceptualizes a need for a politics and politics of knowledge that are inclusive, participatory and creative. However, such research falls short of contributing to the creation of constructive critique via its re-inscription of the practice/theory dualism and classic vanguardist division of labour by arguing that movements produce particular and concrete knowledge and that the role of the theorist is to produce theoretical knowledge that can orientate that practical and concrete knowledge towards a more universal and general theorization able to challenge macro-structures of power.

Critical realism, therefore, reproduces the flaws of theoreticism and elitism. It can contribute to a type of theoretical negation that destabilizes mystifications of social reality and historicizes capitalism. However, it is unable to contribute to practical negation and constructive critique in relation to post-representational forms of politics, because of its ontological reification of the forms of capitalism that become epistemological straitjackets which reproduce alienated social practice. The epistemological

orientation that can begin to overcome some of the dualisms between theory and practice, expert and layperson, concrete and universal found in these frameworks are premised upon an expansion of our understanding of the nature of theory, the process of the construction of theory, the role of the academic as producer of knowledge and the role of practice. Accordingly, it is necessary to expand the notion of theoretical practice to include the collective reflection of communities in struggle. Theory, therefore, becomes an open instrument, derived from and by social movements in their attempts at systematization of experience and the creation of emancipatory subjectivities. The theorist becomes the collective reflexive thinker. A researcher in solidarity with such struggles for social justice can thereby engage in a horizontal relationship of mutual 'learning' in which abstraction is based upon closeness as opposed to distance from lived experience and in which epistemology becomes a prefigurative practice of everyday life.

The CTUs are an example in practice of prefigurative post-representational epistemologies which develop the immanent theoretical from the concrete. This is based on a heritage of liberation theology and popular education in their struggles over water, land and education in the 1980s and 1990s, and a rejection of vanguardist, representational politics characteristic of the *punto fijo* period and the orthodox Venezuelan left. Despite the challenges and uneven nature of this process, their self-reflexivity is demonstrated by their reactions to the successes and failures of organizing CTUs, developing the CP project and co-coordinating the 2006 national meeting. Theoretical knowledge production is collective, not individual; forged in the heart of struggle as opposed to the isolation of abstraction at a distance. Localized political struggles have the capacity to combine the concrete and the abstract, the particular and the universal. This capacity is immanent in the lived experiences of such communities of resistance. The type of theory that is a result of such collective reflexive praxis forges projects of social transformation which attempt to avoid the alienated relations of power characteristic of vanguardist forms of politics and knowledge creation.

This suggests a transcendence of academic epistemic privilege and a subversion of academic subjectivity: not only so 'we' as researchers in the global North can contribute to post-representational politics in the global South, and in so doing stretch the practice and understanding of movement relevant research; but fundamentally how we can *learn* from these practices, and reorientate our practices in the here and now. It suggests a rupture in the separations and categorizations that orientate academic/activist subjectivity, and a taking of the pedagogies and methodologies of prefigurative epistemologies into our everyday lives as researchers, teachers, workers, mothers, activists. Where this might lead (both individually and collectively) is unknown, but it contributes to opening up the possibilities of creating the worlds we desire in the present.

Notes

*I would like to thank Andy Robinson for our fruitful discussions about the notion of post-representational epistemological practices, David Bailey for his insights about critical realism (CR), Sarah Amsler for our ongoing discussions about the possibilities of radical praxis in the neoliberal university, the Nottingham Political Ethnography Group for creating a stimulating environment to engage about these issues in our work, the Nottingham Free School, particularly Dom and Ben, for our development of critical pedagogies in the communities in which we work, Jennifer Martinez for a wonderful insight about the implications of CR ontology and, last but not least, Camille Herreman for politicizing the private as part of our struggles and therefore her support in looking after my daughters so I could finish this chapter and finalize, with Alf Nilsen, the book project.

1. The Metropolitan Region Assembly of the CTUs produced a publication, known as '*el librito azul*' (the blue book) or '*Democratización de la ciudad y transformación urbana*' in 2003. In this the work of the CTUs and their objectives were expanded from a narrow notion of legalization of property rights towards a notion of 'city democratization', in which access to decent living conditions, democratic participation in the organization of community relations, a dignified life and decent infrastructure within communities were seen as integral to the question of housing and environment.
2. My thanks for Alf Nilsen for suggesting I structure the chapter with a vignette at the beginning and for Jennifer Martinez for confirming that these practices were still structuring the CTU's practice in her presentation 'Collective Knowledge Production in Practice: A Window into the Life of a Social Movement and Venezuelan Politics', Emancipatory Knowledge and Practice, Post Graduate Workshop, CSSGJ, University of Nottingham, 19 January 2010.
3. Author discussion with Andres Antillano, 26 August 2006.
4. This was the political pact between the political elites of AD (*Acción Democrática*) and COPEI (*Partido Social Cristiano de Venezuela*), which maintained a 'formal' power-sharing democracy and was the basis of a distributional coalition funded by oil rents. It ensured the exclusion of political and social forces outside the orbit of either political force. For many in the shantytowns, therefore, the experience of the Punto Fijo (1958–99) system was one of political, social and economic exclusion. This exclusion occurred within a context of a party system and a democratic representative state and regime. It is from such experiences that the mistrust of political parties and political liberalism becomes both a rational and logical political response from those interested in progressive change in Venezuela.
5. Contribution made in workshop organized by author comparing popular struggles in the UK with those of Venezuela, 18 August 2006, CPTH, La Independencia, La Vega, Caracas. The heritage of popular education and liberation theology is discussed in the book about a priest el padre Wuytack who arrived in Venezuela in 1966 to start a worker-priest mission, which was banned by the Pope. While living in La Vega, he helped to organize communities and took part in a famous strike at the local cement factory. He was expelled for subversive activities in 1972. For further details of Wuytack's experiences in Venezuela and La Vega see Ruiz (2007).
6. Author conversation, 7 August 2006, Caracas.
7. Series of conversations between author and Andres Antillano, one of the founders of the CTUs in La Vega, national coordinator and academic, and Nora Machado,

also one of the founders of the CTUs in La Vega, and national coordinator, July/August 2006, Caracas.

8. Series of conversations between author and Mariela Machado, CTU representative, July/August 2006, Caracas.

References

- Amsler, S. (2009). 'Ethnographies of Critique: Critical Judgement as Cultural Practice', Paper presented at The Future(s) of Critical Theory Conference, Frankfurt Am Main, 19–21 March.
- Bailey, D. (2009). *The Political Economy of European Social Democracy: A Critical Realist Approach*. Ontological Explorations Series (London and New York: Routledge).
- Barker, C. and Cox, L. (2002). '“What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us?” Academic and Activist Forms of Movement Theorizing', Alternative Futures and Popular Protests, 8th Annual Conference, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, April.
- Bevington, D. and Dixon, C. (2005). 'Movement-Relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism', *Social Movement Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 185–208.
- Bhaskar, R. (1975 [1997]). *A Realist Theory of Science*, 2nd edn (London: Verso).
- Bhaskar, R. (1998). *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 3rd edn (London: Routledge).
- Bonefeld, W. (1992). 'Social Constitution and the Form of the Capitalist State', in W. Bonefeld, R. Gunn and K. Psychopedis (eds), *Open Marxism, Vol.1: Dialectics and History* (London: Pluto Press).
- Bonefeld, W. (2003). 'Human Practice and Perversion: Beyond Autonomy and Structures', in W. Bonefeld (ed.), *Revolutionary Writing: 'Common Sense' Essays in Post-Political Politics* (New York: Autonomedia): 73–88.
- Charnock, G. (2008). 'Challenging New State Spatialities: The Open Marxism of Henri Lefebvre', *Manchester Papers in Political Economy*, No. 03/08, Centre for International Politics, University of Manchester.
- CTU (2003). *Democratización de la ciudad y transformación urbana* (Caracas: Cooperación Solidaria Instituto Municipal de Publicaciones), available at <http://www.banap.gov.ve/ctu/ctu.pdf>. accessed on 14 February 2010.
- Deleuze, G. (1994). *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- Dinerstein, A. (2003). 'Que se Vayan Todos! Popular Insurrection and the Asambleas Barriales in Argentina', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 187–200.
- Escobar, A. (1992). 'Imagining a Post-Development Era? Critical Thought, Development and Social Movements', *Social Text*, Vol. 31–32, 20–56.
- Fedirici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Canada: Autonomia Press).
- Fernandes, S. (2008). 'Barrio Women and Popular Politics in Chavez's Venezuela', *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 97–128.
- Foucault, M. and Deleuze, G. (1977). 'Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze', in D. F. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell): 205–17.
- Fox, M. (2006). 'Venezuela's Urban Land Committees Hold First National Meeting of its Kind', *VenezuelaAnalysis.com*, 6 November, <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/news/2051>. accessed on 14 February 2010.
- Freire, P. (2000). *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum).

- Freire, P. (2006). *Pedagogia da Autonomia: Saberes necessários á prática educativa* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra).
- Gilbert, J. (2009). *Catching the Knowledge Wave? The Knowledge Society and the Future of Education* (New Zealand: NZXER Press).
- Holloway, J. (2002a). *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today* (London: Pluto Press).
- Holloway, J. (2002b). 'Zapatismo and the Social Sciences', *Capital and Class*, Vol. 78, 153–60.
- MacIntyre, A. (1994). *The Macintyre Reader*, in Kelvin Knight (ed.) (Cambridge: Polity Press): 223–34.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminisms Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicising Solidarity* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press).
- Motta, S. (2009). 'Old Tools and New Movements in Latin America: Political Science as Gatekeeper or Intellectual Illuminator', *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 51, No.1, 31–56.
- Ruiz, F. (2007). *Francisco Wuytack: La Revolución de la Conciencia* (Caracas: Ministerio de la Cultura, Fundación Editorial el Perro y la Rana).
- Santos, B. De Sousa (ed.) (2007). *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies* (London: Verso).
- Santos, B. De Sousa (2008). 'Depolarised Pluralities: A Left with a Future', in P. Barrett, D. Chavez and C. Rodríguez-Garavito (eds), *The New Latin American Left: Utopia Reborn* (London: Pluto Press): 255–71.
- Sayer, A. (1992). *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach* (London: Routledge).
- Shukaiitis, S. (2009). *Imaginal Machines: Autonomy and Self-Organization in the Revolutions of Everyday Life* (London and New York: Minor Compositions, Autonomedia).
- Taylor, P. (1993). *The Texts of Paulo Freire* (Buckingham: Open University Press).
- Tischler, S. (2008). 'The Crisis of the Classical Canon of the *Class Form*', in W. Bonefeld (ed.), *Subverting the Present: Imagining the Future* (New York: Autonomedia): 161–78.
- Wacquant, J. D. and Bourdieu, P. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press).
- Wainwright, H. (1994). 'The Theory and Politics of Knowledge', in H. Wainwright (ed.), *Arguments for a New Left: Answering the Free Market Right* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell): 90–112.
- Wainwright, H. (2003). 'A "Mass of Sense": Knowledge, Power and Democracy', in H. Wainwright (ed.), *Reclaim the State* (London: Verso): 1–29.
- Wainwright, H. (2004). 'New Politics: Principles, Practice and Challenges', document available from the Transnational Institute, <http://www.tni.org/es/archives/act/2367>. accessed on 14 February 2010.
- Wainwright, H. (2005). 'Why Participatory Democracy Matters – and Movements Matter to Participatory Democracy', document available from the Transnational Institute, http://www.tni.org/archives/archives_wainwright_matter. accessed on 14 February 2010.
- Wainwright, H. (2009). 'Positively Public QED', in H. Wainwright with M. Little (eds), *Public Service Reform, But Not as We Know It! How Democracy Can Transform Public Services* (Newcastle: Compass and UNISON): 167–79.

9

Beyond Differences? Exploring Methodological Dilemmas of Activist Research in the Global South

Birke Otto and Philipp Terhorst

The best way to understand something is to try it. Levin in Greenwood and Levin (1998: 1)

Introduction

The proliferation of transnational organizations, such as large private corporations, international non-governmental organizations and global social movements, has created complex webs of global linkages and interdependencies, continuously creating new inequalities and gaps between those who have material and social opportunities and those who are denied them. Researchers and academics committed to fostering social justice (Motta, this book) are inextricably enmeshed in these webs of unequal and potentially exploitative transnational relations, even though their aim is to expose and counteract the societal effects of increasing (global) injustices.

This is a dilemma that is well known and much discussed in anthropological, feminist and postcolonial studies (for example, Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Bourgois, 1990; Abu-Lughod, 1991; Didur and Heffernan, 2003; Sanford and Angel-Ajani, 2006). As authors based at European academic institutions, we consider it necessary to reflect on our and others' personal experiences in activist research activities in the global South. It follows that this chapter is intentionally written from and about the position and perspective of the activist researcher of the global North whose research is with social movements in the global South. Activist research consciously calls into question neutral and objective forms of research and instead embarks on collaborative and political research processes with the intention of reclaiming (subaltern) voices and seeking change that brings about social justice. In this sense, activist researchers see themselves as part of social justice movements and collaborate through participatory methodologies. While we share the overall favourable assessment of the strengths and usefulness

of critical activist research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) and participatory action methodologies (Freire, 1982; Fals Borda and Rahman, 1991), designed with the explicit intention to address structural differences and develop equal relations and mutually beneficial research, we also support the more critical voices that have highlighted how these research constellations contribute and sustain global inequalities by silencing and exploiting the more oppressed. Thus, based on the assumption that activist research is sometimes unwittingly complicit with the structures it vehemently seeks to oppose, this chapter addresses the challenges and dilemmas that emerge in this particular research collaboration (Frenzel and Sullivan, 2009; Ghorashi and Wels, 2009; Diversi and Finley, 2010; Veissiere, 2010). We suggest that the particular research constellation that crosses north–south or other cultural–economic boundaries constructs, confronts and conjoins a duality between the subaltern – those who are struggling for voice and mobility within the dominant symbolic order – and the activist researchers – those who arguably move, speak and make themselves heard much more easily within that same order. This substantially affects and strains the research relationship. Yet the problems and challenges emerging in this constellation are rarely mentioned, acknowledged or discussed in academic publications (Buchy and Ahmed, 2007; Sultana, 2007; Diversi and Finley, 2010).

By problematizing the relationship between activist researchers and subaltern positions, we do not intend to reinvent the wheel but endeavour to point out some of the challenges that the activist research process may encounter. Following the authors Spivak (2008) and Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), we suggest that it is the underlying interdependent and possibly exploitative relationship that makes it difficult to overcome these differences. Referring to this theoretical understanding, it follows that the identity of the activist researcher is constructed through and made possible only because of the existence of the subaltern position – that which she wishes to change. Moreover, this binary is situated in a hierarchical power relationship based on access to social and material mobility and representation. If the intention of activist research is to overcome such differences, one must address the implications of dealing with these structural distinctions. Thus, the question we pose here is whether it is possible to jointly build a research process that allows for changing both the position of the activist researcher and the subaltern agent.

Based on valuable experiences and examples, we point to three dilemmas that can emerge in research practice. Firstly, we discuss the (im)possibility of translating experiences into Western academic codes. Secondly, we highlight the difficulty of escaping one's role as a mobile academic; a position that often entails privileges of access to decision making, financial resources and status. Lastly, we discuss the risk that this research relationship is complicit with unequal power relationships because of the difficulty in constructing new social relations and positionalities. These research practice dilemmas

create an uncomfortable terrain, which to some may appear trivial or not central in light of the manifold oppressive and exploitative relations that activist research aims to address and contest. Yet we argue that we must nevertheless point to these challenges to problematize the blurry line between re-enactments and changes in hegemonic power relations in order to permit imaginations and practices that can overcome this dilemma. Therefore, the last part of this chapter develops some conceptual underpinnings of activist research and further reflects on research experiences, especially by Terhorst (2009) and Gaber et al. (2009). It re-emphasizes the importance of seeing activist research as a political act that is at once defined by and helps to construct a common project through collaborative partnerships. At the same time, it acknowledges its experimental, contingent and precarious character with the recognition that movement politics as well as politics of research have a conflictual, complex and volatile nature. The constant and continuous attempt to resolve such structural problems on the micro-level in the research relationship is a prerequisite for changing broader hegemonic relations that construct positions of the mobile and immobile.

The mobile/immobile dichotomy in activist research

Paul Chatterton defines the activist researcher as ‘someone who sees the value in radical education and the public debate of ideas which challenge the norm’ (Chatterton, 2008: 421). In this sense, the epistemological background of activist researchers is founded in a commitment to confront social injustices with the objective of working together with social movements in revealing their manifestations and underlying origins. It actively calls into question neutral and objective forms of knowledge production and academic practice and consciously adopts the standpoint of the ‘victim’, the ‘marginalized’ or the social movement (Higginbottom, 2008: 158, 161). Rather than seeing academic activity as something that predominantly takes place for and within academic circles, activist research embarks on a collaborative knowledge-making process together with social movements. A key moment here is that research outcomes are not intended to solely remain within the boundaries of the academy but are instead produced for the marginalized, social movements and society in general (ibid.: 18; Bourgois, 1990; Freire, 2006; Sanford and Angel-Ajani, 2006; Kindon et al., 2007; Chatterton, 2008: 421; Chatterton and Pickerill, 2008). It follows that activist research can be described as a political act not only in the sense that it attempts to make visible, heard and understood what has no place in the dominant order (Rancière, 1999: 30) but also because it claims an active part in social movement activity. Activist research thus is social action for change, reclaiming (subaltern) voices and mobility and decolonizing social relations (Cox, 1998; Madison, 2005; Mathers and Novelli, 2005). In so doing, it challenges current and mainstream thinking within academia and beyond.

This sort of politically motivated research requires a collaborative methodology often considered to be based in participatory research. The latter suggests that researcher and participants ‘work together to examine a problematic situation or action to change it for the better’ (Kindon et al., 2007: 28). Participatory research has become a leading paradigm within the social sciences in recent years (*ibid.*). Much of this work has been influenced by Paolo Freire (2006), the Brazilian activist researcher who explicitly stressed the importance of education and social actions as two important pillars of research with marginalized communities. According to Freire, research and education have a role in ‘liberating’ the minds of the oppressed. They provide an opportunity to ‘develop a dynamic understanding informed by critical thought and action towards the goal of developing a “critical consciousness”’ (Truman et al., 2000: 7). Thus, participatory research is designed with the explicit intention of addressing such differences in research collaboration with the aim of developing equal relations and mutually beneficial research outcomes. The creation of a dynamic and reciprocal relationship of all research participants challenges the researcher/researched duality and intentionally avoids claiming a position of ‘objective’ distance to the subjects of research (*ibid.*: 4; Boesten, 2008: 8).

Contrary to many of their research partners, activist researchers based at Western academic institutions (who are the focus of this chapter) are highly mobile subjects in terms of geographical, social and material capital (Diversi and Finley, 2010: 15). In other words, they usually have the capacity to cross geographical–political borders easily, they can engage with a variety of people across social and cultural boundaries and they own the tools and resources to make themselves heard and understood within academic institutions and other hegemonic spaces. In many ways, they are both children and expressions of a global hegemonic order that has bestowed upon them the above-mentioned privileges. This position poses a challenge when activist researchers embark on projects with social movements in the global South, because it tends to create a relationship between the highly mobile researcher and the social movement activists from the South that is, in many cases, fragmented by class, culture and geographical differences. In other words, the research collaboration is embedded in a setting of material, social, political and power differentials resulting from histories of colonialism, development and local realities (Sultana, 2007: 374). Put differently, collaborative research between the mobile researcher and those who are denied the privileges of global mobility is an expression and reflection of injustices based within the broader global order. This creates challenges and tensions that affect the research process and its participatory methodologies in manifold ways.

The particular activist research methodology to write *with* rather than *about* the oppressed creates certain ethical and political problems that have been discussed widely, particularly by feminist ethnographers, who engage

in debates about the necessity of reflexivity with regard to positionality, representation and power relations (for example, Lewin, 2006; Buchy and Ahmed, 2007; Sultana, 2007; Gonzalez and Lincoln, 2008). Yet Nagar and Ali (2003) draw attention to the risk of focusing too strongly on individual and textual strategies and discussions around questions of (mis)representation and (in)authenticity. Such a preoccupation can distract from the joint research collaboration and instead, widen the gulf between theory production in the North and social activism in the South (*ibid.*: 375). In contrast, activist research addresses reflecting on roles and positionalities within the research relationship in a particular way. It attempts to strategically deal with structural differences through the construction of a common (political) project, whereby the relationship between researcher-outsider and activist-insider blend into a new set of relations (Cox, 1998; Colectivo Situaciones, 2003). This new set of relations is internal to the social reality and, in our view, internalizes the research activity in a way that can potentially lead to a constructive and productive processing of structural differences. It can do so as it seeks to formulate and compose a project for shared social action that incorporates both the movement activities and the research. Thereby, new and particular constellations can arise that blur if not supersede structurally overdetermined differences.

One result of this particular way of addressing structural differences through the move towards a common project is that the activist researcher can play a part in the production of movement knowledge. In the understanding of researchers like Wainwright (2005) and Cox (1998), the activist researcher has the possibility of picking up, analysing and abstracting from the tacit and empirical knowledge of social movements. This, however, suggests a distinction between the intellectual knowledge production of the researcher and tactical knowledge production of the activists: both have different objectives and strategies but are united by sharing the same political goal (Messer-Davidow in Nagar and Ali, 2003). In contrast, Motta (in this book) and Colectivo Situaciones (2003) argue that such a conceptualization only perpetuates the split and distance between the researcher as academic and the researched subject, thereby impeding the construction of a common project. With the intention of freeing the activist researcher of her academic status, Motta (in this book) suggests that the activist researcher rejects her special status as an academic and becomes one node among many in the production of what she calls popular knowledge. The Argentinean research collective Colectivo Situaciones argue in a similar line of thought that practical, popular movement knowledge can, through both the act and process of research, generate and thus compose other types of knowledge, which will eventually lead to more abstract and theoretical types of knowledge and make redundant the special status of the academic (*ibid.*). This move avoids the differentiation between abstract knowledge and practical knowledge within the common political project, a split that creates a

hierarchical relationship between the analyst of knowledge (the academic) and the creator of practice (the activist), and becomes yet another expression of the imposed structural differences of hegemonic power relations (Motta, this book). Despite the many discussions, attempts and problematizations of the creation of knowledge in the collaborative process of activist research, what remains, in our view, is the irresolvable fact that activist research takes place at the intersection of two often incompatible worlds. The dichotomy between those who are well embedded in the dominant social order (here: placed in the academic institution) and those who do not have access to social mobility and representation remains and continues to have substantive effects on the research process and relations among all participants.

With the intention of gaining a better understanding of the nature of this research relation, we will draw on writings of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988, 2008) and Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2005) to mark out the position of the activist researcher in relation to the subaltern activist. The term *subaltern* was originally coined by Gramsci to describe 'unorganised groups of rural peasants based in Southern Italy, who had no social or political consciousness as a group, and were therefore susceptible to the ruling ideas, cultures and leadership of the state' (Morton, 2003: 48). It was taken up by the Subaltern Studies Collective, a group of historians in India, who aimed to (re)write the histories of peasants and other subordinated groups in colonial India with the political objective of countering elite accounts of history and, in so doing, underlining historical and present forms of subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, age and status (Guha, 1988: 35). As vanguards of the activist research movement, the scholars of the Subaltern Studies Group aspired to locate and re-establish a 'voice' and hence agency of communities in postcolonial India. In her seminal article 'Can the Subaltern Speak', Spivak challenges these researchers by provocatively claiming that enabling subaltern speaking is conditioned by the structural order of the dominant (Western, metropolitan) discourse and therefore not possible. Speaking to be heard requires the expression of the subaltern position through the rationale and language of the dominant symbolic order. As a consequence, subaltern speaking surrenders its 'own voice' and is instead appropriated by the dominant discourse. Thus, the subaltern unwillingly re-inscribes her own subordinate position within society, a process which eventually becomes self-defeatist (Spivak, 1988, 2008: 20). What complicates the matter even more is that subaltern positions tend to lack the tools, or the 'infrastructure' to move within the mindset and language of the dominant discourse. In other words, subaltern speaking and resistance in particular takes place in 'another' voice that cannot make itself understood (Spivak, 1988). It is only heard as 'noise' that does not make sense within the realm of what can be said, seen or understood in the dominant order (Rancière, 1999: 29). Consequently, particular acts of resistance, Spivak

concludes, are simply not possible, as they are not framed within the dominant rationale (Spivak, 2008: 52). This is how resistance movements become excluded from participation in discussions, negotiations and decisions, not being recognized or taken seriously as legitimate channels demanding change. In sum, the term subaltern is a strategic move to refer to a position without identity, a position beyond the lines of representation, without possibilities for participation and deprived of the protections and privileges of the dominant global symbolic order (Butler and Spivak, 2007: 152).

Moving to Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005), we aim to point out how the activist researcher may relate towards this position of subalternity. Whereas Spivak focuses on the subaltern, Boltanski and Chiapello commence from a different point of analysis. The French authors conceive contemporary global society as a network that hosts those who are connected and interlinked, but also those who remain at the networks' fringes. The former possess 'the ability to move around autonomously not only in geographical space, but also between people, or in mental space, between ideas' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 361). They are streamlined, capable of having diverse connections, extending networks and are in a privileged position in terms of language, finances, access, status and geographical position (*ibid.*: 355). The latter, however, are excluded precisely because of their disaffiliation within the network. A disaffiliated subject, so Boltanski and Chiapello argue, is not attached 'to any of the chains whose intricate complex constitutes the social fabric' and is, consequently, 'no use to society' marking a new form of poverty (*ibid.*: 348ff.). Placed on the other side of this dichotomy, they are characterized primarily by their fixity, inflexibility and inability to move within the network or the dominant, metropolitan discourse (*ibid.*: 361). Despite their diversity, the mobile are enabled to move effortlessly not only geographically but also between different intersecting discourse – that is, they can speak and make themselves heard. Inhabiting the same spaces though, the immobile cannot move and cross as easily among discursive and physical borders (Spivak, 2008: 33). Where Boltanski and Chiapello are important for our argument is that they clarify the link between the mobile and the immobile. Instead of referring to exclusion to characterize the immobile, a term that tends to conceal the reasons for marginalization, the authors establish a connection between the 'excluded' and the 'better-off, particularly those who occupy privileged social positions' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 353ff.). The authors state:

The stand-in must remain in the place where he has been installed. His remaining in this node of the network allows the great man to move around. . . . What use would a mobile phone . . . be, if you could not be certain of finding someone at the end of the line, in place, on the ground, who can act in your stead, because he has what is to be acted on to hand?

(*Ibid.*: 363)

That is to say that some people's immobility is the condition of possibility for other people's mobility – those who remain fixed secure the presence of the mobile and flexible (*ibid.*: 362).

Referring to this theoretical understanding of the underlying dependent and possibly exploitative relationship between the mobile and the immobile, it follows that the identity of the activist researcher is constructed through and possible only because of the existence of the subaltern position – that which she wishes to change. Moreover, this binary is situated in a hierarchical power relationship based on access to social mobility and representation. We recognize that the theoretical construction of this dualism is not as clear-cut in research practice as it might be portrayed in this chapter. And we agree that an excessive concentration and discussion of these differences can discourage people from concrete political and strategic activities in the North and the South (Nagar and Ali, 2003; Motta, 2011). Yet, as the examples will show, real difficulties arise in research practice because of the above-mentioned dichotomy, which raises the question, if it is possible to jointly build a research process and infrastructure that allows for changing the position of the activist researcher and the subaltern to make both resistance and representation possible.

Experiences and challenges in activist research practice

The previous section has shown the difficult dichotomy in which the activist researcher finds herself. On the one hand, she intends to use her research and the collaborative research process to overcome societal injustices and inequitable differences. At the same time, her position as activist researcher is at least partly conditioned and made possible precisely because of these structural differences. This places the research collaboration in a dilemma that can lead to uncomfortable, confusing and challenging situations and outcomes. We now wish to sketch three concrete tensions and difficulties that can arise in the collaborative research process arising from our own and other activist scholars' reflections. Firstly, we refer to the (im)possibility of translating what the activist researcher sees and experiences into Western academic codes (making actions visible and speakable in the dominant order with the objective of making change happen). Secondly, we highlight the difficulty of escaping the role of the mobile academic, a position that creates particular dilemmas in the struggle for access to decision making, financial resources and status. Lastly, we discuss the risk that a research relationship reiterates the same unequal power relationships that it intends to overcome.

(Im)possibility of translations

In a fascinating study, Chandrasekara looks at the daily accounting practices of Sinhalese women in rural Sri Lanka. Chandrasekara's interventionist aim was to expose alternatives to the dominant Western accounting system

that relies on Eurocentric institutional views and disregards other forms of accounting. The research methodology was to reveal silenced or marginalized voices and 'let these women speak for themselves as a way to value what they have to say about accounting and financing' (Chandrasekara, 2009: s.l.). In her narrative, she accounts for the difficulties that confronted her in trying to translate the observed accounting practice into frames of dominant Eurocentric thinking. Sometimes, she states, it was simply impossible to fully understand and translate the accounting and financial practices of these women in terms of Western institutionalized accounting practices. More importantly, it risked the destruction of 'subaltern women by translating them out of social relationships and abstracting them from their culture and values leading them to isolation from their own social realities' (ibid.). In other words, establishing discursive access between the mindset in which the researcher moves and the subaltern women proved a challenging operation with no clear-cut solution.

Gaber et al. (2007) encountered a similar experience which forced them to reflect and reconsider their own sedimented and institutional thinking when attempting to make sense of the activities of a social project in a Brazilian favela in terms of resistance to neoliberal governmentality. Even though the research process was seen as a joint reflection with all participants, the researchers were quickly confronted with the limits of their own conceptual guidance that was grounded in Western theories they had learned and internalized at their home universities. Whereas the research findings might have been interesting in light of the reflection and furtherance of theoretical development, it seemed to make no sense and was at best of little use for the activities and participants of the social project (ibid., see also 2009). Consequently, the authors questioned the use and necessity of their research as it did not contribute directly to the activities of the social project. The possibility for producing research outcomes that mutually benefit both the researcher and the community has left some researchers in doubt (see, for example, Diversi and Finley, 2010) as to whether the research outcomes are really timely enough, relevant enough or helpful for those who are living in the situation and know well enough their own problems. It leads to a situation where it must be questioned whether the insights of research do not do much more than deliver a 'fairly obvious' message for those to whom the research is intended (Nagar and Ali, 2003: 355).

The dilemma that is presented by these two examples is one of representation and knowledge production. The authors had the desire of revealing alternative modes of living to what they experience as oppressive dominant social orders, yet they were unable to escape their own embeddedness, language and mindset of that same order to articulate alternatives without destroying what they had found. The knowledge production outcome is often developed and packaged in a way that is not easily accessible for or does not directly speak to the concerns of communities whose struggles the

researchers wish to advance. This dilemma emerges partly because of activist researcher constraints, rooted in the embedded values of their academic institutions. There is no denying that the researcher needs to turn some of the experiences they confronted into publishable, academic products. In other words, it is impossible to completely free oneself from academic conventions because of the structural necessity of translating the experience into an academic language and mindset that is 'recognizable' and publishable. Such publications are written mainly in English, filled with Western academic terminology and published in outlets to which some research participants do not have access (Buchy and Ahmed, 2007: 371). The difficulty therein is that it may require the use of Western academic theories in order to 'fill gaps' in existing literatures (Gaber et al., 2009) in a manner in which practice becomes analysed via the use of de-contextualized terms and knowledge (Chandrasekara, 2009). While we do not claim that this makes knowledge production across cultural differences impossible or worthless, per se, we do highlight the risk of reinforcing and re-inscribing existing structural differentiations and power relations between the researcher and the subaltern through the central stakes of representation and knowledge production as they occur in an academic environment that reproduces the very power relations that it seeks to contest (Sullivan, 2004).

(Im)possibility of escaping predetermined roles

The next example recounts an experience where activist research was confronted with difficulties that arose, to a large extent, from the fact that the researcher was situated in a more privileged position of power and access to social and material resources. The research focused on grassroots activism against HIV/AIDS in a small town in Tanzania, and the research process was structured according to the political and ethical aims of the researcher in a participatory manner. It was a long-term and committed project with meaningful participation, trust and enthusiasm among the community (Boesten, 2008). Boesten was highly aware of her privileged role with regards her access to financial resources and decision makers compared to the local research collaborators. Given that it was a funded project for which she was paid, she decided that it was only fair to also remunerate other research participants who conducted interviews or took notes (*ibid.*). Moreover, she strategically utilized some of her privileges by offering support to local groups to mobilize funds and establish links between the activists and other decision makers. Yet, as time passed, Boesten recounts that she started to find herself in a position where research participants increasingly expected more direct tangible benefits from interaction with her. These increasing expectations and demands started to entangle her into personal, organizational and local politics to a degree much greater than what she felt was appropriate and clearly lay outside the jointly defined and demarcated goals of the research project.

Social movement actors have a strong sense of the privileges in terms of resources and mobilities of the researcher and of the role that successful dialogue and collaboration efforts could play in furthering their personal, organizational, political and intellectual agendas (Nagar and Ali, 2003: 358; Veissiere, 2010). It is common among activist researchers to further the political goals and social justice by fruitfully using the privileges resulting from their position as mobile activist researchers (see also Terhorst, 2009). Not only does this contribute to the fostering of the concrete political goal, but it also nurses a desire to 'give something back' (Bourgois, 1990, Boesten, 2008). Yet, to act on the basis of one's privileges does not only accentuate existing, unequal power relations, it can also create situations where the individual desire to gain from someone else's privileges may distract from the goals of the research. Such differing motivations of cooperation may be a cause of disappointment on both sides. This gap is intensified by the fact that the researcher is always free to leave the situation and has the unilateral, determining power over the use of the resources stemming from her privileges whereas the local partner remains 'fixed' in their place, structurally excluded from obtaining such privileges (Nagar and Ali, 2003; Boesten, 2008; Terhorst, 2009; Diversi and Finley, 2010). The tension clearly results from a social mobility gap between the research participants.

The notion of activist research going somewhere to promote social justice, to redistribute by means of taking advantage of one's position, can be an expression of what in postcolonial studies is often referred to as a notion of the *white man's burden*. Taking Rudyard Kipling's poem from 1899 as a metaphor – '*Take up the White Man's burden/send forth the best ye breed/Go bind your sons to exile/To serve your captive's need*' – it alludes to a responsibility of the privileged towards those who are less privileged with the intention of transforming them into equally privileged people (Brantlinger, 2007: 172). In other words, it expresses a notion of 'guilt' that Westerners feel when they become aware of the direct and indirect consequences of their privilege, that is, the immobility and exploitation of communities in the global South (cf. Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). The feeling of duty and obligation towards the 'disadvantaged' remains embedded in the narrative of some activist researchers even today. Yet the sentiment of redistribution becomes problematic if it conceals a hierarchical relationship of those who apparently possess the capacity to 'help' and the less privileged who are on the receiving end (Didur and Heffernan, 2003). Thus, activist research runs the risk of being tied to a dynamic where subalternity is, provocatively expressed, a 'symptom' that needs to be 'cured' by studying, recovering and changing it through activist research (cf. Žižek, 1997: 27). Yet, the condition for that is that the researcher maintains their mobility and access to power, whereas the subaltern position maintains immobility, reduced to a perpetual reliance on the privileges of the researcher. In other words, the desire to 'give something back' makes it difficult to escape or shift existing power relations because

it depends on a hierarchical relationship between those who can give and those who can only take. Thus, a unilateral practice of redistribution runs the risk of only re-enacting the existing unbalanced power relationships.

(Im)possibility of creating new social relations

The last example is an account of two activist researchers who reflect on the difficulties of trying to escape their own complicity with the material realities of global inequalities in an international activist project. Indymedia is an independent media project that has set itself the objective of democratizing publishing and media in a horizontally organized mode. It is based on principles of consensus and plurality, hoping to produce public 'open spaces' relatively independent from political and economic structures (Frenzel and Sullivan, 2009). In a remarkably reflective and detailed account, activist scholars Frenzel and Sullivan report on the difficulties participants encountered in an initiative of global cooperation among media activists from the North and South. The aim of the activist media network was to link African independent media with the existing global network and to create new initiatives in some African countries. The project consciously and actively sought to resist one-directional aid, knowledge and financial flows between the North and the South, conscious of the colonial divides this might reflect. However, as the authors report, in some instances, the participants unwittingly found themselves engaged in reproducing precisely those unequal power relations that they had sought to contest and overcome through their practice (*ibid.*). For example, much of the planning for the first joint project of the media network took place via transnational, web-based and horizontal structures (open mailing list, wiki-space, online conversations and so on) based on the network's principles of openness and equality. Yet, as Southern activists lacked access to frequent internet use, they were inevitably less involved in the participatory planning process of the project (*ibid.*). Moreover, project funds obtained from the North were mainly administered by Northern participants. This created a feeling of disempowerment amongst many participants from the South. A similar situation occurred with the dissemination of knowledge with regard to the information and communications technologies central to the project. As many Northern activists appeared more proficient in the operation of these tools, they quickly turned into 'experts' teaching Southern participants. Asserting those expert (or 'technocratic') roles strengthened the already persistent power lines reflecting an imbalance between Southern and Northern activists. Lastly, mobility and access proved to cultivate a pervasive partition. Whereas most Northerners had mobilized their own funds for travelling, Southerners received travel funds from Northern donors, which again produced a relation of dependency. To a degree, the more that the project advanced, the harder it was to overturn the pre-existing relations of power. The capacities and tools required to actively construct a new

set of social relations and shifting positionalities could not be fully generated. The authors conclude in asserting that all the participants involved might have underestimated the significance of the structural inequalities and how they penetrated in their own process. In this case, it led to a situation where the organizing process reflected a situation where principles of grassroots organization and a 'globalization from below' such as 'open space' and 'volunteering' became ideologies that Northern activists transported into the realm of Southern social spheres (*ibid.*). Such an outcome can be seen as the mechanism to which Spivak raises attention when she states that transnational activism can easily face the danger of imposing a political will to subaltern voices that is constructed by the dominant elite (Spivak, 1987: 197).

Activist research approaches: incomplete but potentially productive answers to structural dilemmas

The common project

Developing common projects of alternatives that challenge the structural impositions and injustices of the dominant system to develop other forms of freedom and support others to make their voice heard is the goal of activist research (Cox, 1998). Yet it remains a goal difficult to reach, especially when projects are funded by entities or institutions from the North (Buchy and Ahmed, 2007: 371). The desire to get involved in furthering justice 'for' others, as partly experienced in some of the examples, may be an expression of the activist researchers' own dissatisfaction with their position within the dominant symbolic order. Even though social and material mobility suggests freedom and flexibility, it is at the same time an imposition of the demand to constantly stay mobile, to play the game in order to cope, to function and to survive. The fear of becoming 'immobile' in the face of one's own social and economic contexts potentially pushes one to look beyond one's own context to those that are far away, or to those people who evoke the promise that another world is, in fact, possible. Doing activist research in the global South may also be a way to gain relief from a perceived paralysis of how to confront global inequalities from the present position in the 'comfort zone' of the North where the potential for change through academic research often seems absent or allusive. Yet this suggested global solidarity runs the risk of transporting Western-biased ideas to a context where they do not make sense. The political will of the subaltern faces the danger of becoming constructed by the dominant elite once again (Spivak, 1987: 197). Turning 'their' problems and struggles into 'ours', we in turn, make 'our' problems 'theirs'. Constructing a will, that of the mutual struggle against corporate globalization can easily turn into assimilation, foreclosing other aspects of other people's struggles (*cf.* also Žižek, 1997).

In this last section of the chapter we will look more closely at how the conscious construction of a common project plays out as political intervention and tries to deal with problems such as the ones mentioned above. We argue that it is important to re-emphasize the distinctive trait of activist research that it is conceptualized as a political act rather than being only research. Yet whereas activist research may focus on changing the macro structures, it also concentrates on overcoming structural differences within the research processes. This reciprocal move between the attempt for social transformation on both the macro- and the micro-level allows for a critique of the reproduction of power relations not only in local contexts but also on the global level as well as in institutional academia (Sullivan, 2004). The collaborative effort is a constant challenge that 'insists on crossing multiple borders' with regard to the objectives, strategies and skills that must find their own specific form and meaning (Nagar and Ali, 2003: 356). As we have pointed out above, the underlying notion that unites all activist research collaborators remains the idea of a common social project (Cox, 1998). Through the focus on building a common project, activist research can consciously affect, through the research design as social action, social relations in which subaltern positionalities are understood as active agents. The immobility that pervades Spivak's notion of the subaltern is therefore replaced by the view which recognizes the agency of both the researcher and the researched. This can help to dismantle the dualism we posit as structurally given. Yet, as we have shown in this chapter, this can easily become a non-attainable ideal because of the other hierarchies implied in the relationship of the research process itself. Moreover, there is the constant risk that the very frame of a common project reiterates Western-biased ideas and neocolonial relations that make it difficult to create and construct new and altered power relations (cf. Spivak, 1987). As we have seen, activist research can sometimes fail to overcome pre-existing unequal relations, even though they are politically designed and reflexive with regard to their intention of undoing such forms of engagement. This is because actors themselves are caught in roles and identities that stem from their position within the broader set of hegemonic relations in the networked society (cf. Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005).

We argue that in consequence an indispensable appreciation of activist research is, therefore, that a common project can only be constructed if the activist researcher engages with already existing and recognized forms of social organization and articulation of the subaltern. Whereas the structural position of the subaltern suggests an unorganized and disconnected form, a lack of agency and means of representation, social movements in the above sense build on the basis of cultural, social, economic and/or political exclusion and are specific in that they generate conflictuality, a common identity and forms of organization (Diani and Bison, 2004). These are the foundations of an autonomous agency of social movements. In this sense, movements are not merely the passive receivers of research but can actively

adapt and use the investigator for their own projects, even without the investigator actually fully grasping this implicit role reversal (Cox, 1998).

For example, in his activist research, Terhorst (2009) became a part of the social movement that he was studying. Similar to the Indymedia project, the research was a continuation of already existing activities in other geographical spheres. The National Federation of Water Workers (FENTAP) and Terhorst had both already been active participants in the global water justice movement. Through their engagement with this movement, they created ideas and partnerships that later became the basis for their common project. This consisted in Terhorst working as a researcher and team member in the directorate of the Peruvian organization, FENTAP, for a prolonged period of time. He also joined forces with other local social movement organizations all of which intended to prevent water privatizations in the region. Specifically, Terhorst, FENTAP and the local movement organizations built a common project in the context of the anti-privatization struggles in Peru where the research project was to develop capacities within the movement for strategically developing public communitarian alternatives to water privatization. Terhorst had a role in researching but also in organizing movement activities to prevent the imminent privatization of the municipal water utility in the city of Huancayo. The objective of the movement was to develop political pressure and alternative proposals that would contest privatization discussions.

What is important in this process to reflect on the methodology of activist research was that the objective of the movement – to prevent privatization – and the objective of the research – to learn how movements generate alternatives to privatization – overlapped and were part and parcel of the common project to seek just and public water provision. The project materialized as strategies and practices of research and of how the movement affected and conditioned each other. In other words, the collaborative research process constructed congruence between movement research, political activism and social movement politics (Cox, 1998; Colectivo Situaciones, 2003). This was possible only because the construction of a common project (Cox, 1998) had been an *ex ante* condition for access and communication to the field. This reciprocal move of the mutual shaping of research practice through exchange between the movement and the research is an integral part of activist research. This was a difficult learning experience for Terhorst. He had to repeatedly learn and acknowledge that the concepts of alternative public services that he knew from his academic and international movement background were not necessarily applicable to the Peruvian movements. This unlearning of dominant mindsets was, however, not a one-way process as the local movements also learned through the reciprocal exchange with Terhorst's perspectives. Despite this productive process of (un)learning, Terhorst moreover acknowledges that his research focus (and that of the national movement leaders in the Peruvian capital Lima) did not

fully capture the political and social movement discourses in the Andean societies, which often use anti-privatization arguments to express and publicize much other deeper and long-standing societal and political conflicts. Terhorst's research could hardly capture or acknowledge sufficiently all of these factors because of its limited focus on anti-privatization. In this sense, Terhorst could not prevent recreating a line of (mis)representation between the metropolitan and mobile (in this case the Lima-based union federation and Terhorst) and the more immobile (in this case the local social movements in the Andean city of Huancayo). But this (mis)representation was similarly a reflection of the Peruvian movement landscape of which the activist research had become a part.

This open research process to construct a common project consciously allowed for processes of gradually shifting and changing identities within the obvious and apparent dualisms between researcher and the researched. It constantly sought to counteract the incursion of positions that would pre-define the (external or superior) role of the researcher. In order to do so, the research process openly acknowledged the effects of the differences and special positions of the research and went through various phases where the roles, tasks and types of collaboration changed over time. Nevertheless, the research encountered similar dilemmas as mentioned above in the case of Boesten (2008). At a more personal level, Terhorst also found himself assigned to the role of the 'rich Westerner', which could not at all times be submerged through the joint identification with the common political space that he shared with other movement participants. His privileged position also infringed on the research process on a more political level when he started to facilitate the attainment of financial resources from Europe for local movement organizations. Even though this was thought of as part of the activist research process, it turned into a local political issue that pro-privatization politicians used as argument against the movement. Apart from these infringements at different levels, Terhorst's role within the movement changed over time as well. In its main phase, it was a form of active participation as movement member and shifted over time to a more distanced role of facilitating resources and providing advice. Overall, the employment of the privileges conferred to Terhorst through his structural position as Northern academic was both a difficult and risky but also a constructive element in the research. The temporal contingency of roles and positions imposed by the structural differences in the research process sometimes disrupted the social relations by creating further inequalities that could not be overcome. But even though these difficulties were never fully overcome, they were at least integrated as a conscious element. Yet this was only possible in contingent and restricted times, spaces and settings.

The examples also demonstrate that activist research is a practical intervention with the consequence that the politics of research correspond and relate to the politics of social movements. As Cox (1998) argues, these are

not two separate things. In this regard, Terhorst found that there are inherent limitations in accessing subaltern and immobile actors and discourses through social movement research, as the politics between researchers, social movement activists, members and constituents are stratified, complex and vary over time and space. Thus, the politics and relations of research cannot be predetermined or fixed, especially not by the researcher. For example, a movement researcher may gain access to and a research agreement with a number of leaders of a social movement, as was the case for Terhorst's research agreement with leaders of FENTAP and a number of local movement leaders. Such a process can form the basis for a valuable research process to involve the activist researcher and movement activists. But it does not necessarily mean that the research involves the members and constituents of social movements, as they are less, or not at all, visible within the social movement's organizational structures. This is the case even though the social movement may aim to represent these social groups. So a new line of representation is created through the practical intervention of the research, one that inherits the same problematic movement of crossing the differences between the immobile and mobile that we started with. The only difference is that now the researchers and movement activists (leaders) appear on the one side of the divide while movement members and even more so, movement constituents, appear on the other. But this, in our view, should not be a reason to cease research, as lines of representation are an issue for any movement-building effort. So in a sense, activist research, in order to deal with structural differences, has to correspond to the same politics of social intervention as social movement action in general.

Knowledge representation or presentation

A second difficulty that we have pointed to in this chapter regards the production of (academic) knowledge. University-based activist researchers cannot disavow themselves of the requirements and academic pressures to produce academic deliverables and publishable products for the academy. The dilemma is in the problem of translation and how to bridge the gap between academic writing and social activism. Sometimes we have to recognize that these are two different practices and therefore two different languages are involved, as expressed by Messer-Davidow. She states, 'The activist me had acquired know-how by planning, escalating and modifying direct action, and the academic me had acquired knowledge *by* analysing, refuting and reframing esoteric propositions' (Messer-Davidow in Nagar and Ali, 2003: 360). In other words, there are different forms of knowledge and knowledge uses, all of which pose their own particular problems. As posited in our examples, real difficulties emerge when trying to describe, explain and analyse – hence translate – subaltern practice and alternative and counter-hegemonic ways of living into Western-based understanding and theory, or using situated theories to understand practice. In the case

of Gaber et al. (2007), this resulted in frustration and dissatisfaction, questioning the usefulness of the research process for the movement itself. This raises the question of whether knowledge produced for academic standards is compatible with knowledge that is useful for movements. Within the activist research literature, we can find different positions regarding the production and use of knowledge. Whereas Wainwright (2005) and Cox (1998) suggest that the activist researcher has an important role in abstracting tacit and empirical movement knowledge, Motta (in this book) and Colectivo Situaciones (2003) argue that the activist researcher becomes one node among many in the production of popular knowledge. Nonetheless, we wish to suggest that the discussion between academic/intellectual and popular/tactical knowledge is not necessarily incompatible. In fact, the activist research may attempt to work creatively with these tensions and move between the different roles and uneasiness that plague academic and popular knowledge.

Terhorst (2009) recounts how the collaborative research process created different forms of knowledge creation and outputs. On the one hand, the discussion and dissemination of research findings with other movement participants became an inevitable process because of his immersion within the movement itself. For example, at a movement workshop called 'The Evaluation of the Struggles for Water in The Americas, Analysing Our Resistance and Proposals Around Public and Community Management' in Bolivia, he shared and discussed the jointly produced findings. The idea 'was to discuss and analyse the struggles, hopes and problems of the construction of public community water systems and therefore was the same as the basic research problem posed in this thesis' (ibid.: 99). He considered this event as closing the circle of his activist research, as it had 'fulfilled the key objective of the research: to be relevant and useful for the social movements that I partnered with' (ibid.: 95). In this sense, Terhorst shares the suggestions of Motta and Colectivos Situaciones where the binary between researcher and movement is resolved within the practice of the movement as such.

However, Terhorst, like other activist researchers, was also required to publish his findings, according to academic standards. Thus, he states:

Then, after years of activist-research intervention, I turned back to my lonely role as analyst and returned to my desk to write. This individual phase and the output in form of written research outputs... remained removed from the movements that I had partnered with and become part of. That is why I needed to close the research cycle by feeding my findings back to the movements. I checked their validity and legitimised the individual and secluded act of knowledge production that is so much the reality of academic life but at times can be of so little help to collective learning processes within the movements.

(ibid.: 98)

Terhorst recognizes and accepts that the production of international academic knowledge is not necessarily produced in the language of social movements and is, as such, without direct tangible benefits for them. Yet, as his findings were a result of long-term collaboration, discussion and knowledge exchange, the academic outcome was only one among many. It suffers from the problem of translation, thereby moving its production and product further away from the lifeworld of the movement. But following Wainwright's and Cox's position, this form of academic knowledge, which abstracts some of the findings, can contribute to the discussions and changing perceptions in other spheres and in the academia. For example, Chandrasekara (2009) explicitly stated that her research on subaltern accounting practices aimed at revealing the contingent hegemony of Eurocentric accounting practice, thus it serves foremost an audience within the academic institution.

In other words, even though all collaborators maintain a commitment to the shared intellectual and political agenda – the common project – one must also recognize that the knowledge produced is for different audiences with different goals and strategies. It implies that writing can take place in various forms: individually or in a joint process or in consultation with others. Nonetheless, as Nagar and Ali state, 'the knowledges produced, as well as the purposes for which they are deployed, remain inherently and deeply collaborative, irrespective of the formal co-authorship of the actual texts that get produced and circulated' (Nagar and Ali, 2003: 369).

Engagement

All these processes require notions of proximity, contextuality and prolongation. This is necessary to turn engagement into an integral part of the movement and its social reality. Prolongation stands for long-term engagement between the activist researcher and the social movement that extends open series of productive interactions and encounters, for example, in public meetings and discussions, to the production and reception of written text, the latter not being an end-point of knowledge production but merely one point in an ongoing process of exchange and innovation (Colectivo Situaciones, 2003). It may be difficult to achieve by many activist research endeavours because it requires more than just time and commitment. In line with Cox, the physical, verbal and cognitive engagement in such social projects and recompositions of identities, roles and positionalities, as embodied through skills, are also necessary. This so-called 'skill of engagement' is composed of modes of action, collective learning processes, sedimented experiences, practices and language (Cox, 1998) as they have been presented in all examples mentioned throughout this text. These skills can only be developed in the course of an open research process, since the social relations and politics can only be determined and affected in the course of the research and not in advance. Activist research therefore turns into a skilful and heuristic practice of engagement in common projects that

is based on collective learning processes. By this process of mutual learning, it can address the complexity of structural differences through contingent, precarious and never fully resolved means of political research practice through the recognition that research and its methodology is a political act (cf. the politics of research by Cox, 1998). As Motta (in this book) would put it, such a process remains a constant challenge in which the activist researcher has to 'unlearn' traditional conceptualizations and practices of academic training and knowledge creation.

In addition, the construction of a common project is always limited to a certain scope in which the researcher and the research design can comprehend and make visible parts of the totality of social struggle and social processes. This means that activist research focuses on one particular element of the totality of the movement. In the case of Terhorst, the activist researcher had a specific focus of attention and research interest which affected and limited the project he negotiated with the movement. In this sense, the risk of hegemonizing Western concepts and bringing to the surface existing, yet perhaps hidden, unequal relations could not be fully avoided. But elements such as the cultural background, knowledge interest and conditions of the researcher were a constituent part of the common project. They were incorporated into the collaboration between movement leaders and the researcher, as were other structural factors such as resource possession and allocation and political opportunities of the movement. Far from arguing that Terhorst in his practice overcame these dilemmas, we want to highlight that the questions around power and authority in such partnerships cannot be discussed beforehand. Instead, they form constant conflicts within the collaborative process, similar to the broader struggle in which the social movement project has embarked on (Nagar and Ali, 2003: 369). As a result, structural differences between the mobile and immobile are played out as conscious-political factors rather than silent-structural forces and can thereby be challenged and potentially transformed into productive rather than disruptive elements.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to address the question of whether it is possible to jointly build a research process that allows for changing both the position of the activist researcher and the subaltern with regard to questions of social, material and epistemological mobility. The question arose in the context of activist researchers committed to furthering social justice and embarking on collaborative knowledge-making processes with social movements in the global South. As we have seen, activist research can sometimes fail to overcome pre-existing unequal relations even though such research is politically designed and reflexive with the intention of subverting such inequalities and exclusions. This is because actors themselves are caught in roles and

identities that stem from their position within the broader set of hegemonic relations in the networked society (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). This creates challenges and tensions that affect the research process in manifold ways. Employing Spivak (2008) and Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) to the field of activist research, we understand this relationship as determined by structural differences and interdependencies and relations of exploitation between subaltern and metropolitan or mobile and immobile social positions. It follows that the identity of the activist researcher is constructed through and possible only because of the existence of the subaltern position – the position without voice and mobility which activist research seeks to change. Activist research thus can become complicit with these dominant structures as the research process is an expression and reflection of injustices based within the broader global order.

These considerations, we have argued, create an uncomfortable terrain upon which field research must move. It presents an inherent problem for research that necessarily crosses multiple geographical, class and cultural borders. In light of this, we have posited that structural impediments to (our) practices of researchers based at European academic institutions seem sometimes impossible to overcome despite practices of reflexivity and participation in research methodologies with the explicit intention of overcoming these inequalities. Such practices cannot always fully disentangle the problematic and potentially exploitative relation as these are embedded in the micro relationship between the researcher and researched.

Yet activist research expressly and purposefully aims to engage with and intentionally alter the positionality of the researcher and researched. The research setting as such, where the researcher is an active part of the social movement, is an essential step towards approaching and shifting the dichotomy of insider-outsider or researcher-researched. It proposes a parallelism between the research and political practices that reciprocally nourish one another. In this sense, activist research turns positionality into a constitutive and central element of knowledge production, with the consequence that reflexivity and participation in activist field research become part of the politics of the social movement, just as the researcher becomes part of the movement. Through such an actively formulated practice, rather than involuntary incidence, activist research inscribes itself into the social reality and therefore into the (hegemonic) relations of force that are embedded into research practices. And just as a social movement, activist research should be understood as a relentless and critical act which strives to be connected to social action and attempts to understand and improve the 'way things are'. This learning-by-doing by researchers and social movements forms the basis for research-activist practices to deal with structural differences, rather than merely rationalizing them away through individual and textual acts of reflexivity. It is in this sense that we understand activist researchers and social movements as agents, as well as products of history (Kemmis, 1993).

If activist research recognizes openness and the aspect of learning (rather than telling) as one of its central features and part of social movement politics, then the result is an experimental process of social action that acknowledges and employs societal differences as potentially disruptive but also potentially productive in shifting social relations both on the individual levels of the research process and on the broader level of structural social change.

References

- Abu-Lughod, L. (1991). 'Writing Against Culture', in R. Fox (ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series): 137–62.
- Boesten, J. (2008). 'A Relationship Gone Wrong? Research Ethics, Participation, and Fieldwork Realities', LSE-NGPA Working Paper Series, No. 20.
- Boltanski, L. and Chiapello, E. (2005). *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso).
- Bourgois, P. (1990). 'Confronting Anthropological Ethics: Ethnographic Lessons from Central America', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 43–54.
- Brantlinger, P. (2007). 'Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" and its Afterlives', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 172–91.
- Buchy, M. and Ahmed, S. (2007). 'Social Learning, Academics and NGOs: Can the Collaborative Formula Work?', *Action Research*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 358–77.
- Butler, J. and Spivak, G. C. (2007). *Who Sings the Nation-State?: Language, Politics, Belonging* (London: Seagull Books).
- Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* (London: Falmer).
- Chandrasekara, I. (2009). 'Ethnofinance: A Study of the Daily Accounting and Financing Practices of a Sinhalese Women's Community', Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, School of Management, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK.
- Chatterton, P. (2008). 'Demand the Possible: Journeys in Changing Our World as a Public Activist-Scholar', *Antipode*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 421–7.
- Chatterton, P. and Pickerill, J. (2008). 'Autonomous Geographies: Activism and Everyday Life in the City', ESCR Final Report, RES-000-23-0957.
- Clifford, J. and Marcus, G. (1986). *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Colectivo Situaciones (2003). 'On the Militant-Researcher', <https://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0406/colectivosituaciones/en> (accessed 10 December 2009).
- Cox, L. (1998). 'Gramsci, Movements and Method: The Politics of Activist Research', http://www.euromovements.info/html/gramsci_cox.htm (accessed 14 October 2004).
- Diani, M. and Bison, I. (2004). 'Organizations, Coalitions, and Movements', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 33, No. 3–4, 281–309.
- Didur, J. and Heffernan, T. (2003). 'Revisiting the Subaltern in the New Empire', *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1–15.
- Diversi, M. and Finley, S. (2010). 'Poverty Pimps in the Academy: A Dialogue About Subjectivity, Reflexivity, and Power in Decolonizing Production of Knowledge', *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 14–17.
- Fals Borda, O. and Rahman, M. A. (1991). *Action and Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly* (New York: Apex Press).

- Freire, P. (1982). 'Creating Alternative Research Methods: Learning to Do It by Doing It', in B. Hall, A. Gillette and R. Tandon (eds), *Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly?* (New Delhi: Society for Participatory Research in Asia): 29–37.
- Freire, P. (2006). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum).
- Frenzel, F. and Sullivan, S. (2009). 'Globalization From Below? ICTs and Democratic Development in the Project "Indymedia Africa"', in O. F. Mudhai, W. J. Tettey and F. Banda (eds), *African Media and the Digital Public Sphere* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan): 165–82.
- Gaber, K., Köbberling, G. and Otto, B. (2007). 'Resignification of Neoliberal Governmentality in the Social Periphery: The Strategy of *Grupo Cultural Afro Reggae*, a Social Project in Rio de Janeiro's Favelas', Paper presented at the Seventh Essex Graduate Conference in Political Theory, Essex 12–13 May.
- Gaber, K., Köbberling, G. and Otto, B. (2009). 'Manager der Marginalität. Kultur und Sozialarbeit in den Favelas von Rio de Janeiro', in S. Lanz, G. Dorner and K. Gaber (eds), *Funk the City: Sounds und städtisches Handeln aus den Peripherien von Rio de Janeiro und Berlin* (Berlin: Bbooks): 132–51.
- Ghorashi, H. and Wels, H. (2009). 'Beyond Complicity: A Plea for Engaged Ethnography', in S. Ybema, D. Yanow and H. Wels (eds), *Organisational Ethnography. Studying the Complexities of Everyday Life* (London: Sage): 231–51.
- Gonzalez, E. and Lincoln, Y. (2008). 'Foreword', in N. Lucca, et al. (eds), *Foundations of Qualitative Research Volume 1* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Bibliographica Press).
- Greenwood, D. J. and Levin, M. (1998). *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications).
- Guha, R. (1988). 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India', in R. Guha and G. C. Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 37–44.
- Higginbottom, A. (2008). 'Solidarity Action Research as Methodology: The Crimes of the Powerful in Colombia', *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 35, No. 5, 158–70.
- Kemmis, S. (1993). 'Action Research and Social Movement: A Challenge for Policy Research', *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Vol. 1, No. 1, available at <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v1n1.html> (accessed 14 November 2009).
- Kindon, S., Pain, R. and Kesby, M. (2007). *Participatory Action Research Approaches and Methods: Connecting People, Participation and Place* (London: Routledge).
- Lewin, E. (2006). 'Introduction', in E. Lewin (ed.), *Feminist Anthropology. A reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing): 1–38.
- Madison, D. (2005). *Critical Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publication).
- Mathers, A., and Novelli, M. (2005). *Researching Resistance to Neoliberalism: Critical Ethnography as Solidarity* (Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University).
- Morton, S. (2003). *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (London: Routledge).
- Motta, S. C. 'Notes Towards Prefigurative Epistemologies', in S. C. Motta and A. G. Nilsen (2011) *Social Movements in the Global South, Dispossession, Development and Resistance*. Palgrave Macmillan: Rethinking International Development Series.
- Nagar, R. and Ali, F. (2003). 'Collaboration Across Borders: Moving Beyond Positionality', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 356–72.
- Rancière, J. (1999). *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).
- Sanford, V. and Angel-Ajani, A. (2006). *Engaged Observer: Anthropology, Advocacy, and Activism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).
- Spivak, G. C. (1987). *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge).

- Spivak, G. C. (1988). 'Can the Subaltern Speak', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press): 271–313.
- Spivak, G. C. (2008). *Other Asias* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing).
- Sullivan, S. (2004). 'First International Conference on Social Movements and Activist Research', *CSGR Newsletter*, Vol. 11, 12–15, available at <http://www.euromovements.info/html/sian-investigaccio.htm> (accessed 11 December 2009).
- Sultana, F. (2007). 'Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research', *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 374–85.
- Terhorst, P. (2009). 'The Role of Social Movements in Developing Public Alternatives in Urban Water Services', Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Loughborough University, UK.
- Truman, C., Mertens, D. and Humphries, B. (eds) (2000). *Research and Inequality* (London: UCL Press).
- Veissiere, S. (2010). 'Making a Living: The Gringo Ethnographer as Pimp of the Suffering in the Late Capitalist Night', *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 29–39.
- Wainwright, H. (2005). 'Notes Towards a Politics of Knowledge', *Newsletter Euro-movements*, <http://www.euromovements.info/html/hillary.htm> (accessed 10 January 2009).
- Žižek, S. (1997). 'Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism', *New Left Review*, Vol. 225, 28–51.

Part III

Against Neoliberalism and Beyond Developmentalism? Social Movements and the Postcolonial Development Project

10

Three Actors, Two Geographies, One Philosophy: The Straightjacket of Social Movements

Radha D'Souza

1

This chapter argues that one reason for the intellectual crisis on the 'left'¹ since the emergence of 'globalization'² is their inability to develop conceptual resources to advance ideas about human emancipation, liberation and self-determination to re-envision new forms of social orders and revolutionary social transformations. 'Globalization' introduces a new tension in social movements. 'Globalization' rests on neoliberal ideology or 'liberal triumphalism' and widespread regime changes in the governance of capitalism (D'Souza, 2008, 2010a). These changes alter the role of social movements within a globalized social order. Liberal triumphalism expressed as 'the end of history' by Fukuyama, is, in turn, premised on the 'death of communism' following the end of the Cold War, the implosion of the Soviet Union and the rise of China as a capitalist power. These developments challenge intellectuals on the left to respond to and develop conceptual resources to meet the new challenges of liberal triumphalism.

The challenges of 'globalization' have renewed interest in social movements and generated a discourse around inequalities and social justice. The emergence of a number of journals,³ the creation of special centres to study social movements,⁴ academic publications on social movements,⁵ the blurred boundaries between activism and scholarship leading to a field of 'activist scholarship'⁶ and funding for research on social movements by leading research funding bodies are evidence of the interest in social movements.

The focus of social movement research is on social and distributive justice. Accounts of expropriation under 'globalization' typically name, blame and shame three actors: corporations, states and international organizations. There is ambivalence, however, about the geographies of expropriation in that the accounts are premised on descriptions of a borderless world and

'global' appropriation on the one hand. On the other, social movement discourses refer to the North–South divide to construct an imaginary geography where the North refers to centres of capitalism, imperialism past and present, and Anglo-American-European nations and the South refers to colonial, 'underdeveloped', 'Third World' Asian, African and South American societies. These conceptual building blocks used to critique 'globalization', and the structure of thought that they produce, mirror the conceptual repertoire of philosophical liberalism.

This chapter draws on social movements in India to develop the above arguments. The arguments have wider reach for oppressed nations elsewhere variously referred to as 'Third World', 'South', 'developing world', 'underdeveloped nations' and such following preferred ideological orientations. In India, the economic and social inequities of 'globalization' have produced a series of resistance movements against land acquisitions, displacement and evictions, and development projects and their insatiable demands for natural resources. Each struggle has been more strident than the previous one. Kalinganagar (January 2006), Singur (May 2006), Nandigram (March 2007), Lalgarh (November 2008) and Narayanpatna (November 2009) are some landmark struggles in recent times.⁷

One type of response has been the resurgence of Maoist insurgency that reaffirms the continued relevance of core ideas developed in the course of the Chinese revolution for social transformation in India. The second type of response is inspired by the 'global justice movements' that have emerged in the wake of 'globalization' and use the conceptual tools of three actors and two geographies and the philosophical assumptions on which the concepts rest. This chapter does not address the conceptual, theoretical and philosophical questions entailed in 'traditional' communist movements such as Maoism. Firstly, those problems call for an immanent critique *within* the socialist and national liberation traditions that evaluates the problems of revolutionary change in societies such as India in the current global conjuncture. Such a task is beyond the scope of this chapter. Secondly, the global reach and influence of intellectuals in the wake of 'global justice movements', on the one hand, and the increased social inequities and tensions in Indian society, on the other, calls for a closer scrutiny of the adequacy of the concepts, theories and ideologies to meet the challenges that confront the people.

Intellectuals – following Zygmunt Bauman (1987) – include a range of public figures who interfere in the political process through influencing the minds of the nation and actions of political leaders.

[T]he intentional meaning of 'being an intellectual' is to rise above the partial preoccupation of one's own profession or artistic *genre* and engage with the global issues of truth, judgement and taste of the time.

(Ibid.: 1–2)

'Globalization' increases the visibility of certain types of social movements over others. Intellectuals play a key role in the enhanced visibility of some social movements over others that have a political outreach beyond their societies (Talshir, 2005). In India, for example, where software exports is a major foreign exchange earner for the country, only two million out of 193 million households have internet connections (Raju, 2006: 155). 'Globalization' amplifies the voices of the two million globally over the 193 million with reifying effects. This chapter assesses the ideas produced by anti-globalization movements and argues that at stake are meta-concepts like nation, society and structural social change.

2

Colonization brought a range of classes, castes, communities, nationalities, religious and ethnic groups in the Indian subcontinent under the institutional umbrella of the modern *state*. The freedom struggle forged a *nation* by bringing the diverse social forces into a common struggle against the colonial state. All shared common aspirations for freedom, yet each group joined the freedom struggle with specific claims, demands and political programmes. Promise of linguistic reorganization of states, national autonomy and federal structure to nationality groups, secularism for religious groups, affirmative action to marginalized castes, distributive justice for the poor, land reform and redistribution, protection of Adivasi lands, regions and cultures and protection of labour, amongst other provisions, hammered out during the course of the freedom struggle through political alliances, came to be embodied in the constitution of independent India. Thus, the Indian Constitution *codifies* the social contract between her diverse populations, a contract forged through the freedom struggle. During the freedom struggle Indian intellectuals gave shape and form to the way the nation was envisioned (Inden, 1990; Goswami, 2004). They inscribed their ideals for the nation in the constitutional document. This social contract is threatened by 'globalization', made redundant at best.

Broadly generalizing, Indian intellectuals fused three types of thinking about the nation: Indian culture, Western-style constitutional democracy and socialism, the idea that justice is 'economic, social and political' in the words of the Constitution. Independent India was going to be Indian *and* modern *and* egalitarian. The fusing of three strands of thought within a constitutional framework was the intelligentsia's way of straddling a tension inherent in states born of anti-colonial struggles, what Clifford Geertz (1993 [1973]: 240) calls the tension between *essentialism*, 'The Indigenous Way of Life', and *epochalism*, 'The Spirit of the Age'. These states were neither the classical 'bourgeois' states nor classical 'feudal' states popular in social theory and belied classifications based on analytical frameworks and conceptual categories developed in social theory located in the Western knowledge

institutions (Raju, 2006). The tension was characteristic of the monopoly finance capitalism that ushered in a new world order from the ashes of the world wars and restructured relations of super and subordination of states by innovating new institutional regimes (D'Souza, 2006).

As long as the tension between essentialism and epochalism existed, Indian intellectuals defined their role by shifting emphasis from one to the other strand when the social contract came under stress. They saw their role as keepers of the state to ensure the state remained an 'enlightened despot'. They supported the development agenda of the state, with its demands for water, forests, land, displacement and destabilization, and, at the same time, supported democracy, liberal rights and social justice. They supported Indian culture founded on Western-style political economy.⁸ 'Globalization' has made culture irrelevant. Postmodern pluralism enables all cultures to co-exist under the iron dictates of global markets. This makes a mockery of culture because it reduces culture to a superficial item of consumption and makes 'The Indigenous Way of Life' impossible. The 'demise of communism' has shrunk epochalism by eliminating competing models of modernity. Now there is only one model: neoliberal 'globalization'. There is only one correct intellectual response to this: to revive liberal philosophy, expand its scope and adapt it to the institutional context of monopoly finance capitalism after the end of the Cold War. What remains is naked, unconstrained epochalism. Only the 'Spirit of the Age' matters.

'Globalization' retains the state in the 'nation-state', but makes it difficult to sustain the nation. The Indian intellectual is, therefore, torn between the demands of the state in a globalized world, and the demands for a nation from the people. The challenge then is to re-envision the nation: whose nation and what kind of nation India should be. It is precisely the answer to this question that is impeded by the conceptual resources produced by the 'global justice movements'.

3

There were at least two moments in India's contemporary history when the question of whose nation and what kind of nation India would be came to challenge the ideology, theory and practice of Indian constitutionalism. The first moment was the Telangana uprising and the second the Naxalbari uprising. Both times intellectuals invoked visions of 'The Nation' to force the state to shift the emphasis from the modern strand to the cultural and democratic strands to ensure the state remained an 'enlightened despot'. It is useful to revisit those moments to assess the conceptual resources deployed by the 'global justice movements' today.

Indian independence was inaugurated by the Telangana armed uprising.⁹ Spanning nearly six years, from 1945 to 1951, it occurred at a tumultuous moment in India's modern history: the end of world wars, the formation of a

new world order under the United Nations, the rise of the American empire, the emergence of socialist states, the final phases of the freedom struggle, partition of the country, independence, unification of India and, lastly, and equally significantly, the drafting of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly. The armed uprising covered 3000 villages and a population of over three million over 16,000 square miles, mainly in the three districts of Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam in the present state of Andhra Pradesh. The peasants set up committees, repudiated debts, redistributed land, barred entry of forest officials into tribal regions and set up armed squads to defend the area. Free India's first action was to send 50,000 troops to quell the peasant uprising, arrest over 4000 people, detain, imprison and torture tens of thousands with many of those cases continuing long after the suppression of the uprising (Gupta, 1984; Sundarayaya, 2006 [1972]).

Telangana had a profound influence on the thinking of Indian intellectuals. Partition and Telangana challenged the independent India they had designed. Partition belied secular India and Telangana belied an egalitarian India. Inspired by Marxist ideas many communists joined the Telangana peasants and Adivasis, India's indigenous people.¹⁰ The intelligentsia, across ideological divides, pushed agrarian reforms to the forefront of the national agenda. The Indian National Congress, India's first elected government, was reluctantly forced to accept, in principle at least, that land reform was part of the social contract. In India's first elections in 1952 the Communist Party of India was returned as the largest opposition party in the federal parliament, a result symptomatic of the national mood, even after military suppression of the struggle. The Telangana uprising forced attention to a more democratic, devolved federalism. As the Congress Party procrastinated over reorganization of states on the basis of dominant language groups, one of the terms negotiated during the freedom struggle, the intelligentsia everywhere forced the issue. More significantly, the Telangana struggle never degenerated into a Hindu-Muslim divide, despite the fact that the rulers of Hyderabad were largely Muslim and the peasantry were largely Hindu, and, it occurred against the backdrop of partition.

In cinema, in literature, in poetry and songs of that period, the Adivasi and the peasant was India's soul. The ripple effect of Telangana was felt on the entire nation. Indian intellectuals had envisioned the nation, it was a vision they had forged through struggle, and they were not about to let it go. The Constitution would spell out the terms of the social contract and the state would be forced to enforce those terms in letter and spirit. The Constitution was adopted in 1950, the last embers of Telangana snuffed out in 1951 and the first elections held in 1952.

Thus, Telangana impelled intellectuals to preserve the nationhood born of the freedom struggle by institutionalizing it within the framework of the newly independent state. Liberal theory and the enhanced role for the state in post-world wars thinking, in other words the 'Spirit of the Age', provided

them with the conceptual tools of constitutionalism, liberal democracy and state-centred development. These ideas were institutionalized globally in the UN Charter guided by the Truman Doctrine, a set of principles for the new world order developed by the then president of the USA. Subsequent dismay at the way the constitutional discourse translated into an elitist project, globally and nationally, can be understood only by interrogating the myopic assumptions that scholars made about the nature of the *epoch*. Their assumptions precluded them from characterizing the epoch, its attributes and characteristics, and the institutional regimes of international political economy where the nation-state was a key constituent component (Anghie, 2004). In the newly independent states such as India the most significant assumption was the possibility of capitalism without colonies, an assumption based reductively on accepting juridical conceptions of the state and a de-historicized view of capitalism and imperialism in the new age (D'Souza, 2005).

By the end of the third Five Year Plan in 1966 India had gone from being a creditor nation at the time of independence to a debtor nation. It had all the hallmarks of a typical 'underdeveloped' state: inflation, balance of payment problems, public debt, debt servicing on conditions imposed by international institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, high unemployment, growing rural poverty, low wages, corruption and routine structural violence against the poor. Famines broke out in different parts of the country between 1965 and 1972 calling into question the privileging of modern sector and urban industries over agriculture and rural economy. The prestige of the political process waned, and fissiparous regional and state parties and movements emerged. Struggles of marginalized nationalities and ethnic groups had reached a nadir. Northeastern states, Kashmir, were frequently under army operations. Ideas of neocolonialism, dependency, peripheral nations and imperialism returned to intellectual discourse. The India that the freedom struggle envisioned was tattered.¹¹

Thus, two decades after Telangana, another peasant uprising erupted in a remote region of the state of West Bengal called Naxalbari. Naxalbari gave Maoists their Indian name: Naxalites. On its own, the Naxalbari uprising was small but its influence on intellectuals was disproportionately large. The uprising began when clashes broke out with police in May 1967. By July 1967 the uprising was crushed. Adivasi and peasant revolts spread to several states: Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Kerala amongst others. The uprisings were put down militarily using state repression. It must be noted that nearly all the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s flared from the embers of similar struggles in the 1940s: Naxalbari from the embers of the Tehbhaga movements, Srikakulam from the embers of Telangana, the land struggles in Uttar Pradesh from the embers of Nijai Bol movements and so on, and further, it must be noted that the movements in the 1940s flared from the embers of similar movements in the colonial era (Ghosh, 1974;

Sen et al., 1978; Banerjee, 1984; Desai, 1986; Mukherji, 2004 [1979]; Singh, 2004 [1979]). This historicity needs to be noted not least because the current struggles have flared from the embers of the Naxalbari era.

Naxalbari set the terms of the debate for intellectuals by articulating the causes of their disillusionment. Their critique focused on the social contract that the freedom struggle had so assiduously forged. The salient points of their critique were: (1) class alliances did not work; the social contract could not be made to work for the Adivasis, the rural poor, the marginalized nationalities, and the urban poor, because it was inherently flawed and unworkable; (2) a new social contract should be renegotiated on the basis of a new alliance of classes explicitly in favour of the Adivasis, the peasantry, the urban poor, and oppressed nationalities and groups in India; the nation needed to be re-envisioned on the basis of a new class alliance; (3) liberal parliamentary democracy could not meet the aspirations of the poor, if anything liberal parliamentary democracy was as tyrannical as the colonial government it had replaced; (4) Indian independence was a charade, a 'transfer of power' from colonial to Indian rulers; as long as the state's source of power flowed from imperialism and feudalism, structural transformation of Indian society could never come about; (5) the Indian state and Indian ruling classes would not abdicate power voluntarily; only an armed revolution could forge a new India. Thus, the Naxalite articulation of the disillusionment with the actual trajectory of Indian independence challenged the vision the intelligentsia forged during the freedom struggle for the nation.

The extent to which the Naxalite articulation of this disillusionment captured the imagination of the intellectuals can be gauged from the numbers of students, academics and professionals who joined the movement, from the number of journalists, artists and film-makers who sympathized with the movement, and furthermore, by the extraordinary state repression of Naxalites including torture, abductions, 'encounter killings' and imprisonment without trials. By 1973 40,000 Naxalites were in jail (Mukherji, 2004 [1979]: 28). Their mistreatment invited widespread criticism from a cross-section of the country's intellectuals across ideological divides, and internationally. A series of events (unrelated to the Naxalites) followed including a nationwide railway strike in 1972 that culminated in the declaration of national emergency in 1975.¹² Liberal rights and constitutional freedoms were suspended, and the independence of the judiciary eroded. The Naxalite critique of independence resonated with the disillusionment of the intelligentsia therefore. Significantly, their vision for the nation remained. A large section of the intelligentsia did not see the problem to be their design of the nation; rather, they saw the problem as one of failure of the state to act according to their vision. They turned their attention to reaffirm the constitutional vision and values and became vocal critics of the state (Baxi, 1982; Sathé, 2000, 2003; Noorani, 2002, 2006).

Their critique spawned a range of new types of activism: a renewed civil liberties movement, public interest litigation following concerns about access to justice, movements against displacement by large public projects, movements for alternatives, such as alternate technology, people's science, traditional knowledge, movements based on specific localized communities, for example, Adivasis and forest rights, fisher-folk and fishing rights, caste rights, unorganized sector workers, urban housing rights movements and many more. These movements were informed by the tension between the constitutional vision of the nation, on the one hand, and its suspension during the Emergency, on the other. It must be noted that these movements were, in their moment of inspiration at least, home-grown responses to a national crisis (Omvedt, 1993; Kamat, 2002; Rao, 2004 [1979]; Shah, 2004).

The Berlin Wall brought down many other walls besides the one between West and East Europe. India's non-alignment became irrelevant. Indian industry, nurtured and sheltered by constitutional visions of modernization and development, found it could venture out into the world without constitutional protections. The 'war on terror' became a new source of power for the Indian state. Internationally, it opened up new opportunities to forge military alliances with the USA and her allies. Nationally, it freed the state of irksome criticisms of human rights violations, suppression of nationalities, to dilute secularism and social justice *de facto*.

The expansion of the jurisdiction of courts to intervene in state policies by social movements in the post-Naxalbari period became another conduit for 'globalization' (D'Souza, 2005). Criminalization of politics became widespread (Association for Democratic Reforms, 2009), malnutrition rose to alarming proportions (Measham and Chatterjee, 1999). Nearly 200,000 farmers committed suicide since India signed up to World Trade Organization agreements (Sainath, 2009). The state introduced a series of legislation to appropriate land, forests and mineral resources, and to turn them over to corporate interests and national and international investors. The Special Economic Zones Act 2005, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, the Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill, 2007, and the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2007 are some important statutes to give effect to the neoliberal economic reforms following 'globalization'. The renewed measures for acquiring land and natural resources have led to a wave of struggles in several parts of the country.¹³ The winds of 'globalization' put the social contract under severe stress, possibly the worst since independence. Epochalism has triumphed over essentialism.

The Adivasis and rural poor rebel in Kaliganagar, Singur, Nandigram, Lalgah and Narayanpatna once more. These developments have led to the expansion of Maoist influence that reaffirms their critique of the Indian state. The state on its part has launched military operations in large areas known as Operation Green Hunt.¹⁴ At this juncture, intellectuals outside the

Telangana–Naxalbari traditions turn to 'global social movements' for their conceptual tools. The nature of these resources needs scrutinizing.

4

Contemporary India is in turmoil not least because the consciousness of her peoples surpasses that of her intellectuals in the present conjunctures of 'globalization'. Referring to a similar moment in history when Haitian slaves declared independence at the turn of the eighteenth century, Susan Buck-Morss writes about the role of the Creole intellectuals who seized ideas of freedom and self-determination from the armoury of the French revolution and European Enlightenment and trained them against the Empire that enslaved them; she asks:

What if every time that the consciousness of individuals surpassed the confines of present constellations of power in perceiving the concrete meaning of freedom, this were valued as a moment, however transitory, of the realization of absolute spirit?

(Buck-Morss, 2000: 865)

Anti-colonial struggles for national independence throughout the twentieth century, similarly, wrenched ideas of freedom, liberty and equality from colonizing societies and trained them against their colonial masters (Anderson, 1983). India was no exception. Indian intellectuals were as strident, if not more, in seizing weapons from the conceptual armoury of Western liberalism, from Marxism and the struggles for socialism in European societies, Western and Eastern, and using them to give form and shape to the aspirations for freedom amongst India's colonized subjects. Their role has turned awry as the people of the subcontinent articulate their aspirations, once more, in their long march for freedom. The 'about-turn' of the Haitian slaves appears impossible today not least because the conceptual and philosophical armoury of the West is empty.

The role of intellectuals in dominant Western capitalist nations, Zygmunt Bauman (1987) argues, underwent a transformation. From being 'legislators' of modernism, they have become 'interpreters' of a postmodern world. Scholars, raised in the traditions of the Enlightenment, designed and modelled how the world should be for the state, in other words, they 'legislated' the type of world they lived in. Now, under postmodern conditions, they have become 'interpreters', their role is that of communicators between a variety of communities and cultures constituted by market forces.

the discourses of truth, judgement and taste, which seemed to be fully administered by intellectuals (and in which only the intellectuals were rightfully participants), are now controlled by forces over which the

intellectuals, meta-specialists in the validation of truth, judgement and taste, have little, if any control. Control has been taken over by other forces – by autonomous institutions of specialized research and learning, needing no validation but that constantly replenished by their own, institutionally supported procedural rules, or by equally autonomous institutions of commodity production, needing no validation other than the productive potential of their own technology. And over this institutionally fragmented world towers the new validating meta-authority: the market, with price and ‘effective demand’ holding the power of distinguishing between true and false, good and bad, beautiful and ugly.

(*Ibid.*: 158)

The intellectual in dominant Western capitalist nations has become a ‘homeless wanderer’ as it were. Ideas of freedom, self-determination, liberty and equality, and human emancipation have become echoes from an earlier modernist era when intellectuals designed the world with authority, duly rewarded by capitalist powers of course. The ‘master-slave’ dialectic that animated Hegel – foregrounded by Haitian slaves as Buck-Morss points out – does not agitate postmodern Western intellectuals; they are no longer able to articulate a universal norm in a consumerist world where ‘[g]oods and services introduce themselves as the solution to genuine human problems’ (*ibid.*: 165).

‘Globalization’ brings knowledge production under market regulation. The rise of ‘globalization’ has witnessed two parallel developments in epistemic communities. Firstly, knowledge production is regulated by market instruments like funding mechanisms, peer reviews, quality assurance, impact assessments, public–private partnerships, efficiencies and so on. These instruments are prevalent in the non-governmental organization sector as much as the universities, think-tanks and policy institutes affiliated to social movements. These regulatory principles seek to assess the quality of knowledge in terms of the conceptual resources it generates for market regimes in economy and society (Brock-Utne, 1996; Carter, 2000; Luque, 2001; Jordan, 2003; Peters, 2003; Robertson, 2003; Olssen and Peters, 2005).

The renewed interest in social movement studies is institutionally driven by the new market regimes that seek ways of replacing citizen–state relationships under state regulation with civil society–stakeholder relationships under market regulation (Choudry, 2007; D’Souza, 2009). The UN Human Development Summit and the Copenhagen Declaration in 1995 forms a watershed moment for social movements in that the neoliberal transformation of international organizations initiated by ‘globalization’ and spearheaded by the World Trade Organization targeted social movements for the regime changes (D’Souza, 2008, 2010a).

Secondly, the recognition of social movements as a source of useful knowledge has resulted in a surge of academic activities that mine social

movements for concepts, ideas and theories. The raw ideas mined from struggling people are then processed through the academic mills, the funding mechanisms through the procedures of peer review, academic conventions, existing literatures and so on in ways that sanitize the raw concepts, ideas and theories thrown up by social movements. The institutional contexts of knowledge production, the methodological procedures and academic conventions purge the knowledge produced in struggles of its intuitive dimensions. They segregate the knowledge from people, from its contexts and local histories, and its universal appeals to the spirit of freedom and emancipation that all struggles possess (D'Souza, 2010b). The transformation of sanitized concepts and ideas appeals to the intellect and reason, and objectifies them as knowledge products and global commodities that can be drawn upon to govern society (Smith, 2006 [1999]; D'Souza, 2009).

Social movement scholars are transformed into interpreters of struggles in a world of networked communications. Invariably these struggles are located elsewhere outside Western societies: the Third World, South whatever, and always about 'them' out there. Implicit in this preoccupation with globalism is the conception that freedom and emancipation are no longer concerns for Western societies. Where concerns of Western societies *are* articulated they are limited to intervene in market capitalism to allow for a larger, non-adversarial role as 'stakeholders' in capitalist institutions (cf. Mouffe, 2005). Thus social movement theories miss the nub of Buck-Morss' point. Far from hoisting the flag of human emancipation and articulating the historical trajectory of human freedoms in the present conjuncture, they *interpret* the struggles of oppressed people like the peasants and Adivasis in India and see them as affirmation of pluralism standing in opposition to meta-theoretical concepts of freedom and emancipation.

The conceptual frame of social movement literatures mirrors those of 'globalization'. Dominant concepts in the conceptual armoury of 'globalization' include: the ideologies of globalism, rolling back the state, decentralized governance within monopolistic corporatized economy, people as 'stakeholders' with sectional interests and the ideology of liberal constitutionalism. The concepts that 'global justice movements' generate reverse these images as their antithesis (for example, Patel and McMichael, 2004; Holloway, 2005). They do not conceptualize human emancipation and freedoms in the current historical conjuncture for which all humanity can aspire to. Freedom is not freedom at all if it applies to some and not to others. Freedom in 'global justice movements' is limited to freedom from the state and to local choices under a networked global political economy (D'Souza, 2010b).

Freedom and human emancipation remains the central, possibly the *only*, relevant issue for the vast majority of India's populations and oppressed people elsewhere. When freedom has abandoned the consciousness of their mentors, what weapons can Indian intellectuals, or indeed anyone else

for that matter, hope to wrench from their mentors' arsenals to arm the aspirations of freedom of their own people?

Marc Galanter wrote about social change in India:

The revolutionary principle fostered by British rule was not the notion of deliberate social change, but rather the notion of the unit which might legitimately introduce and be the subject of such changes.

(Galanter, 1989: 31)

Today, when the global markets are the only unit that can legitimately introduce and be the subject of social change, what is the role for the intellectuals – if there is one at all?

5

The critique of 'globalization' by intellectuals in Western societies had a significant influence on 'global social movements'. How to characterize 'globalization' dominated thinking of intellectuals. For some 'globalization' produced a transnational capitalist class (Sklair, 1991); for others it was a new form of imperialism governed by global institutions (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2002); for others yet again was a 'de-centred' and 'de-territorialized' empire different from state-centred imperialism (Hardt and Negri, 2000); and for some it was a new regime of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2003). Many academics and artists became involved in movements like the World Social Forum, campaigns like International Rivers Network, Fifty Years Is Enough, Public Citizen and so on. A new type of academic, the 'activist scholar' emerged. The orientations of the intellectual critique of 'globalization' shaped the *type* of responses 'global social movements' developed against 'globalization'.

All were agreed that under 'globalization' capitalism no longer had a *vanguard* as in the past when the Dutch nation was the vanguard of mercantile capitalism, Britain of industrial capitalism and the USA of monopoly finance capitalism at the end of the world wars. Most agreed that imperialism was no longer about inter-state rivalries over markets, resources and spheres of influence as 'globalization' had integrated the world. While many agreed that imperialism exists, the antidote to imperialism, national self-determination was considered redundant at best, and fell away from the conceptual repertoire of 'global justice movements'. And lastly, as capital was global and the governance of capital was by international institutions, resistances must also be global, and therefore 'global social movements' should form transborder solidarities to create global civil society.

Much of this critique was based on perceptions of radical institutional transformations as they unfolded within and between international organizations and states (D'Souza, 2010a). The 'death of communism' was accepted

by most. With the revolutions and national liberation struggles of the early twentieth century discredited as elitist projects, and the states born out of those struggles rolled back, the intellectuals were left with conceptual and theoretical resources from the repertoire of classical liberalism. What else was there?

There was an upsurge in social movements theory to the return of classical ideas from liberal philosophy: human rights, property rights, various other rights, interest-based organizations and groups, incorporation of protest into formal juridical entities, civil society, democracy, public sphere, and near universal opposition to violence and 'vanguardism' as instruments for social change. Under 'globalization' which was *precisely* about the return to core classical liberal philosophy, and adapting it for use in the new institutional context of the post-Cold War world, these ideas in social movements theory received new respectability. The way social change came to be envisioned may be exemplified by two examples that are influential in social movements theorizing and from different philosophical orientations.

Hardt and Negri (2000), writing within anarchist traditions, provide a graphic picture of social change. They write:

When a distributed network [that is, the biopolitical antithesis of Empire] attacks, it swarms its enemy; innumerable independent forces seem to strike from all directions at a particular point and then disappear into the environment. From an external perspective, the network attack is described as a swarm because it appears formless. Since the network has no centre that dictates orders, those who can only think in terms of traditional models may assume it has no organization whatsoever – they see mere spontaneity and anarchy. *The network attack appears as something like a swarm of birds of insects in a horror film, a multitude of mindless assailants, unknown, uncertain, unseen, and unexpected.* If one looks inside a network, however, one can see that it is indeed organized, rational, and creative. It has *swarm intelligence*.

(Ibid.: 91; emphasis added)

Some horror films indeed in our times of teenage suicide bombers with superb 'swarm intelligence' and impeccable networks!

From a Marxist tradition, David Harvey (2000) invokes the analogy of an 'insurgent architect'. The insurgent architect is a creature born of the paradox of utopianism. Utopianism is inspirational as a normative ideal, but becomes authoritarian when realized in practice, a paradox presented by the 'death of communism'. Given this paradox Harvey envisions social change through a constructed scenario where a revolution is successful in 2020.

How exactly it happened remains obscure, but in 2019 these disparate and fragmented movements suddenly came together (some later said through

the machinations of some secret society of revolutionary organizers, though there was little evidence for it at that time).

The wretched of the earth spontaneously and collectively rose up. They created a massive movement of non-violent resistance silently occupying more and more spaces of global economy, while issuing rapid-fire demands for greater equality, the disbanding of military power, and the impeachment of military and religious leaders.

(Ibid.: 261)

What is interesting in this scenario is the passivity of the economic actors and states. How are the 'wretched of the earth' going to occupy economic spaces when the global economy pushes them out systematically using all the coercive instruments of state power? Non-violence is seen as a *choice* that social movements make, not a response to state and corporate violence aided by sophisticated technologies of violence. The appeal in the final analysis is to ethical and moral sensitivities. Institutions are not moral, ethical beings, however. They are complexes of laws that dictate a structural logic.

Characterization of 'globalization' requires interrogating the causal powers, causal mechanisms and above all what Bhaskar (1993: 135) calls the 'the all pervasive presence of the past'. It requires picking up the threads of theory and concept formations from where it was left off, in the success and failures of socialist and national liberation experiences. As Dirlik (2003: 215) says:

The problems presented to radical politics by global transformations suggest that... inherited assumptions about nations, revolutions and even capital, the dialectics of which were crucial to past radical strategies, need to be reconsidered – even if such reconsideration reveals their irrelevance to the present.

This task is complicated by the fact that the location for theory and aesthetics remains in the Western capitalist societies, and the problems for theory are thrown up by the 'wretched of the earth' outside those societies.

6

The architecture of capitalism is founded on three actors: the economy, state and civil society. Classical liberal theory *is* about the relations between the three actors. State regulation conceptualizes the relationship by emphasizing the state's role in the governance of capitalism; market regulation conceptualizes it by emphasizing economic institutions in the governance of capitalism. Both have differing roles for the social infrastructure of capitalism: one emphasizes citizenship and the public sphere; the other, civil society and interest-based communities. 'Globalization' *is* about returning,

adapting, modifying and extending the core concepts and values of philosophical liberalism to the conditions of monopoly finance capitalism after the end of the Cold War; and after the last vestiges of the structural changes that the revolutions and national liberations of the early twentieth century had brought about were erased.

'Globalization' alters the state–economy relations. Whatever their desired goals, *objectively*, 'global justice movements' provide the civil society component and round off the regime change from state to market regulation (D'Souza, 2010a). The return of philosophical liberalism means 'global social movements' turn attention on the relations between three actors: the economy, the state and civil society. 'global social movements' mirror the structure of thought of 'globalization' with emphasis on its social infrastructure: civil society.

The metaphor of 'globalization' makes the geographies of the three actors opaque. In fact, each actor is a creature of a different historical logic. Their formal juridical trappings notwithstanding the Euro-American states formed by the victory of merchant over feudal classes, with the money and resources from the colonies, is a very different beast from the colonial states formed through militarism and conquests. Notwithstanding the formal rules of incorporation and transborder investments, Monsanto and Microsoft have a different place in their societies from Tata or Birla. If civil society is about communities with common interests in the markets, for example, trade unions in labour markets, consumer organizations in consumer markets, 'grey power' groups for pensioners and so on, a vast majority of India's populations do not belong to the market economy or civil society (D'Souza, 2007). Indeed the Subaltern Studies movement was precisely about those people who were not part of civil society (see Guha, 1982).

Suddenly there is no terminology, no word, to name '*them*': those people facing the brunt of the 'globalization' onslaught. 'They' cannot be called 'colonized' because their states are independent in international law; 'they' cannot be subaltern because civil society vests everyone with this thing called 'agency'; 'they' are not really members of civil society because their interests are opposed to the market or they are out of the market economy; 'they' cannot be called 'underdeveloped' because the development discourse has deconstructed the meaning of development, unravelling it as an unsustainable regime of capitalist accumulation; 'they' cannot be 'Third World' because communism had collapsed the three worlds into two; 'they' cannot be 'backward' because modern technology no longer flies the banner of progress with confidence; 'they' cannot be 'indigenous' because that only refers to ethnic identity and not useful as a category in political economy; 'they' cannot be 'peasants' because peasants properly belong to a feudal era and we now live in a 'global village'. At a time when 'globalization' displaces, expropriates and vandalizes the lives of millions we are unable to name '*them*' in relation to capitalism in its 'globalization' phase.

As a result, the three agents exist everywhere globally, that is, without history and geography structuring them in any specific geo-historical conjunctures in time and place in ways that can inform people's actions and resistances. If social movements are about changing social structures, what structures are the 'global social movements' about to change in a world where:

power which manifests itself at best as a decentered totality and a structureless structure, and which may be challenged only in shifting alliances of political groupings devoted to the defense of places, of everyday life, and of particular interests (which may come together on some issues but not on others); alliances whose politics are aimed not at systemic transformation (impossible by definition) but at carving out spaces of democratic politics in a protracted struggle without visible end.

(Dirlik, 2003: 215)

In this global environment, Indian intellectuals and social movements are at crossroads. In order to reclaim the traditions of self-determination and decolonization that inspired the freedom struggle they must confront the theoretical and conceptual questions of *real* and *actual* decolonization. Real and actual decolonization calls for the development of theoretical, philosophical, legal, scientific, technological, political, economic, social and cultural resources and institutional innovations that parallel the Enlightenment in breath and scope. Alternately they could turn to the conceptual armoury of Western intellectuals who are no longer 'legislators' as Bauman (1987) points out. For the Indian intellectual the latter option is equally difficult. They cannot play the role of 'interpreters' like their Western counterparts, they cannot 'post' yet another theory in conditions of 'liquid capitalism', because of the magnitude of the crisis that surrounds them as an existential reality.

7

The explosion of social movements at the end of the Emergency in 1977, the insistence of the intellectuals and social movements that the state must be made accountable, and the proliferation of new organizations, agitations and so on were caught unawares by the winds of 'globalization'. 'Globalization' integrated the legal and institutional structures of the economy with market institutions in the new neoliberal regime. It exacerbated the schism introduced in the social contract by Telangana and Naxalbari. To large corporate and economic actors the social contract became a hurdle. The constitutional protections to Adivasi lands and forests, the affirmative policies in education and public institutions, public food rationing systems, restrictions on hiring and firing labour, even public ownership of natural resources became an impediment at worst, a nuisance at best, to the full integration

of the Indian economy in the global markets. This was a *qualitatively* new situation for India.

The state and the Naxalites (Maoists), locked in battle, set the terms of engagement for everyone else. The social movements between the two far ends of the political spectrum are left to defend the vision of the nation inscribed in the Constitution but without the participation of the powerful economic actors and with a state that is rolled back from the economy. Their struggles for state accountability and social justice become ineffectual at best.

These points may be exemplified by the case of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, one of the most influential post-Emergency social movements in India. With tireless dedication the movement exhausted every democratic avenue to make the state accountable for rehabilitation and resettlement of people adversely affected by the Sardar Sarovar dam project. The movement combined mass mobilization, organized non-violent protests, and appealed to courts and the national conscience. 'Globalization' is precisely about *taking* land and resources of the Adivasis and rural poor. With the modern sector economic actors deserting the social contract, the state too found a new source of power: the global market institutions. Faced with a stasis after an extended period of opposition spanning over a decade, the Narmada movement turned increasingly to the 'global social movements' for solidarity and support (Fisher, 1995).

Narmada Bachao Andolan was not alone in this. There were many other issue-specific movements against particular corporations, sectors and issues that turned to the 'global social movements' for solidarity. The limitations of single-issue movements against a unified state became apparent. Diverse movements came together to form the National Alliance of Peoples' Movements (NAPM). The NAPM's emphasis is on building broad-based popular movements to reclaim the social contract enshrined in the Constitution for those excluded from it by 'globalization'.

The Ayodhya Declaration of the NAPM articulates the aims of the new social movements and reveals their conceptual and theoretical premises. The NAPM unified diverse sectoral and issue-specific movements into a broad-based national movement; it organized a nationwide campaign under the theme *Desh Bachao, Desh Banao Abhiyan* (Save the Nation, Build the Nation Campaign). The nationwide campaign culminated in the Ayodhya Declaration in March 2003 (NAPM, 2003). The campaign captured the essence of the social and political crisis in India: the *nation* needed to be *saved*, and it needed to be *built*. How? The task requires characterization of the three actors: state, economy and civil society, the geographies of the three actors and development of theoretical understandings.

On the characterization of the state, the Declaration states:

Though the people's movements have been fighting against the oppressive, omnipotent and omnipresent State, they have never ruled out the necessary role of the State, as *it is one of the important milestones in human*

civilization. Historically, we have traveled [sic] very far from the conservative laissez-faire concept of the State The people's movements have been opposing the oppressive role of the State but they want the State to fulfil its historic role of protector of social justice and social welfare and not be the chowkidar [watchman] of corporate interests, as is being done today, in the age of Globalization.

(emphasis added)

The state here is a disembodied, hypostatized entity, a historical inevitability. It is 'omnipotent' and 'omnipresent' and therefore through sheer will, capable of being benign and compassionate. The state, an institution, must behave like human beings with a psyche, capable of ethical and moral conduct. The state has historically travelled further from laissez-faire ideas and therefore it must return back to what it was. The conception that the state has abdicated its social responsibilities *since* 'globalization' flies in the face of the experiences of NAPM's constituents, foremost amongst them the Narmada Bachao Andolan. Much *before* 'globalization' the state evaded its social obligations, which is why the Narmada struggle dragged on a decade before 'globalization'. Notwithstanding numerous struggles like Narmada the state intensified economic developments that displaced people and destroyed their environment. The imprint of the 'global justice movements' on the thinking about the state is evident: the Washington Consensus, not independence, is the starting point of analysis, even when it went against the lived experiences of the social movements.

By 2003, the NAPM identified itself as a constituent of 'global social movements'. The Declaration states:

International solidarity and movement assumes importance in such a march towards a more just sustainable world, as has become evident from the anti-Globalization movement throughout the world. This has heralded the rise of a New Internationalism. NAPM has been a part of this new international process towards equality and justice, self-reliance and peace. The World Social Forum and such other platforms, mass actions as in Seattle, Davos, Prague and Geneva have more potential to be effectively used towards turning the widest alliance into an effective political force.

Given the philosophical orientations of the 'global justice movements', the NAPM's role is that of civil society in the new regime of capitalism, 'globalization'. The emphasis on liberal rights is apparent in the Declaration. The Ayodhya Declaration identifies five main issues for its programme of action: (1) right of local communities to natural resources; (2) right to livelihood; (3) new paradigm of alternate development ensuring sustainability and justice; (4) struggle for social action; and (5) fostering alternative policies by

which is meant building alliances. The focus of the Declaration is a set of demands from the state. None of the rights and demands are inconsistent with the Constitution.

The NAPM exemplifies a paradox of constitutional democracy in India: the more intellectuals and social movements intensify their struggles and demand that the state enforces the constitutional rights of the marginalized, the more widespread are their breaches by the state. 'Globalization' is the finale of such breaches because it alters the regulatory frameworks of the state itself.

The critique of the state by the 'global justice movements' mirrors the critique of the state under 'globalization'. The 'global justice movements' are therefore unable to reconceptualize a new type nation as an antidote to the new imperialism, a neo-national liberation as it were to reclaim place, history, people and nature. Yet it is precisely such reconceptualization of decolonization that the breakdown of the social contract necessitates.

Notes

1. The 'left' refers to an intellectual tradition that is critical of capitalism in the broadest possible sense and seeks inspiration from the works of Karl Marx to a greater or lesser degree.
2. The term 'globalization' is used as an omnibus term to refer to the economic, political, institutional and ideological changes that have followed the defeat and eventual demise of the socialist bloc, changes that have restructured the institutional architecture of the world order that came into being at the end of the Second World War. The term is a contested one, and hence, its use within inverted commas.
3. For example: *Social Movement Studies* (published by Routledge since 2002); *Mobilizations* (published by the Department of Sociology, San Diego State University since 1996), *Globalisation, Societies and Education* (published by Routledge since 2003); *Globalizations* (published by Routledge since 2004).
4. For example, the School of Geography at the University of Leeds offers an MA in Activism and Social Change, and the University of Nottingham has witnessed the establishment of a Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice.
5. These are numerous, enough to carve out a field of scholarship, and publishers like Zed Books, South World Press and South End press specialize in social movement publications.
6. See, for example, the 2009 special issue on activism and knowledge in *McGill Journal of Education*, Vol. 44, No. 1.
7. Indian newspapers, magazines, websites and blogs provide information and analysis about these events. For information, see <http://sanhati.com/>; *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Frontline*, *Tehelka* and newspaper reports. For this author's contributions to the debates, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLSwINrpHhc&feature=related>; also <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1gnf7TPbGU> and <http://www.monthlyreview.org/mrzine/dsouza171209.html>. accessed on 26 October 2010. For analysis on current issues, see Arundhati Roy (2009).
8. The Gandhians were somewhat different in this. They supported liberal democracy but not the development model.

9. There were other peasant and Adivasis struggles, but Telangana was by far the biggest and most significant. For an account of similar struggles after independence, see Desai (1986).
10. The Telangana struggle had profound effects on the communist movement in India, a strand of inquiry that is outside the scope of this chapter.
11. For a summary of key events and issues, see Park (1975), Bayley (1983, 1984) and Dua (1979).
12. *Ibid.*
13. See footnote 7.
14. See footnote 8.

References

- Adamovsky, E. (2009). *Historia de la Clase Media Argentina: Apogeo y Decadencia de una ilusión, 1913–2003* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Planeta).
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso).
- Anghie, A. (2004). *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Association for Democratic Reforms (2009). *Analysis of Criminal and Financial Details of MPs of 15th Lok Sabha (2009)*, Report by National Election Watch and Association for Democratic Reforms, New Delhi.
- Banerjee, S. (1984). *India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising* (London: Zed Books).
- Bauman, Z. (1987). *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Baxi, U. (1982). *The Crisis of the Indian Legal System* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House).
- Bayley, D. H. (1983). 'The Police and Political Order in India', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 484–96.
- Bayley, D. H. (1984). 'The Police and Political Order in India', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 484–96.
- Bhaskar, R. (1993). *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom* (London: Verso).
- Brock-Utne, B. (1996). 'Globalisation of Learning – The role of the Universities in the South: With Special Look at Sub-Saharan Africa', *International Journal of Development*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 335–46.
- Buck-Morss, S. (2000). 'Hegel and Haiti', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 821–65.
- Carter, C. (2000). 'Keepers of Knowledge Capital: Legislating for the New Millennium', *Management Decision*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 179–81.
- Choudry, A. (2007). 'Transnational Coalition Politics and the De/Colonization of Pedagogies of Mobilization: Learning from Indigenous Movement Articulations Against Neo-Liberalism', *International Education*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 97–112.
- D'Souza, R. (2005). 'The "Third World" and Socio-Legal Studies: Neo-Liberalism and Lessons from India's Legal Innovations', *Social and Legal Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 487–513.
- D'Souza, R. (2006). *Interstate Conflicts over Krishna Waters: Law, Science and Imperialism* (New Delhi: Orient Longman).
- D'Souza, R. (2007). 'Looking Into the Crystal Ball: "Civil Society" and "Humanity" in the 21st Century', *Polylog: Journal of Intercultural Philosophy*, Vol. 18, 55–62.

- D'Souza, R. (2008). 'Liberal Theory, Human Rights and Water-Justice: Back to Square One?', *Law, Social Justice and Global Development Journal*, Vol. 1, 1–15.
- D'Souza, R. (2009). 'The Prison Houses of Knowledge: Activist Scholarship and Revolution in the Era of "Globalisation"', *McGill Journal of Education*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 1–20.
- D'Souza, R. (2010a). 'Law and Development Discourse About Water: Understanding Agency in Regime Changes', in P. Cullet, A. Gowlland-Gualtieri, R. Madhav and U. Ramanathan (eds), *Water Law at the Crossroads in India: National and International Perspectives* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press): Ch. 17, 491–522.
- D'Souza, R. (2010b). 'When Unreason Masquerades as Reason Can We Regulate Trade and Communication Ethically?', in G. Cheney, S. May and D. Munshi (eds), *Handbook of Communication Ethics* (London: Routledge): 475–93.
- Desai, A. R. (ed.) (1986). *Agrarian Struggles in India after Independence* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Dirlik, A. (2003). 'EMPIRE?: Some Thoughts on Colonialism, Culture, and Class in the Making of Global Crisis and War in Perpetuity', *Interventions*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 207–17.
- Dua, B. D. (1979). 'Presidential Rule in India: A Study in Crisis Politics', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 19, No. 6, 611–26.
- Fisher, W. F. (ed.) (1995). *Toward Sustainable Development: Struggling Over India's Narmada River* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe).
- Galanter, M. (1989). *Law and Society in Modern India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press).
- Geertz, C. (1993 [1973]). *The Interpretations of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Fontana Press).
- Ghosh, S. (1974). *The Naxalite Movement: A Maoist Experiment* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay).
- Goswami, M. (2004). *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press).
- Guha, R. (ed.) (1982). *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Gupta, A. (1984). 'Revolution in Telangana 1946–1951', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and Middle East*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1–26.
- Hardt, M. and Negri, A. (2000). *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Harvey, D. (2000). *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).
- Harvey, D. (2003). *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Holloway, J. (2005). *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today* (London: Pluto Press).
- Inden, R. B. (1990). *Imagining India* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers).
- Jordan, S. (2003). 'Who Stole My Methodology? Co-opting PAR [1]', *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 185–200.
- Kamat, S. (2002). *Development Hegemony: Non-Governmental Organizations and the State in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Luque, E. (2001). 'Whose Knowledge (Economy)?', *Social Epistemology*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 187–200.
- Measham, A. R. and Chatterjee, M. (1999). *Wasting Away: The Crisis of Malnutrition in India* (Washington, DC: World Bank).
- Mouffe, C. (2005). *On the Political: Thinking in Action* (Abingdon: Routledge).

- Mukherji, P. N. (2004 [1979]). 'Naxalbari Movement and the Peasant Revolt in North Bengal', in M. S. A. Rao (ed.), *Social Movements in India: Studies in Peasant, Backward Classes, Sectarian, Tribal, and Women's Movements* (New Delhi: Manohar): 17–90.
- NAPM (2003). *Desh Bachao Desh Banao Andolan, Ayodhya Declaration* (Faizabad, India: National Alliance of People's Movements).
- Noorani, A. G. (2002). *Citizens' Rights, Judges and State Accountability* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Noorani, A. G. (2006). *Constitutional Questions and Citizens' Rights: An Omnibus Comprising Constitutional Questions in India; the President, Parliament and the State; and Citizens' Rights, Judges and State Accountability* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Olszen, M. and Peters, M. A. (2005). 'Neoliberalism, Higher Education and the Knowledge Economy: From the Free Market to Knowledge Capitalism', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 313–45.
- Omvedt, G. (1993). *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India* (New York: East Gate Book).
- Park, R. L. (1975). 'Political Crisis in India 1975', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 15, No. 11, 996–1013.
- Patel, R. and McMichael, P. (2004). 'Third Worldism and the Lineages of Global Fascism: The Regrouping of the Global South in the Neoliberal Era', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 231–54.
- Peters, M. A. (2003). 'Classical Political Economy and the Role of Universities in the New Knowledge Economy', *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 153–68.
- Petras, J. and Veltmeyer, H. (2002). *Globalization Unmasked: Imperialism in the 21st Century* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing and /Zed Books).
- Raju, S. (2006). 'Production of Knowledge: Looking for "Theory" in "Familiar" Places?', *Geoforum*, Vol. 37, 155–8.
- Rao, M. S. A. (ed.) (2004 [1979]). *Social Movements in India: Studies in Peasant, Backward Classes, Sectarian, Tribal, and Women's Movements* (New Delhi: Manohar).
- Robertson, S. L. (2003). 'WTO/GATs and the Global Education Services Industry', *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 259–66.
- Roy, A. (2009). *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* (New Delhi: Penguin Books).
- Sainath, P. (2009). 'Neo-liberal Terrorism in India: The Largest Wave of Suicides in History', *CounterPunch*, 12 February.
- Sathe, S. P. (2000). 'The Unfinished Agenda: The Constitution at the Crossroads', *Journal of the Indian Law Institute*, Vol. 42, No. 2–4, 171–92.
- Sathe, S. P. (2003). *Judicial Activism in India: Transgressing Borders and Enforcing Limits* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Sen, S., Panda, D. and Lahiri, A. (1978): *Naxalbari and After: A Frontier Anthology (Vol. 1 & 2)* (Calcutta: Kathashilpa).
- Shah, G. (2004). *Social Movements in India: A Review of the Literature* (New Delhi: Sage Publications).
- Singh, R. (2004 [1979]). 'Peasant Movements in Uttar Pradesh: A Study in Politics of Land and Land Control in Basti District 1801–1970', in M. S. A. Rao (ed.), *Social Movements in India: Studies in Peasant, Backward Classes, Sectarian, Tribal and Women's Movements* (New Delhi: Manohar): 91–148.

- Sklair, L. (1991). *Sociology of the Global System* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Smith, L. T. (2006 [1999]). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books).
- Sundarayayya, P. (2006 [1972]). *Telangana People's Struggles and Its Lessons* (New Delhi: Foundation Book).
- Talshir, G. (2005). 'The Intellectual as a Political Actor? Four Models of Theory/Praxis', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 209–24.

11

Fuelling the Flames of Dignity*: From Rupture to Revolution in Argentina

Marina Sitrin

On the night of the 19th, while the news was on television and the middle class was at home watching, seeing people from the most humble sectors crying, women crying in front of supermarkets, begging for or taking food, and the State of Siege was declared, then and there began the sound of the *cacerola* (the banging of pots and pans). In one window, and then another window, in one house and then another house, and soon, there was the noise of the *cacerola*.

The first person began to bang a pot and saw her neighbor across the street banging a pot, and the one downstairs too, and soon there were four, five, fifteen, twenty, and people moved to their doorways and saw other people banging pots in their doorways and saw on television that this was happening in another neighborhood, and another neighborhood... and hundreds of people gathered banging pots until at a certain moment the people banging pots began to walk.

That's how it was. The movement of the 19th and 20th began with a sound – the sound of someone banging on a pot. That sound grew, and then bodies began to move from their houses to the corner, and then to the center of the city, and finally to the Plaza de Mayo. Bodies moved and pots banged, and finally that new phrase was spoken – not speeches, not explanations, not political party placards. There were housewives, young people – everyone was there – and they said with a common voice '*que se vayan todos!*' ('they all must go!').

(Pablo, quoted in Sitrin, 2006: 22)

19 and 20 December 2001, Argentina: a crack in history

The government of Argentina froze all personal bank accounts in December of 2001. This was done to prevent a potential run on the banks, and in

response to a growing economic crisis. The government defaulted on 95 billion dollars of debt, the largest default by a country in history. The people of Argentina responded. The *cacerolazo* that began on 19 December with one person and then another soon had hundreds of thousands participating. Within two weeks, four governments had resigned. The Minister of the Economy was the first to flee on the night of 19 December. The president rapidly followed on 20 December.¹ The institutions of power were paralysed. By the evening of 19 December a State of Siege was declared, reverting back to well-established patterns of repressive violence. But the people broke with the past, with what had often been done, and rather than stay at home in fear they came into the streets with even more bodies and sounds: *cacerolando*. And then the sound of the *cacerolazo* found a voice, a song. It was a shout of rejection, and a song of affirmation. *Que se vayan todos!* was sung, and sung together with one's neighbour. It was not just a shout against what was, but it was a song of joy and togetherness. People sang, banged pots and greeted one another, kissing the cheeks of neighbours whose names had only recently been discovered. People were seeing one another for the first time. It was a rupture with the past; a rupture with obedience and isolation. It was the beginning of finding one another, oneself, and of meeting again. The 19 and 20 December was a crack in history upon which vast political landscapes unfolded. Revolutions of everyday life were created (Vaneigem, 1979). This break was also with what some referred to as a commodification of life. Martin K., from a neighbourhood assembly in Buenos Aires, speaks of people waking up and breaking from this sort of relationship.

The sensation I had was that society was a kind of desert, marginalized, even culturally, and out shopping. Everything related to the market and this marginalization expressed itself in social relations as well.

(Sitrin, 2006: 31)

Martin goes on to discuss how the experience before the crisis was one where identity was tied up in where one shopped, ate or what one wore, that people did not see one another as people but more as consumers. Then, with the popular rebellion, that was stripped away, literally and figuratively. In the case of Martin specifically, he met his neighbour Pablo, another participant in the assemblies only after the rebellion. They had lived in the same building as neighbours for many years previous to this, without even knowing one another's names. Now they are *compañeros* and friends.

From cracks to creation: the emergence of horizontal formations

Throughout history and around the world, there are moments, like 19 and 20 December in Argentina, when the ways in which we see things drastically

change, when something occurs that allows our imaginations to open to alternative ways of seeing and being, opening what the Zapatistas call cracks in history (see Ainger, 2001). When formal institutions of power are laid bare, as often takes place in the moments of a crisis, people frequently come together, look to one another and create new supportive relationships (Solnit, 2005, 2009). The autonomous social movements in Argentina are one of these many movements (Dinerstein, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; North and Huber, 2004; Liesvley and Ludlam, 2009). This chapter addresses what happens in the wake of this rupture, particularly how moments of rupture can open spaces for new social relationships which become movements of everyday revolutions. It reflects on what has worked in the Argentinian experience and how it continues to transform people and communities.

Many autonomous movements and communities around the globe are prefiguring the world they wish to create – creating the world they desire in their day-to-day relationships. Many use the language of prefigurative politics to describe this relationship.² These are not new sets of principles, ethics or ways of being. Prefigurative politics have historical and theoretical roots, from anarchism to the Spanish revolution, as well as dozens of moments of worker and community control, from the worker Soviets in Russia to the Shora in Iran, to worker and community control at various times in Argentine, Mexican and Chilean history, the Civil Rights Movement in the USA with Beloved Community, the popular power movements in Hungary and Bavaria and of course the Paris Commune. The times in history when we have self-organized and done so in inspiring and transformative ways are countless.

While these moments of rupture can be some of the most beautiful and solidarious ever experienced, they are too often temporary, and the previous ways of relating return. The Paris Commune lasted only 60 days, the assemblies after September 11 in New York a few weeks, the Shora in Iran in the late 1970s close to a year and workers' control in Chile in the 1970s anywhere from a few months to a few years, depending on one's interpretation.

In Argentina, for over eight years many movement participants have been creating forms of horizontal decision making – *autogestion* – that are autonomous from the institutionalized power of the state, and as a part of this process, crafting new people and new subjectivities. Worldwide, particularly in Latin America, these are not small 'experiments', but rather communities that include hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people and communities who are opening cracks in history and creating something new and beautiful in the fissures they pry open. This phenomenon, loosely beginning in the mid- to late 1990s in Latin America, is part of an overall questioning of hierarchical institutions and political parties. While not the main or only experience, this process of prefiguration, attempting to create the new society and new social relations in day-to-day relations rather than waiting for the 'big' seizure of power is something that has become more widespread, ranging from the Zapatista communities in Chiapas, Mexico to

the experiences in El Alto Bolivia with the Council formations, or the more autonomous segments of the Landless Movement in Brazil (MST). Even in countries that have used the method of social change through a new governing party or organization, one can see grassroots prefigurative formations, from the Communal Councils in Venezuela to the recuperated workplaces in Uruguay.

The experiences of the autonomous movements in Argentina help provide an answer to the question of how a rupture can become an everyday revolution. The diversity of the movements in Argentina, as well as the longevity of the struggles for autonomy and *horizontalidad*, make Argentina a particularly useful example in this process. This is also based very much in how the Argentines define the success of their movements and the importance placed on the transformation of the self and the collective in the construction of dignity. This measurement, one of dignity, is not something generally recognizable in the social sciences, and therefore often creates a debate at best, and at worst many argue the movements are not succeeding, basing this measurement of success on a the yardstick of contentious politics or solely materially outcome-based movement analysis.

The social movements that arose in Argentina are socially, economically and geographically diverse. They are comprised of working-class people taking over factories and running them collectively; middle-class urban dwellers, many recently declassed, working to meet their needs while in solidarity with those around them; the unemployed, like so many unemployed around the globe, facing the prospect of never encountering regular work, finding ways to survive and become self-sufficient, using mutual aid and love; and with autonomous indigenous communities struggling to liberate stolen land. All of these active movements have been relating to one another, and constructing new types of networks that often reject the hierarchical template bequeathed to them by established politics. A part of this rejection includes a break with concept of 'power over', people are attempting to organize on a flatter plane, with the goal of creating 'power with' one another (Colectivo Situaciones, 2001; Holloway, 2002). Embedded in these efforts is a commitment to value both the individual and the collective. Simultaneously, separately and together these groups are organizing in the direction of a more meaningful and deeper freedom, using the tools of direct democracy, *horizontalidad* and direct action. Together, what is created is a revolution of the everyday. Even with the changes, challenges and decrease in participation in many movements, this revolution continues, quietly and slowly perhaps, but it continues.

Revolution with a small r

In discussing revolution, I am using a concept that has been expressed by many in the movements and further articulated by sociologist and militant scholar, John Holloway (1998, 2002). There exists a deep resonance with the

writing and work of Holloway, with many in the movements feeling that he echoes their experiences, thoughts and feelings. In particular, his focus on the creation of new relationships based in dignity rather than the concepts of social change coming from above or through the taking of power, particularly that of state power.

The whole conception of revolution becomes turned outwards: revolution becomes a question rather than an answer. 'Preguntando caminamos: asking we walk' becomes a central principle of the revolutionary movement, the radically democratic concept at the centre of the Zapatista call for 'freedom, democracy and justice'. The revolution advances by asking, not by telling; or perhaps even, revolution is asking instead of telling, the dissolution of power relations.... A revolution that listens, a revolution that takes as its starting point the dignity of those in revolt, is inevitably an undefined revolution, a revolution in which the distinction between rebellion and revolution loses meaning. The revolution is a moving outwards rather than a moving towards.... Whereas the concept of revolution that has predominated in this century has been overwhelmingly instrumentalist, a conception of a means designed to achieve an end, this conception breaks down as soon as the starting point becomes the dignity of those in struggle.... The open-ended nature of the Zapatista movement is summed up in the idea that it is a revolution, not a Revolution ('with small letters, to avoid polemics with the many vanguards and safeguards of THE REVOLUTION').... Revolution refers to present existence, not to future instrumentality.

(Holloway and Pelaez, 1998: 167)

Similarly, as Martin K., a participant in a neighbourhood assembly reflected,

This struggle is revolutionary, but not the way people meant revolutionary in the 1970s. It's something else, and we still haven't named it, because it is not a revolution in the sense of bringing down the state. We have to create another world, build another world, think of how to organize this other world, using a different logic.... We're creating new ways of relating to one another. No one knows exactly how to do it. It's a collective process. No one is going to come and tell us how to do it, and it's exactly this process that is so beautiful.

(Sitrin, 2006: 271)

Movement participants not only speak of what they are creating as revolutionary, but of the day-to-day changes in social relations as a revolution. Linked with the concepts of power being that of something one creates, and creates together rather than a thing to be taken, revolution is seen

as a process of life transformation and not the storming of the Bastille or government palace.

Mapping the movements in Argentina

Many of the social movements discussed in this chapter were born of the rebellion of 19 and 20 December, such as the neighbourhood assemblies and collective kitchens, while others existed previously and blossomed after the rebellions, such as the recuperated workplace, indigenous and unemployed movements. Below is a brief description of the movements discussed in this chapter which is by no means exhaustive, but one selected to represent the diversity in composition and social class, all based on the common organizing perspective of autonomy and *horizontalidad*. This use of autonomous is not meant to address, or reflect, any direct relationship to the autonomous Marxist currents (see Cleaver, 1979). When discussing the meaning of autonomy with people in the movements, what I would hear most often would be a version of the assertion that ‘we are autonomous because we are going to do things ourselves, we do not want the state or political parties telling us what to do. We will decide ourselves, and together.’

Significant here is the fact that people from such different backgrounds were and are coming to such similar conclusions. For this reason it is important to explain their origins and activities. Additionally, many in the movements have in common what they are choosing to do, as well as how, from seeing the need, for example, to take over space, or ‘territory’ in movement language, to making decisions horizontally, rejecting concepts of power over and hierarchy. What each movement does, and how they are continuing is key for the understanding of how movements last and what social relations remain even if the form of organization changes.

Neighbourhood assemblies

This process did not obey an ideological decision; people simply met on a street corner in their neighborhood, with other neighbors who had participated in the *cacerolazos*. For example, in my assembly, in the neighborhood of Colegiales, someone simply wrote on the sidewalk, in chalk, ‘Neighbors let’s meet here Thursday night’. Who wrote this, no one knows. In the first meeting there were maybe fifteen people, and by the next week it was triple. Why did it increase in this way? It was not an ideological decision, or an intellectual, academic or political one. We simply came together with a powerful rejection of all we knew. A strong rejection of political parties and the forms of political parties, a strong rejection of all those that occupied spaces in the State or that organized to occupy positions in the State.

(Sitrin, 2006: 41)

People in the neighbourhood assemblies first met to explore new ways of supporting one another and meeting their basic necessities. Many explain the organization of the first assemblies as an encountering. People were in the streets, they began talking to one another, saw the need to gather, and began, street corner by street corner, park by park, intersection by intersection. Everyone I met reflected on this experience as something totally new and spontaneous.

In each neighbourhood the assemblies worked, and a number of them still continue to work, on a variety of projects, from helping facilitate barter networks, creating popular kitchens, alternative medicine, planting organic gardens and sometimes taking over buildings, including the highly symbolic creation of community centres in bankrupt and abandoned banks. These occupied spaces house any number of projects, including kitchens, small print shops, day care areas, after-school help for kids, libraries, micro-enterprises, free internet access and computer usage, and even a small movie theatre. Events range from the political discussion, to literary and artistic discussions, to salsa and tango classes and improvisational theatre.

Hundreds of neighbourhood assemblies emerged in the first year after the rebellion, each comprising anywhere from a dozen to a few hundred participants. Important to note, and something participants in the assemblies spoke of early on, is the fact that the assembly is not just the specific act or grouping that came together as a part of the rebellion, but the neighbourhood assembly was and is a representation of a break in forms of social relationships and the creation of new ones, based on *horizontalidad*, *autogestion* and autonomy.

Another significant aspect to the construction of neighbourhood assemblies is that they generally were comprised of middle-class urban residents. There are exceptions to this, and a question generally as to what makes someone middle class (Adamovsky, 2009). For the sake of this chapter I am going to use middle class as a definition that people imposed onto themselves, generally related to consumption and class identification rather than one of a social relationship to production. Historically the middle class in Argentina was, at best, disdainful of workers and even more so of the unemployed and poor. Unique in the movements of 2001 and after is the shift in the relationships of people organized from the middle class. A slogan that came into effect in the first years of the rebellion was '*Cacerola piquetero una sola lucha*' (the pot bangers (middle class often) and *piqueteros* (unemployed and poor) are in one struggle).

Unemployed workers' movements

The *piquetero* or Unemployed Workers' Movement (MTD) in Argentina arose in the north and south of the country in the 1990s when unemployed workers, as well as broader based popular movements, in the context of a growing economic crisis, organized against local governments and corporations.

Generally led by women, unemployed workers in the provinces of Salta, Jujuy and Neuquen took to the streets by the thousands, blocking major transportation arteries to demand subsidies from the government. In a decisive break with the past, this organizing was not done by or through elected leaders, but directly by those in the streets, deciding day-by-day and moment-to-moment what to do next. In some places neighbours came together first, tried to discover what needs existed in the neighbourhood, and from there decided to use the tactic of blockading roads – *piquetes*. While the origins of the MTDs was one of direct democracy and participation, over time that experience has only been generalized with some of the movements.

Argentina has a long history of clientalistic relationships, relationships often described as ‘domination networks’ (Auyero, 2000) – that is, ‘relationship[s] based on political subordination in exchange for material rewards’ (Fox, 1994: 153). People in unemployed neighbourhoods would explain how they were not able to get anything done without having to go through their local *puntero*. This *puntero* usually works for the local Peronist or Radical Party and their job is to turn out votes at election time, and bodies at the time of political rallies. In exchange for this participation the *puntero* might be able to get basic material things for people, such as light bulbs, or things fixed in the neighbourhood that are generally ignored, such as the cleaning out of a sewer. This was how most things were done, and to some extent still are done in the unemployed neighbourhoods. But there was a break with this relationship.

It is these movements, the ones that break with clientalism and *punteros*, and identify themselves as autonomous that are the focus of this chapter. Additionally, a few of the movements that once referred to themselves with pride as being unemployed have now decided to take the unemployed status out of their names, feeling that that is a status imposed upon them rather than generated by them. Some now call themselves movements for dignity, as with the case of what was the MTD Chipoletti, or are cooperatives or *Frentes* (Fronts), as with the Cooperativa Solano and Guernica, previously the MTDs Solano and Guernica. Many of the neighbourhoods where the MTDs are located are on the outskirts of cities, in areas that some might refer to as slums, lacking paved roads, sometimes with no electricity or water, and with a level of unemployment that is not so much an occurrence as a state of being. Not having a location of work, the traditional means of protest for a worker, a strike or job action, was unavailable, and thus, the *piquete* was created; blocking the roads to shut down the flow of production at the points of distribution rather than production.

Many talk about the *piquete* as not only a space of protest, but a space that opens when the road is shut down. Movement participants sometimes refer to this as free territory, a space that has consciously been created outside of, and against, the state (Zibechi, 2008). It is in this freed space that forms of

horizontalidad and new subjectivities emerged. This does not mean, however, that in the first moments of the *piquete* movement participants envisioned the shut down as also an opening. The process evolved over time. From this process of opening grew more reflection as to what was taking place, and thus the transformation of the process into something more conscious.

From the *piquetes*, which forced the government to give the first (small) unemployment subsidies in the history of Latin America, many groups became movements, expanding their strategies and tactics to creating autonomous areas upon which they have built housing and gardens and created alternative education and health care. In the MTD of Allen there is an autonomous clothing production micro-enterprise that is called 'Discover', as a *compañera* explains:

They named it 'discover' because through the MTD they discovered the value of *compañerismo*, the value of solidarity. Through the MTD, they discovered experiences that enable one to express oneself beyond words.

(Sitrin, 2006: 109)

These autonomous projects are organized geographically, MTDs emerging with neighbours in different neighbourhoods, many of whom work together in network formations. The unemployed movements represent some of the most marginalized communities and peoples in Argentina. They physically live on the geographic outskirts of towns and cities, and until the popular rebellion were perceived of in the same way. Now, when the movements speak of the construction of new territories it is both geographic space, such as the unemployed taking over land upon which they build houses and clinics, but also the political territory of the new social creation that is also occupying space in the imagination of the population.

Recuperated workplaces

The few occupied factories that existed at the start of the 2001 rebellion have grown over the past eight years to include hundreds of workplaces, with a particularly large percentage increase in the period of 2008–09, taken over and run by workers, without bosses and generally without hierarchy. The majority of these workplaces had been abandoned by the previous owners and after a process of assemblies and discussions were then taken over and put into production by a segment of the employees. Almost every workplace sees itself as an integral part of the community, and the community sees the workplace in the same way. As the workers of the Zanon ceramic factory in the south of Argentina say, 'Zanon is of the people'. Each workplace has its own internal form of decision making, though most use not only the assembly form, but each worker has the same decision-making power as the other, all decisions are made together, and the salary distribution is the same or close to the same in the vast majority of the workplaces. A few workplaces

have decided to have forms of management with sectors making decisions that affect the other workers, though this experience is rare (Zibechi, 2006).

Autogestion is how most in the recuperated movements describe what they are creating and how. The vast majority of workplaces have equal pay and use *horizontalidad* as a way of making decisions together. The few workplaces that have variations in pay and use representational forms of decision making are almost always the ones more recently occupied, with workers who have not had many years working together, and have generally not had to resist government repression to defend their recuperation (ibid.). This reflects the deep connections with levels of militancy, trust and radical democracy. The more time workers spent together, working, and in particular struggling and in confrontation with bosses or police, the deeper the trust that was created. The more that this trust developed, the more willing workers were to take risks together, and to raise the level of militancy and confrontation with the state, police or owners. This is also generally true with regard to the depth of democracy in the workplace.

Over time, recuperated workplaces have begun to link with one another, creating barter relationships for their products. For example, a medical clinic will service members of a printing factory in exchange for the free printing of their material, or Zanon, a ceramic factory in Patagonia, is providing the tiles for the reconstruction of the Hotel Bauen in Buenos Aires. This experience, while still minimal, is growing and many see it as one of the best paths for the movement (unpublished interview, Maria, Hotel Bauen, 2009). Overall, the experience of the recuperated workplaces is limited by market forces within Argentina as well as globally, and while many are struggling with this question, attempting to find alternative paths, it still remains one of the greatest challenges the movements face. As of yet there are not so many recuperated workplaces in the same industry that competition has become an issue, but many realize this could be one of the many upcoming challenges.

Some of the workplaces have organized community centres in spaces that are not being used, or when the factory is closed. Over the past three years in particular, though beginning in 2004, a growing phenomenon has occurred in the recuperated workplaces, which is the *Bachillerato*. *Bachilleratos* are educational programmes that are certified by the government to grant secondary education degrees. They are three-year programmes that must meet certain criteria, including contact hours and specific areas of study. There are now over 150 *Bachilleratos*. Each of these 150 has already graduated at least one class, with each class having a minimum of 35 students. That represents a few thousand people, each of whom now has a degree because of education provided by the movements, housed in factories run by workers without bosses. Additionally these courses are not your traditional classes, but rather are taught with a focus on social movements and cooperativism, using forms of non-hierarchical education, such as the Paulo Freire method of popular education. At one graduation I attended in the recuperated print

shop of Chilavert in 2009 the students had already come together during that year and *autogestionada* (self-organized using horizontal forms of relations) a booklet that could be used for the incoming classes. This experience showed in practice that what was being learned was and is not just your basic maths and philosophy, but social change and *horizontalidad* (Pagina 12, 2009, Mu 31, December 2009).

New social relationships

People and movements have and will continue to take over buildings, land and factories. People will always fight to make a better world. Part of what is so unique about the movements in Argentina is that communities are not only finding creative ways to sustain themselves, they are recreating themselves in the process, creating more loving and trusting spaces, and different, more confident people. The language of subjectivity and protagonism is used to explain what is happening to people and within people. They feel as actors in their lives, and not just because they are now running their workplace, but because they are doing it together, with one another, basing their actions in love and trust. As a *compañera* in the unemployed movements so eloquently described,

The thing is everything depends on how far one wishes to go in creating a new society. If you begin with loving yourself first and if you can love those in your immediate surroundings, you have the greatest potential for transformation. A life previously devoted to a single leader now assumes a radical stance that is much more profound, it assumes a devotion that is much more profound. We have seen this in our day-to-day lives and in our day-to-day relationships. As we come together to work, or as we come together to carry out a joint project, we generate affective ties that strengthen common support for a project, the things that are fought for by the other person are the same things that I feel I must fight for. And so, it's as if things take on a different meaning, it's a completely different horizon, and that is something very new, very of the now.

(Sitrin, 2006: 234)

One of the ways these new social relationships are facilitated, and what helps people communicate directly and openly is through the use of *horizontalidad* as a tool.

Horizontalidad

Horizontalidad is a word that encapsulates most directly the ideas upon which the new social relationships in the movements in Argentina are grounded.³ It is a word that previously did not have political meaning. It emerged from a new practice, from a new way of interacting, a break with

previous ways of relating and being, which has become a hallmark of the autonomous movements.

Horizontalidad is a social relationship that implies, as its name suggests, a flat plane upon which to communicate, but it is not only this. *Horizontalidad* implies the use of direct democracy and the striving for consensus, processes in which attempts are made so that everyone is heard and new relationships are created. It is an attempt to break down power relationships based in affective politics and against all the implications of 'isms'. It is a break with vertical ways of organizing and relating, but a break that is an opening. One of the most significant things about the social movements that emerged in Argentina after 19 and 20 December is how generalized the experience of *horizontalidad* was and is. This new social relationship is used by those in the middle class in assemblies, with the unemployed in neighbourhoods, with workers taking back their workplaces and with all sorts of art and media collectives that emerged in the wake of the crisis. *Horizontalidad* and a rejection of hierarchy and political parties was the general experience. Where this came from and how it is linked to the rupture is something that many reflect upon in the movements.

As Ezequiel, from the neighbourhood assembly of Cid Campeador describes,

The first thing that I want to say is that I do not know where the idea of *horizontalidad* comes from. . . . I believe that part of the impulse towards *horizontalidad* was related to an inability to trust officials, this feeling that all leaders that existed were corrupt by the mere fact of being leaders. Regardless of who held whatever formal position, inevitably s/he was corrupt, had abandoned you, and was totally separate from your problems and necessities.

(Ibid.: 48)

Our relationships are still deeply affected by capitalism and hierarchy, and thus by the sort of power dynamics it promotes in our collective and creative spaces, especially how we relate to one another in terms of economic resources, gender and race relations, and access to information and experience. As a result, until these fundamental social dynamics are overcome, the goal of *horizontalidad* cannot be achieved. Time has taught that, in the face of this, simply desiring a relationship does not make it so. But the process of *horizontalidad* is a tool for the achievement of this goal. Thus *horizontalidad* is desired, and is a goal, but it is also the means, the tool, for achieving this end.

Many movement participants shared the experience in the first months and year of the rebellion where people began using the language of *horizontalidad*, and believed that by using it, the language, the relationship was also taking place. The idea comes from a social relationship, but once named it began to define the desired relationship, rather than the actual relationship creating and deepening the term. It is from this that people

began to then refer to *horizontalidad* as a tool and a goal. By attempting to create more direct and open communications, one can hear the other better, and thus break down many of the prejudices and preconceptions we have coming from a society constructed on the hierarchy of difference. From this place of direct listening and building of trust new relationships form and old biases and power assumptions begin to break down. Not all power breaks down, and it is also with the use of *horizontalidad* that individuals and groups can point to this and use the tool of the desired relationship to create more space for those with historically less access to power and privilege. For example, women, while often the ones in the forefront of the actions in the rebellion, are not the ones to speak most or first. Using *horizontalidad*, and the desire for all to participate on an even plane, discussions took place as to the lack of women's voices in assemblies, and in various groups and spaces tools were used to open more space, including in a few assemblies rotating speakers by gender. People I spoke with in the early years of the rebellion reflected on what the construction of *horizontalidad* meant for their community and individual and collective identities. In a conversation with participants in the MTD in Allen, a *compañera* reflected,

The meaning of *horizontalidad* is up for interpretation. If you talk to the left-wing political parties, they schematize the question. They believe that *horizontalidad* is a straight line, an association of points which are all the same, in which difference don't exist. If you don't see that *horizontalidad* is a relationship between different people with the same quantity of rights, we won't understand each other. That opposing view implies that you believe that *horizontalidad* presupposes a machine that cuts the chorizo [sausage] into equal parts, and that is not *horizontalidad*. We are different... we are all different. The issue is how each is thought of and how each sees him or herself inside a community, how each person is integrated, how that produces community and how that community produces collective thought. That is *horizontalidad*.

Horizontalidad is and continues to be an ever-changing word and social relationship. The more people's relationships change, as this section shows, the more the concept and use of the word changes. As Emilio says above, it is an ever-changing process. Some of what is so useful and beautiful about *horizontalidad* is that it is alive, like the movements, a tool when necessary in the walk and a goal that keeps the vision clear as we walk.

Power and autonomy

I use the term autonomous to describe the social movements in Argentina because this is the way the movements identify themselves. Autonomy is one of the ways of distinguishing oneself, and the movement, from the state

and other hierarchical institutions. Autonomy is also used to reflect a politics of self-organization, *autogestion*, direct participation and a rejection of power as a thing, something that is used over someone else.

The unemployed workers' movements were born, containing new forms of horizontal decision making and autonomy as 'other powers'. Together, with *horizontalidad* and autonomy, the movements find ways of meeting the movements' basic needs. It is not always easy, and all needs are never met, but together, with new ways of making decisions and creating goods, through micro-enterprises and barter, more needs are met, and differently, without power over one another. The movements were formed as an intentional break with the power over and hierarchy of the *punteros* and clientalistic relationships of the past. As another participant in the unemployed workers' movement of Allen in the far south of Argentina explains:

The movement in Allen is surging forth, and from it all the freshness and naturalness of the movement. From the moment that it is born with all that fresh spontaneity, it bursts forth rupturing the social controls that political parties and *punteros* exercise over the unemployed. The first rupture is the casual dismissal of the *punteros*, the setting aside of political parties, and seeking one's own path. Imagine that. And this is done without a previously elaborated theory about this practice, surging as a spontaneous expression of social practice that seeks to carve out a different path, like some sort of quest. Don't you think?

(Ibid.: 108)

This rejection of the state, political parties and hierarchical power came from practice and experience. Ideas and theories were explored later. Scholar militants like John Holloway and Colectivo Situaciones were read and discussed, but the concept of power and autonomy articulated by those in the movements came first from their lived experiences. Some of these experiences from which people were breaking took place in the recent past, having been in relationships with neighbourhood *punteros*, bosses, politicians and often union bureaucrats. Other experiences date back further with movement participants who came from experiences of more militant or revolutionary struggle and who were now breaking with the experience of organizing as a cell with a leader and hierarchy, as with the guerrilla struggles in the 1960s and 1970s.

As at the time of the rebellion, simultaneously, there was a NO! The *Ya Basta!* The *Que se Vayan Todos!* The countless rejections of all that was, and when that broke, it opened the yeses. One of the yeses in this specific instance of institutional power is alternative forms of power, of people finding their own power and their collective power, creating other powers. This creation that is a part of the rejection is often referred to as autonomy.

Neka, from the unemployed workers' movement of Solano, describes their approach to power.

The issue isn't just the physical confrontation with the system. Everyday we're forced to confront a system that is completely repressive. The system tries to impose on us how and when we struggle. The question for us is how to think outside this framework. How to manage our own time and space. It's easier for them to overthrow us when we buy into concepts of power, based on looking at the most powerful, based on something like weapons or the need to arm the people. We're going to build according to our own reality, and not let them invade it. I think this idea of power as a capability and a potential, not a control, is a very radical change from previous struggles.

(Ibid.: 163)

New concepts of power, as something active, as potentials and not things, are at the heart of the autonomous movements and the creation of new relationships. When power is a thing, something to be taken or won, the process of change being constant ends and power as a goal becomes the end. In the movements, what keeps the new social relationships dynamic and changing are the tools of *horizontalidad* along with seeing the means as the ends. The process is the goal being created, and thus constantly changing. Power as an object and something to win changes this dynamic to one of means to an end and thus the process of social change becomes stagnant and no longer prefigurative.

Autogestion

Autogestion is a word that has no exact English translation. Historically, anarchists have spoken of self-management in a way that comes closest to its current use in Argentina's autonomous movements. It is a word reflecting an autonomous and collective practice. Projects in autonomous spaces, for example, are '*autogestionada*' in the sense that they are self-created and self-managed. In the unemployed movements' neighbourhoods bakeries, organic farms, popular schools and clinics are all *autogestionada*, run collectively, directly democratically, often using decision-making processes based on forms of consensus.

Autogestion is a practice based not only in 'the what' but in 'the how'. It is the relationships amongst people that create a particular project, not simply the project itself. For example, a neighbourhood assembly that decides to organize a neighbourhood medical clinic or communal kitchen and then from the assembly decides how to do it, coordinating such things as schedules, location, gathering of material and so on, these spaces are *autogestionada*. This is a different situation from a community kitchen that

is organized by the government. In the government kitchens neighbours sometimes volunteer to cook or pass out food, but they do not participate in any way in the decisions. The difference lies not in the act of food being distributed by the community, but who organized it and how the community directly participated in the entire process.

Autogestion is a massive break with the ways in which people had been relating for decades in Argentina. While there is a militant history of workers struggle and even self-management in the early part of the twentieth century, this is something that had been crushed under Peronism beginning in the 1950s. Dignity had a particular meaning before Peronism was taken away, and now, with the new movements in Argentina has been retaken, and consciously so.

The dignified worker under Peron was that person who went to work, arrived early, worked hard, and then went home and was able to buy things for his or her family due to this hard work (Berho, 2000). Daniel James, one of the leading scholars on Peronism, speaks of the construction of the dignified working class by Peron as follows: 'In an important sense the working class was constituted by Peron: its self-identification as a social and political force within national society was, in part at least, constructed by Peronist political discourse' (James, 1988: 38). This is a really important point, one that the movements reject. Their claim is that one's identity, one's dignity and subjectivity is not and cannot be determined by others, and especially not by those who have power over you.

Dignity cannot be given. This is the shout of the *piqueteros* and recuperated workplace movements. Among the slogan of the autonomous MTDs are 'Dignity, Autogestion, Autonomy and Horizontalidad'. Dignity here is about creating your own relationship to work and your community. In the MTDs people who were left on the margins of society have decided to take that margin and make it their centre. They are creating dignity in where they are and who they are. They consciously choose to not sell their labour power to the highest bidder, but instead to create and work together in the neighbourhoods, creating a new conception of work and dignity. As one *compañera* from an MTD explained:

We started getting some money from the State with these protests, but in the assemblies we discussed fighting for more than the tiny amount of subsidies they threw at us. Together we decided that we had to fight for something much larger, and that's where the whole idea of fighting for dignity emerged. Fighting for freedom. Fighting with *horizontalidad*.

(Sitrin, 2006: 100)

The evolution of the struggles, from demanding from the state, to rejecting hierarchy and creating horizontal forms of decision making, now without the state, all come together with the concrete construction of *autogestion* to

begin the development of dignity, the dignity movement participants talk about, one based in their own sense of selves and individual and collective power, and which constitutes a path to real freedom.

New subjectivity and protagonism

A friend from Chilavert, an occupied printing press, once corrected me in a conversation explaining that he is not 'political' but rather 'an actor and protagonist' in his life. Chilavert, like hundreds of other recuperated workplaces, uses *horizontalidad* as a tool and goal for making decisions collectively. Decisions are made that range from whether or not all workers, despite different hours and tasks, should be paid the same, to questions about what to produce and how much. Many in the autonomous movements do not call themselves activists, but rather 'protagonists, and subjects'. Similarly, in Grissionopolis, a small, recuperated factory, the workers have placed their machines in a circle with chairs in front of each machine. They are thus, consciously, in a constant assembly. At any time, anyone can begin a conversation related to the running of their workplace. They are the subjects of their life and work. There are no bosses and no elected representatives. It is a politic described in language based on their social relationships rather than an overarching theory, based in turn on horizontal decision making, and what cannot be separated from this is their role as individual protagonists. From this new individual protagonism, a new collective protagonism also arises, the need for new ways of speaking of the '*nosotros*' ('we/us') and '*nuestro*' ('our'), as it relates to the '*yo*' ('I'). The aspiration is a genuinely new conception of our individual selves through new conceptions of our collective selves. This process of self-discovery, and the discovery of one's own power and relational collective power, is at the heart of the construction of new identities. It is through the collective process of struggle and creation that one feels stronger and more of an actor or subject in one's life, and as one feels that individually there is a strong awareness that it takes place only as it relates to the group or collective struggling and creating together. Thus the individual and collective identities are profoundly linked and each works to recreate the other.

People refer to this process of the creation of new people and new relationships as a rupture; a rupture with past ways of being, and specifically a rupture with the idea of not knowing or being involved with the other was being broken from. In the break there was also a retaking of the past, a retaking of memory.

I believe what detonated the explosion of 19 and 20 December was seeing the lootings, followed by the declaration of the state of siege. It was like something in our collective memory said, 'No, I am not going to

put up with it, I'm not going to take it.' It began with some *cacerolazos*, and I remember... boom! People lost their fear, the fear we had from the military era... and well, this is like waking up.

(Ibid.: 24)

The break that Paloma refers to here, the saying no, was massive. The context was that of the most brutal military dictatorship in the history of Latin America, a dictatorship that 'disappeared' over 30,000 people. After a day of hundreds of thousands of *cacerolando* in the streets, with violent police repression, then the state of siege being declared, people continuing to be in the street, and in even greater numbers, was part of the moment of rupture. Expelling five governments was also a part of the long moment of rupture, but most important was what else happened, in the space beneath the government. People went outside and broke a history of silence. A history of '*no te metas*' (don't involve yourself with others) an often used phrase during the decades of the dictatorship as well as for years after 'democracy' was brought back. This opening was described to me much more than the street action. Most important to people was what changed inside them and in their relationships to one another. Paloma, a small and frail, yet amazingly strong woman in her 70s, explained to me all of what had changed in the aftermath of 19 and 20 December. She spoke of losing fear. Of a break, a shift in memory, that memory was recovered and something began to grow in the recovery. She says 'and now we are advancing. Our advances although small, go... little by little, but they go' (ibid.: 24).

This break with the past and shift in collective memory went much further. What happened in the street in those days of rebellion and the months and years that followed was not only a struggle against something, but the creation of something simultaneously. Carina, a university graduate student, describes what took place in the moments of the 19 and 20 December:

It was a reconnection with something that was lost. Many ways of being social had been lost... one of the first things we regained with the 19th and 20th was face-to-face interaction. We regained our community.

(Ibid.: 29)

The creation of new relationships, finding one another, and finding oneself, together making new social subjects and subjectivities is at the heart of where the personal and political meet, creating new people. Past social scientists and revolutionary actors have spoken of creating 'the new man', but in those cases it was generally as a part of creating a new society through taking power and making a new state. In Argentina the concept of new subjectivities is not that the state or revolution creates the new person, but the new person is an ever-changing concept and process. It is a dynamic

relationship between the evolving person and the collective and changing society.

***Politica afectiva* (the politics of affection)**

Linked with the concepts of new subjectivity and protagonism is the concept and base of the politics of affection. As new people develop, and do so collectively, changing and affecting the growth of the group and individual, the base from which the collective relates also changes. A deepening trust develops and as it develops people reflect upon it and see it as a fundamental part of how to continue developing. The new politics being constructed are not simply that there are horizontal formations in assemblies or as a way of making decisions, but *horizontalidad* affects all aspects of the social relationships and the social relationships then change. Through the use of the new tools, such as *horizontalidad* and the construction of autonomy and the development of new subjectivities, the base from which the organizing takes place also changes, and a depth of trust and love grows. This helps one develop socially and individually. Thus this is not merely an organizational phenomenon, but a deeply emotional and personal one. When discussing at length how and upon what the movements are based, people, especially in the unemployed movements, discuss the need to base the movements in a trust and love for one another. This is not offered as a slogan like 'Autonomy and Dignity', but is discussed more quietly. Paula and Gonzalo, from the group HIJOS, a horizontal direct action group, comprised of children of the disappeared, dialogue on this concept:

Paula: 'Our understanding of the idea of *el compañero* enables us to shield ourselves when we are up against any difficult situation and come together in such great unity that we are able to resist and withstand all. We have taken some very hard hits. We were borne of a rupture, and it happened to us again. We have endured all of this because we have profound political conviction, but key is that it is based on humanism. We really believe that the only way we can achieve a revolutionary process, unleash a revolution, is by first changing as human beings. We try to build within ourselves that which we are trying to achieve for society. We believe that if we do not live our lives in the way we desire and seek to live, then, we will never achieve our goals. This is our premise.'

Gonzalo: 'Above all, what we have come to understand is what Che used to say, that is, a revolutionary is moved by great feelings of love, and we must create this love between *compañeros*. Love is the link, because what we are struggling for is of such great importance, it is so important that it is only natural to feel love among ourselves.'

(Ibid.: 236)

From rupture to revolutionary landscapes

Despite the massive challenges the movements face in Argentina, revolutions continue in everyday relationships. These revolutions can be seen all over, if we wish to see them. We can see them in the little girl from the MTD Solano who requests an assembly of adults because she does not think her mother should be allowed to yell at her. We see it in the assembly in the occupied building in Lomas de Zamora where there is a serious discussion of what to do about a case of sexual harassment of a *compañera*, and the matter gets resolved in a way that all feel is acceptable. We see it in the discussion of what to do in the occupied grocery store, pay the electric bill or order new supplies. We see it in the discussions on whether or not to allow a *compañera* back into the movement after receiving money from a political party. These are everyday occurrences, of which there are thousands, in Argentina. Now each of these discussions uses *horizontalidad*, autonomous from institutional power, creating together and in the process creating new people. These are some of the many instances of the creation of day-to-day revolutions.

Unlike many other historical examples where people came together in a time of a crisis and then for various reasons, generally related to institutional power, either through repression, cooptation or 'legitimization' stop their organizing, many of the new forms of creation in Argentina did not stop. Part of the continued organization is in people's recognition that the formal institutions of power actually made for the crisis they were in. It is also in the lived experience of *horizontalidad* and the development of new social relationships. People recognized one another and themselves, felt and feel like actors in their lives, and no longer are told what to do or believe they need someone else to tell them what to do or how. This is a huge step, and one that people are not turning away from. Claudia from Lavaca, an alternative media collective, stated in December of 2009:

Now when groups come together we assume *horizontalidad*. This is not something talked about as much as it was in 2001, when we discussed and debated *horizontalidad* and *autonomia*, now we just use *horizontalidad* and debate other questions.

(Sitrin, 2009, unpublished interview)

The question of power and the state and how to relate to it, if at all, is one of the greatest challenges, and greatest strengths in the awareness of many in the movements in Argentina. As Pablo, a neighbourhood assembly participant, explains:

Simply we came together with a powerful rejection of all we knew. A strong rejection of political parties and the forms of political parties, a

strong rejection of all those that occupied spaces in the state or that organized to occupy positions in the state. With a rejection from the State and political parties to organizations that want to be a part of the State, and with a specific decision that 'we are going to do things for ourselves'.

(Sitrin, 2006: 41)

Person after person would explain to me, with an almost incredulous tone, 'why would we look to those institutions that got us into this mess in the first place?'. 'We will do it ourselves.' An analysis, many argue was instinctive, or at least intuitive, is what allowed the mutual aid to turn to revolution. The solutions lay, as in the first weeks after the rebellion, with people coming together in horizontal ways, looking at one another and listening. Then beginning to solve their problems together, not looking to the state or other powers, but their inner power and power with one another. In the first few years after the rebellion this meant many movements attempted to ignore the state as much as possible, or even sometimes denied relationships that did in fact exist, such as the receiving of unemployment subsidies while saying there was complete autonomy. Now the question of autonomy is more of an engaged one. The more autonomous movements discuss their relationship to the state regularly and are strategizing ways to maintain their own agendas while getting what they can from the relationship.

This last point, the creation together autonomously, without the state, against the state or beyond the state, is the greatest challenge facing the autonomous movements. It is also the most exciting possibility. One of the greatest challenges the movements have faced is how to maintain their own agendas in the face of either government repression or attempted cooptation. Groups and movements are consciously grappling with this, and attempting to create their own time and space in relation to the state, not having their agendas dictated by threats or promises from those with institutional power. As the years pass, it is those movements that take this question most seriously that continue to exist, transform and grow in depth. Many have fallen into the trap of the promises of the state and no longer create their own agendas and priorities, but others continue to create revolutions in their everyday relationships, continuing to expand the prefigurative landscapes created in the fissure that the rebellion of 19 and 20 December in Argentina opened.

Some of the concrete ways in which movements are dealing with the question of autonomy while engaging the existence of the state are, for example, cooperatives insisting on receiving primary goods, such as fabric for a garment factory or paper for a publishing house, rather than accepting money the state sometimes offers. In this way money does not become the determining factor, but if the primary goods are delivered it allows the workplace or cooperative to produce that much more. The Movement for Social Dignity in Chipolletti (previously the MTD Chipolletti) no longer receives

unemployment subsidies for each participant in the movement, but they did agree to receive cement and products that allowed them to build a sizable social centre, bakery and school. They also receive food products weekly, but instead of distributing them person by person, they have a room where the food is collected and movement participants come and take what they need from the goods. This is a relationship based on trust rather than creating a structure in the movement where there is a list of people and based on their participation they are allowed to receive food or not. Thus, the movement in Chipolletti maintains its horizontal relationships, receives some goods that help in their day-to-day survival, but yet does not submit to the dictates of the state.

Conclusion

In the first years of the popular rebellion in Argentina people around the globe were inspired by the emerging new social relationships. Many people were also inspired by the wide array of movements and groups all coming to similar conclusions with regard to the state and forms of hierarchical power. Many were also inspired and even awed by the depth and sophistication of the ideas and theories being developed from within the movements. Now, a decade after the popular rebellion, we are beyond being only inspired. Now we need to now sit back and study, together with the movements, what has been occurring. Together learning what it is that has helped these various movements last all of these years, as well as the many challenges that often block the path of deeper creation. Sara Motta discusses this process of studying, reflecting and learning together with movements in her chapter in this book. She argues, based on a critique of critical realism, that 'This critique opens up the possibilities of thinking through with the communities in resistance in which we participate how we might practice an epistemology that is prefigurative and post-representational' (Motta: 182).

Accordingly, it is the movements in Argentina that show us some of the key components necessary for the long-lasting survival and transformation of communities, creating new social subjects. It is precisely the new social relations, as an integral part of the new movements, which create the longevity of the movements. Distinct from past examples, the movements in Argentina are not striving towards a goal, thing or moment, whether that be 'freedom' or 'revolution'. The movements that are discussed in this chapter see their day-to-day experiences and creations as the revolution they are making. It is the use of *horizontalidad* as a tool and a goal, along with *autogestion*, taking place in territories, both geographic as well as in the imaginary, that come together to help in the process of creating dignity and freedom in the present. It is not a distant goal or promise of a new society or state, but the creation of the new inside of the old. These transformations of the everyday continue, and have continued this past decade. They face

many challenges, as has been discussed in this chapter, and will most likely continue to face challenges such as state repression and attempted cooptation, but as long as the movements are continuing to create, and do so in their own time, with their own agendas, creating new people and new powers, the threats of the state cannot make them end.

One of the main questions this chapter raises is what does it mean for a movement to succeed. For the autonomous movements in Argentina this question is measured not with a stick or a set of theories or pre-set ideological frameworks, but in a more complicated, yet oh so much simpler way. Measurement of success is through the day-to-day transformations of people and social relationships, as the movements have said from the beginning this is what they desire. People answer that they feel happier and more satisfied today than before they participated in movements. Many people, facing desperate conditions, now, together with their neighbours and new friends are creating ways to survive. These projects are often off the official radar, they do not include taking food from the state perhaps, but rather growing it together, maybe in small gardens, or taking over their factory, maybe with only 15 other people, and running it together rather than becoming part of a new national programme under state control. Perhaps it is as simple as the young girl in the MTD Solano who calls for an assembly because she does not want her parents to raise their voices at her. There, in that little girl, is a new growing social subject, one who feels more control over her life, and thus more dignity. She is and will be a different and more dignified person because of the movements.

When asked about their dreams many in the movements in Argentina responded with variations of the same answer. That what they are creating right now is their dream. And they dream that they will be able to continue to live their lives in the ways in which they choose, growing as individuals and collectively – together creating new worlds.

As El Vasco from the MTD Allen said in response to this question,

If we postpone our dreams or put off our aspirations, we're delegating, and we're subordinating – subordinating the evolution of things we are going to do, or allowing someone to finish the things we aspire to. In the end I believe every day must be lived. I believe that the rupture from the past is something permanent, and something that is a part of our daily life. Freedom and the rupture are today.

(Sitrin, 2006: 46–247)

Notes

*This title is inspired by a comment made by a *compañera* in the MTD Solano in a conversation with the Colectivo Situaciones. '*Piqueteros* was the name that they gave us, and for us it was the form that we had to talk to the entire society, telling them that

there were other forms of struggle, of fueling our fire and our dignity' (MTD Solano and Colectivo Situaciones, 2002).

1. One of the motivations behind the *cacerolazo* was the government declaring that all bank accounts were indefinitely frozen. This was a product of an over decade long growing financial crisis linked to privatization policies related to structural adjustment agreements with international financial institutions.
2. To my knowledge the first person to write extensively on the use of this the term was Wini Breines in her writing on the politics of the 1960s and what she saw as a different way of thinking and organizing in part as a rejection of the centrism and vanguardism of the Communist Party. She writes: 'The term *prefigurative politics*... may be recognized in counter institutions, demonstrations and the attempt to embody personal and anti-hierarchical values in politics. Participatory democracy was central to prefigurative politics.... The crux of prefigurative politics imposed substantial tasks, the central one being to create and sustain within the live practice of the movement, relationships and political forms that "prefigured" and embodied the desired society' (Breines, 1989: 6). That Breines used the term to reflect on a practice that was specific does not mean that she discovered an historical practice. People have created movements that desire their means to be their ends throughout all of history, from the Industrial Workers of the World in the USA organizing a 'New society in the shell of the old', via Gandhi in India speaking of 'Being the change you want to see in the world', to the articulation of 'the beloved community' by Ella Baker and others in Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee SNCC in the Black Freedom Struggles in the USA.
3. New words and languages often emerge from new experiences. These words and expressions defy translation. *Horizontalidad*, *politica afectiva* and *autogestion*, as used in this chapter, are a few examples of just this. To attempt to translate them using language that has previously based meanings and feelings results in changing the meaning and intention of the new language. For this reason, I have left them in Spanish.

References

- Adamovsky, E. (2009) *Historia de la Clase Media Argentina: Apogeo y Decadencia de una ilusion, 1913–2003* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Planeta).
- Ainger, K. (2001). 'To Open a Crack in History – Political Activity of Indigenous Peoples', *New Internationalist*, September.
- Auyero, J. (2000). 'Political Clientalism in Argentina: An Ethnographic Account', Paper presented to the Department of Sociology, State University of New York, Stony Brook.
- Berho, D. (2000). 'Working Politics: Juan Domingo Peron's Creation of Positive Social Identity', *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, Fall, 65–74.
- Breines, W. (1989). *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962–1968: The Great Refusal* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).
- Colectivo Situaciones (2001). *ContraPoder: Una Introduccion* (Buenos Aires: De Mano en Mano).
- Cleaver, H. (1979). *Reading Capital Politically* (Brighton: Harvester).
- Dinerstein, A. (2002). 'The Battle of Buenos Aires: Crisis, Insurrection and the Reinvention of Politics in Argentina', *Historical Materialism*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 5–38.

- Dinerstein, A. (2003a). 'Power or Counter-Power? The Dilemma of the Piquetero Movement in Argentina Post Crisis', *Capital and Class*, Vol. 81, No. 3, 1–8.
- Dinerstein, A. (2003b). 'Que se Vayan Todos! Popular Insurrection and the Asambleas Barriales in Argentina', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 187–200.
- Fox, J. (1994). 'The Difficult Transition from Clientalism to Citizenship', *World Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 151–84.
- Holloway, J. (2002). *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today* (London: Pluto Press).
- Holloway, J. and Pelaez, E. (eds) (1998). *Zapatistas! Reinventing the Revolution in Mexico* (London: Pluto Press).
- James, D. (1988). *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1979* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
- Lavaca.org. (2005). 'Concluyó en Venezuela el 1º Encuentro Latinoamericano de Empresas Recuperadas', <http://lavaca.org/seccion/actualidad/1/1195.shtml>. accessed on March 1, 2010.
- Lievesley, G. and Ludlam, S. (2009). *Reclaiming Latin America: Experiments in Radical Social Democracy* (London: Zed Books).
- MTD Solano and Colectivo Situaciones (2002). *La Hipotesis 891: Mas Alla de los Piquetes* (Buenos Aires: De Mano en Mano).
- North, P. and Huber, U. (2004). 'Alternative Spaces of the "Argentinazo"', *Antipode*, Vol. 36, No. 5, 963–84.
- Sitrin, M. (2006). *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (Oakland, CA: AK Press).
- Solnit, R. (2005). 'The Uses of Disaster: Notes on Bad Weather and Good Government', *Harpers*, October.
- Solnit, R. (2009). *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster* (San Francisco, CA: Viking Adult).
- Vaneigem, R. (1979). *Revolution of Everyday Life* (London: Rising Free Collective).
- Zibechi, R. (2006). 'Worker-Run Factories: From Survival to Economic Solidarity', in T. Ballve and V. Prashad (eds), *Dispatches From Latin America: On the Frontlines Against Neoliberalism* (Boston, MA: South End Press) 339–349.
- Zibechi, R. (2008). *Territorios en Resistencia: Cartografía Política de las Periferias Latinoamericanas* (Buenos Aires: LAVACA).
- <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/sociedad/3-135201-2009-11-13.html>. accessed on March 1, 2010.

Index

- accumulation by dispossession, 15–16, 83–4
- activism, 39–40, 160, 165–8, 204, 209–16, 227, 234, 238
- academic, 182–6, 196, 204–16
- social movement, 182, 203, 216
- worker, 41–2
- activists, 61, 67, 69–72, 75, 99, 105, 116–19, 131, 133–5, 145, 150–1, 153–68, 172, 196, 227, 235
- Adivasi, 16, 105–6, 116–18, 120, 229, 231–7, 241, 242–3, 246
- agency, 180, 182, 185, 205, 213
- collective agency, 20
- alienation, 7, 181, 185, 189, 193, 195–6
- alternative, 207, 208, 212, 214, 216, 234, 244, 252, 256, 258–9, 263, 269
- development, 10, 85, 88, 95, 142
- education, 258
- Argentina, 8–9, 13, 96, 179, 251–65, 267, 269–72
- autogestion, 179, 252, 256, 259–60, 263–5, 271, 273
- autonomous, 12, 86, 89, 98, 110, 115, 142, 187–9, 213, 252–5, 257–8, 261–6, 269–72
- Bahrain, 40–1, 43, 49
- Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO), 40
- Bhopal Survivor Movement, 150, 177
- borders, 17, 199, 203, 206, 213, 220
- capital accumulation, 85–6, 241
- Chávez, Hugo, 95–101
- class, 14, 66, 68, 107, 110, 134, 159, 165–7, 203, 205, 220, 229, 233, 238, 241, 250, 255–6, 259–61
- consciousness, 38, 150, 154
- contradictions, 26
- power, 86, 106, 116, 120
- struggle, 72, 92, 113, 159
- working class, 38–9, 43, 96, 140, 150, 159, 253, 265
- Colectivo Situaciones, 204, 214, 217–18, 253, 263, 272–3
- Comités de Tierra Urbana (CTU), *see* Urban Land Committees
- community, 6, 10–16, 69–70, 90, 117, 141, 145–7, 158, 169–70, 178, 180–1, 184, 186–96, 208–9, 217, 221, 252, 256, 258–9, 262, 264–7, 273
- councils, 98, 253
- complicity, 22, 52, 201, 211, 220
- counter-hegemony, 19–21, 83–103, 105, 123, 131, 135–6, 141, 144, 147–8, 216
- creative, 69, 183–4, 189, 195, 260–1
- creativity, 136
- crisis, 87, 88, 90, 95, 234, 242–3, 251–2, 256, 261, 269, 273
- fiscal, 66
- intellectual, 227
- critical
- educator, 146–8
- legal studies, 61, 68
- realism, 179–86, 193, 195, 271
- democracy, 86–7, 95, 98, 106, 131, 147, 229–30, 239, 245, 259, 267
- direct, 23, 93–5, 102, 253, 257, 261
- liberal, 230, 233
- participatory, 20, 23, 93, 99–100, 273
- development, 87, 109–11, 114, 120, 134–5, 152, 175, 225, 227–8, 230, 234, 236, 241, 245
- alternative forms of, 2, 84–5, 88, 136, 142, 244
- capitalist, 86, 121
- discourse, 241
- national, 4–5, 141
- state-centred, 232
- sustainable, 90, 135, 138, 170
- developmentalism, 3–8, 38, 47, 85, 88–90, 115–16, 225

- dialogue, 21–4, 108, 136, 139, 140–1,
 147–8, 151, 154–5, 164, 175, 181,
 186, 193, 194, 210, 216, 221, 268
 dignity, 109, 250, 252–4, 257, 265–8,
 270–3
 direct action, 69–70
 Egypt, 35–54
 Ejército Zapatista de Liberación
 Nacional, *see* Zapatistas
 elites, 12–15, 88, 91, 97, 106, 108,
 114–16, 120, 122, 152, 205, 212
 knowledge, 153
 emancipatory knowledge, 21
 enlightenment, 235, 242
 environment, 119, 160, 163, 188–9,
 244
 environmental justice, 162–5
 epistemology, 154–5, 178–99, 271
 ethnographer, 203
 ethnography, 151, 197
 eurocentric, 208, 218
 everyday, the, 6, 17, 89, 107–8, 117–20,
 135, 148, 179, 182–6, 190, 193, 196,
 251–3, 264, 269, 270–1
 exclusion, 12–14, 86, 88, 141,
 146, 157, 165, 183, 186, 206,
 213, 219
 exploitation, 35, 38, 41, 45, 50–4, 116,
 121, 160, 184, 210, 220
 feminist, 155, 200, 203, 222
 Foucault, Michel, 102, 104, 112–13, 186
 Freire, Paolo, 133, 146, 151, 154, 201–3,
 259
 gender, 50, 155–6, 165–8, 176, 205,
 261–2
 inequalities, 15
 global, 50, 64, 83–6, 89–91, 95,
 113, 152, 167, 173, 181–5, 200–3,
 206, 211–14, 220, 228, 230, 235,
 238–45
 North, 2, 83, 150, 192, 196, 200
 South, 1–24, 83–8, 90, 100–2, 150,
 192, 194, 196, 200, 203, 210, 212,
 219
 globalization, 141, 167, 212, 227–30,
 234–45
 Gramsci, Antonio, 35, 84, 94, 147, 205
 Harvey, David, 14, 86, 238–9
 hegemony, 14, 35–8, 53, 101, 110, 113,
 122, 131, 218
 Nasserite, 43–4, 48
 Holloway, John, 89–90, 180–1, 237,
 253–4, 263
 horizontalidad (horizontalism), 23, 179,
 253, 255–73
 ideology, 85, 133, 174, 227, 230, 237
 imagination, 24
 imperialism, 37, 42, 52, 228, 232–3, 238,
 245
 India, 14, 104–27, 152, 154, 163, 167,
 175, 205, 228–3, 242–3, 245–6
 Communist Party of, 10
 indigenous people, 141, 191, 231, 241,
 253–5
 inequality, 2, 15, 61, 65, 72, 83, 88, 90,
 95, 186
 intellectual, 2, 23, 37, 43–4, 52, 88, 91,
 116, 159, 163, 165, 168–9, 179–86,
 204, 210, 217–18, 227–39, 242, 245,
 255
 leadership, 36, 44, 152
 International Monetary Fund (IMF),
 48–9, 85–7
 Islamism, 42
 Jessop, Bob, 5, 17, 85, 86, 91–2, 104,
 111–14, 122
 Johannesburg, 60–76
 Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath, 117
 knowledge, 131–2, 135, 138–8, 150–1,
 153–6, 164–76, 184–8, 190–6, 202–5,
 208–11, 214–20, 229, 234, 236–7,
 243
 land, 116, 135, 140, 178, 188–9, 228–32,
 234, 242, 243, 253, 258, 260
 reform, 100, 114, 132, 136–7, 142–3,
 145, 148, 229, 231
 Landless Rural Workers Movements
 (MST), 21, 31–2, 135–48, 253
 landowners, 38, 40, 45, 114, 119, 152
 liberalism, 5, 11, 23, 37, 40, 86, 197, 228,
 235, 239, 241
 liberation theology, 13, 187–8, 191–3,
 196–7

- Marxism, 1, 42, 89, 235, 239
- Marxist theory of state, 84, 86, 89–95, 104, 107, 113, 122
- Marx, Karl, 90, 121, 245
- Mazibuko, Lindiwe, 62, 67–71, 73, 75
- methodology, 139, 143, 147, 153, 155, 180, 183, 186–93, 203, 208, 214, 219
- militant particularism, 6–7
- moral economy, 44, 48
- movement relevant research, 2, 21–2, 167, 181–2, 187, 193, 196
- MST, *see* Landless Rural Workers Movements (MST)
- MTD, *see* Unemployed Workers Movement (MTD)
- Muslim Brotherhood, 52–3
- Narmada Bachao Andolan, 10, 105, 118–21, 243–4
- Nasser, 42–5
- nationalism, 38, 40, 43
 - Arab, 42
 - Hindu, 174
- National Programme of Land Reform Education (PRONERA), 131–2, 135–8, 145–7
- Naxalites, 10, 116, 158
- neoliberalism, 1–9, 14–19, 38, 45, 51, 53–4, 60, 83–91, 106, 115–16, 122–3, 131, 134–7, 147, 152, 175, 225
- newly industrialized countries, 11, 14
- NGOs, 50, 52, 88, 107
- object, 153, 180, 184, 264
- Ontology, 179–81, 183, 185, 193
- other, the, 240, 266
- participatory, 189, 195, 209, 211
 - methodology, 200, 203
 - research, 203
 - socialism, 13–14
- party system, 96, 115
- peasants, 16, 38, 141, 152, 231–2, 237, 241, 246
- piquetero (unemployed worker), 256, 265, 272
- politica afectiva (the politics of affect), 268, 273
- popular education, 2, 13, 147, 187–9, 191, 193–4, 196, 259
- postcolonial, 1–5, 9–13, 19–22, 47, 107, 114, 121, 123, 205, 235
 - field of force, 3, 8, 10, 13, 19
 - studies, 200, 210
 - theory, 109
- post-representational politics, 21–2, 179, 181–8, 190–1, 195–6, 271
- poststructuralism, 35, 109
- Poulantzas, Nicos, 91–9, 113
- prefigurative, 178, 196, 252–3, 264, 270–3
- prepayment water meters (PPM), 60–1, 64–72
- primitive accumulation, 84, 115
- PRONERA, *see* National Programme of Land Reform Education (PRONERA)
- PSUV, *see* United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV)
- race, 261
- reification, 185–7, 192
- representation, 14, 22–3, 111, 120, 122, 180, 192–3, 196–7, 201–9, 213, 215–16
- researcher, 153–5, 158, 176, 200–2
- revolution, 250–4, 267–71
 - Bolivarian Revolution, 97–101
 - Chinese Revolution, 5, 228
 - French Revolution, 235
 - passive revolution, 108, 114, 116, 120–1, 124
 - Russian Revolution, 3, 101
- Shantytown, 178, 187, 189–90
- socialism, 42, 49, 97, 101, 229, 235
- social movement (s), 1–3, 8–14, 19–24, 51, 61–2, 69, 73, 76–7, 84–91, 98, 101, 107, 110, 115–19, 121–2, 134–48, 150, 165, 168, 179–82, 184, 187, 192–7, 200–3, 213–20, 225, 227–9, 234–45, 252–5, 259, 261–2
- discourse, 215, 228
- politics, 214
- practice, 184
- research, 154, 179–80, 192, 195, 227
- researcher, 180–1, 195
- strategy, 99
- struggle, 132, 183, 185
- South Africa, 59–80

- state, 104–27, 137, 167, 178, 227–45, 252–70
 capitalist, 183
 intervention, 39, 88, 90, 111
 led development, *see* developmentalism
 managers, 51
 power, 43, 89–92, 95, 113, 121, 240, 254
 repression, 70, 156, 174–5, 232–3, 272
 theory, 47, 111–16, 121
- structural adjustment, 37
 structural selectivity, 92, 97–9
 structure, 107, 110, 112, 122, 180–1, 183, 185–6, 210, 211, 213, 216, 220, 228–9, 242
- subaltern, 2–7, 10–20, 36–9, 41, 43, 84, 104–27, 180, 182, 200, 205–7, 209–12, 213, 216, 218, 220, 241
- subalternity, 206, 210
- subjectivities, 7, 15–16, 20–4, 135, 185, 189, 192, 196, 252, 258, 267–8
- trade unions, 98, 117–18, 159–60, 184, 241
- Unemployed Workers Movement (MTD), 256–8, 262, 265, 270–3
- uneven development, 17, 191
- United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), 100
- university, 2, 21, 22, 131–48, 172, 197, 245
- Urban Land Committees, 178–9, 186–96, 216
- Venezuela, 83–103, 178–99, 253
- visibility, 229
- Wainwright, Hilary, 180–6, 195, 204, 217–18
- water, 59–82, 162, 164, 169–70, 188, 196, 214, 217, 230, 246, 257
- women's movement, 133
- Workers Party (PT), 134
- World Trade Organization, 17, 234, 236
- Zapatistas, 2, 252