Coordinated Power in Contemporary Leftist Activism

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INTRODUCTION

Below I juxtapose the three main historical and contemporary strands of Western leftist activism - reformist social democracy, revolutionary Marxism-Leninism, and radical autonomism and anarchism - in terms of their *competing* notions of power and global governance and yet, conversely, their *coordinated* struggle for a more just, egalitarian, democratic, peaceful and ecologically sustainable world. A number of points will be developed herein. First, globalization, power and activism, are complex. Facile or one-dimensional definitions are unhelpful in terms of both theory and practice. As sociologist John Tomlinson (1999: 14) observed of globalization, 'lose the complexity and you have lost the phenomenon'. The same goes for power and activism. Further, it is important to note that while globalization processes have fragmentary or disintegrative effects, they are also driven by and reinforce unprecedented concentrations of economic, political, social and cultural power. This power is concentrated in global governance bodies ranging from informal, unelected, and unaccountable to inter-governmental, partially-democratic and thus considered somewhat legitimate. Most visible and contentious of these are transnational banks and corporations, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the post-2007 economic crisis nodes of the Group of 20 (G20) leading industrial states and the 'G2' of the US and China - the latter emerging as a key dyadic stumbling block to a strong climate treaty at the 15th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP15) negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009.

In response to this concentration of power at the global level, concerned individuals and groups around the world have also 'gone global' in myriad ways while remaining engaged in local and national politics broadly defined (see Reitan 2007). Yet ironically, in terms of power, global activists are often more realistic and pragmatic than many idealistic scholars who write about them. They are keenly aware of their relative and often acute powerlessness in the face of stronger corporate actors, complex bureaucracies, and prevailing policies, ideologies and practices. In recognizing their relative marginality, along with the complexities of globalization and ways of engaging with, pooling and wielding

power, activists have grown increasingly reticent to advance their group's platform as 'the sole answer' or to critique the tactics and strategies of others. Instead they recognize the need for multiple and flexible approaches to deal with the Janus-headed complex that is neoliberal globalization. They increasingly share information, build trust, develop consensus declarations, and act together in coalitions when possible or in parallel blocs when not. They also lobby, advise, or challenge governance actors at all levels. Further still they experiment with alternative and autonomous modes of political, economic, and social relations. They have thus developed a multi-pronged strategy entailing dynamic, loose and limited coordination across the spectrum from reform to radicalism.

This spectrum suggests another point of this chapter which is that globalization and the activists responding to it are not new. They can be traced back across centuries of contestation that Karl Polanyi (1944/2001) called 'the double movement' or, more recently, Terry Boswell and Christopher Chase-Dunn (2000) termed the ‘spiral of capitalism and socialism’. Just as a prime driver of the recent wave of globalization is the intensification and 'extensification' of the capitalist model of incessant privatization, growth and accumulation to all parts of the globe, so too are critiques of neoliberal globalization and its negative social, political, and ecological effects framed in broadly socialist terms. These range from reformist platforms for strengthening social democracy at the national and transnational levels to diverse calls for a radical and plural democracy.

Finally, what is arguably unique about the present moment is the degree to which the global left has *not* fractured into its historical constituent parts of liberalism, Marxism, and anarchism-autonomism. While these tendencies and tensions are present, activists make concerted efforts to mitigate, manage and bridge them toward joint action - or at the very least not working at cross-purposes. Thus, activists are increasingly coordinating their diverse sources and forms of power in order to wield power collectively. To illustrate how this is done, examples will be drawn from the diverse activist networks organizing around the COP15 negotiations, where I was a participant observer. This pragmatic hanging together of the left reflects the growing recognition of the complexity of globalization and power, as well as the multiple activist strategies needed to engage with and ultimately transform both.

THE THREE FACES OF THE LEFT IN HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM

Though it is fair to question the applicability of the left-right distinction in contemporary politics, and more specifically whether we can speak of a 'global left' in an increasingly multi-polar and multi-civilizational world, I believe these distinctions are still useful as both a spatial metaphor and a rough approximation of progressive tendencies, or affinities, across much of the (post-)modern world. We can imagine them as groups encamped on either side

of a river. On *la rive droite* is a broad and squabbling cluster of the Western Enlightenment's children. Here we find liberal, social democratic NGOs and the transnational advocacy networks they (try to) lead aimed at influencing national and inter-governmental policy. Here too are traditional Marxist-Leninist parties and trade unions and the various mobilization groups they organize who deem capturing the national state - and, in recent decades, inter-state bureaucracies - as a necessary step toward socializing the increasingly global means of production. These modernists conceptualize power as hegemonic, hierarchical, and commandist, yet ultimately consensual - once the liberals construct their perfect institutions or the Marxists destroy capitalism. They see the state as either a prototype for, or as a necessary evil through which to pass to, a cosmopolitan world order characterized by justice, equality, rationality, and peace.

Across the river on *la rive gauche* are an even more diffuse encampment of late-, post- and pre-moderns: Here reside the autonomists, direct-action folks, post-anarchists and post-Marxists as well as many indigenous and anarcha-feminist tendencies.[2] This loose camp would likely *consense* (after a long, arduous process) to a conception of power as networked, biopolitical, prefigurative and, in the current global order, parasitic - yet ideally horizontal. From this perspective the state is viewed as one of many hierarchical and inter-related structures or relations of domination - along with capitalism, patriarchy, European (neo)colonialism, and the pro-growth and anti-environment development model - that must be abandoned, challenged, and destroyed/deconstructed if 'a world in which many worlds can fit', to quote Zapatista *subcomandante* Marcos, is to be realized.

In imagining power in these diverse ways and acting accordingly, each broad activist tendency assists in constructing a new world order: in the former case, a *pluralistic global polity* modelled on the liberal state; in the latter, a *counter-imperial rhizome* consisting of autonomous but networked nodes across an ever-expanding horizontal plane. Both will be elaborated below. Whether, how or the extent to which these distinct forms of power and alternative worldviews can be reconciled is an open question and one that is being debated and tested via activist praxis in the most recent cycle of global contention. It is a fundamental debate, for as Stephen Lukes (1974/2005: 63) noted in his seminal proposition on power:

> how we think of power may serve to reproduce and reinforce power structures and relations, or alternatively it may challenge and subvert them. It may contribute to their continued functioning, or it may unmask their principles of operation, whose effectiveness is increased by their being hidden from view.

This perennial divide among activist camps has deep historical roots and robust contemporary manifestations. Indeed, it has been a ubiquitous feature of 'left' or progressive political philosophy and action for well over a century, and cannot be easily sutured. Socialist folklore reminds us that it was present at the birth of modern transnational activism when Karl Marx himself, representing revolutionary communism, successfully manoeuvred to expel Mikhail Bakunin and his anarchist ilk after the first Communist International for opposing Marx's call to participate in parliamentary elections with an eye toward seizing state power. Instead, the proverbial father of collectivist anarchism Bakunin (1873/1996) advocated direct action on the part of workers to abolish the state and capitalism simultaneously, and thus presciently rejected the intermediate stage of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' on the grounds that it threatened to permanently enslave the very workers it purported to free.

The second main fissure and ultimate schism to emerge early on was between anti-capitalist revolution and social democratic reformism. It broke out in the wake of WWI and was exacerbated by the competing solidarities between national citizen and international proletarian. The terms of this polemical debate, as the story goes, were laid down by German Social Democratic Party members Eduard Bernstein (1889/1993) arguing for the reformist path to socialism as opposed to Rosa Luxemburg (1900/1973) advocating the workers' revolution.

And so it continues today: These three tendencies have re-emerged everywhere in the most recent cycle of contention. We find them in the variegated responses to the US's 'war on terror' (Reitan 2009). They are even more apparent in the global backlash against the core state-allied corporate and financial interests in their drive to construct a single integrated economy and international legal order via neoliberal globalization. These diverse activist tendencies are manifested in the color-coded blocs and diverse tactics of black (anarchists), red (socialists and labor), green (ecologists), and pink (pacifists) ubiquitous at mass protests around the world. They are embodied in the sometimes fractious encounters between Venezuelan grassroots *barrio* activists and representatives of Chavez's state-led *bolivarian* revolution - and in a different way in the muted response by many social movements to Chavez's call for a Fifth International. They are there when urban autonomists and indigenous groups protest the 'NGOization' of the World Social Forum (WSF) and its regional spin-offs, when they occupy spaces within the Forums to protest their and others' exclusion, and when they self-organize direct actions and meeting spaces simultaneously but 'beyond the WSF’. They are constantly competing in the WSF International Council over whether the council's proper role is a deliberative and representative body or merely a facilitative one which cannot take decisions on the Forum’s behalf, as well as how the Forum relates to political parties, government officials, and armed groups.

And as will be seen below, these tensions are endemic in the emergent Climate Justice Movement. The main divide here is between professionalized NGOs and Green party members who lobby official negotiators and engage in the 'Green New Deal' debate with state and corporate actors, versus direct action autonomists and a number of Global South-based movement actors, along with their state and NGO allies, who demand radical change to the capitalist economic and state-political systems.

Survey evidence gathered at the WSF by Ellen Reese (2006) and her colleagues bolsters the above observations: When asked whether a single democratic world government would be a favorable or feasible goal toward which to strive, participants were roughly divided among those thinking it both feasible and worthy (about 30 percent), desirable but not feasible (about 40 percent), and those opposed (roughly 30 percent). The last group - the campers on *la rive gauche* in our spatial metaphor - favor anarchist and autonomist solutions of local governance, deep and radical democracy, and community self-reliance. Further, while a large majority (nearly 85 percent) wish to abolish international financial institutions, nearly 60 percent seek their replacement with more democratic ones. Just over half (54 per cent) want to abolish capitalism completely, while a quarter of those surveyed oppose its replacement with any formal financial structures (see also Smith et al. 2008: 89-90). These results favoring both a world democratic state and a renovated global financial architecture by nearly 70 percent and 60 percent respectively reflect the prominence of modernist and reformist 'right-bankers' within the spaces of the main social forum sites. Yet it is likely that had surveys been administered in the autonomous spaces running concurrently with the social forums as well as among youth camp participants, the results would have been more evenly split.

What can be discerned from the above evidence are two dynamics, one centrifugal and the other centripetal: Regarding the former dispersive dynamic, the three historical leftist tendencies - social democratic reform, Marxist revolution, and autonomist-anarchist radicalism - have clearly re-emerged in the most recent cycle of contention, which many mark as beginning with the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, in 1994. But as to the latter inclusive dynamic, it is important to notice that the three tendencies *are still all there* - debating, critiquing, conflicting, but also coordinating together - 15 years and counting into this cycle: in the shared or parallel physical spaces at social forums, in the virtual spaces of email list-serves where they debate and plan inside-outside strategies and future mobilizations, and in the inter-governmental conferences and street demonstrations coordinating among various blocs and affinity groups. This combined frequency, complexity, diversity, and longevity of transnational activist coordination is arguably unprecedented.

A MODERNIST VIEW OF POWER AND GLOBAL ORDER: TRANSPOSING THE DOMESTIC POLITY TO THE GLOBAL LEVEL

But before heralding the emergence of an unproblematically-united global left (the postmodern prince has appeared!), it is prudent to examine each of the three tendency's distinct - potentially divisive but also complementary - conceptions of power and global order. This is necessary so as to identify the ways that each contributes to their common struggle toward a more just, egalitarian, democratic, peaceful and ecologically-sustainable world.

We begin with the most prosaic, or one could say hegemonic, tendency - if only because neoliberal discourse recognizes its right to exist as a separate but *ur*-political sphere. This is social-democratic reformism, or what liberal scholars and activists call an emergent 'transnational civil society'. The modern notion of civil society has a long and circuitous history (see e.g. Keane 2003). The liberal-democratic tradition defines it as the civic associational realm above the family and below the state, and is commonly seen as distinct from the economic sphere. Viewed also as separate from the political sphere, civil society is considered by reformers to be a necessary complement to the liberal, republican democratic state in the Kantian and Lockean traditions. In this civic realm, autonomous individual citizens - whose rights and freedoms are recognized by a state with circumscribed powers and both are codified in its constitution and laws - freely associate, and ideally this relationship is mutually reinforcing.

In recent decades we have seen an unprecedented scaling up on the part of 'civil society' activists (della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Keck and Sikkink 1998[3]; Reitan 2007; Smith and Johnston 2002). Thomas Wallgren (2009: n.p.) attributes the path taken by Northern activists in particular as embedded within a liberal discursive regime wherein 'the combination of universal ethical commitment and a concern for global challenges and problems turns rather mechanically into a reason for a grand scale of intervention and a positive prejudice towards high-level institution-building'. The reasons for doing so are numerous, and reflect the general demands of many Northern NGO-led transnational advocacy networks in recent years: economic globalization forces have overburdened the governance capacity of any single state; thus civil society is needed to pressure these institutions into becoming more democratic and as participants themselves in constructing democratic instruments; and global problems such as poverty, climate change, weapons proliferation, and financial crises demand global solutions and governance regimes that transcend the *realpolitik* logic of state-to-state relations (Habermas 2006; Held 1995; Patomäki and Teivainen 2004; Reitan 2007; Sehm-Patomäki and Ulvila 2007; Wallgren 2009).

Many activists, policymakers and scholars (Bull 1977; Falk 1987; Hardt and Negri 2000; Suganami 1989; Rosenau 1990) have noted conceptual and practical difficulties in projecting the domestic analogy onto the international level. Yet most NGOs have pursued such a transfer in their 'going global', by demanding recognition, rights, resources and reforms from this transnational tangle of informal, quasi-formal or inter-governmental actors - the legitimacy, authority and power of which many NGOs contest. Yet, by their very act of petitioning, they arguably empower these actors at the transnational level.

What is the precise nature and distribution of power in this emergent global polity which reformist, state-oriented civil society activists are helping to construct? With regard to nature, Robert Dahl's (1957; in Lukes 1974/2005: 16) classic pluralist view of power, defined as ‘a successful attempt by *A* to get *a* to do something he would not otherwise do’, seems to be the point of departure for contemporary thinking on transnational or global civil society (Florini and Simmons 2000; Keck and Sikkink 1998). In Dahl's view, power is measured in terms of behavior that impacts decisions over issues where a contest among clearly-defined interests are expressed in divergent policy preferences. Furthermore, the term ‘power’ for Dahl is interchangeable with ‘influence’ (Lukes 1974/2005: 17-19). So how do transnational advocacy networks exert power - or influence - over governments and corporate actors to get them to do what they otherwise would not? Via the strategic mobilization of information, issue and category formation, pressure, and attempts to gain leverage through moral persuasion, toward not only influencing policy outcomes but also transforming the terms of debate among the powerful (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 2; Risse 2000: 186).

Moving from the nature of power to its distribution in the emergent (neo-)liberal global polity: While liberal discourse opens a space for (depoliticized) civil society, this inclusion is tacitly stratified, and in practice non-state, non-corporate actors are relegated to the lowest rung of the power matrix. Yet many liberal civil society theorists attempt to put pearls on this pig by embracing this stratification so as to champion the ‘third force’ of soft power which morally authoritative NGOs can wield for the ostensible common good.

Ann Florini and P.J. Simmons (2000: 10-11) for example accept ‘standard international relations thinking’ on power and the place of civil society actors within that global rank order. They describe two, three-tiered hierarchies descending from most important to least: in terms of power, we find coercive, economic, and then 'soft' power of moral authority, influence, or persuasion;[4] and in terms of actors, there are governments, firms, and civil society. Following these standard realist and liberal assumptions, Florini and Simmons see states as the most powerful actors precisely because they access or wield all three forms of power. Firms are next, possessing the latter two forms.

Finally, civil society is confined mainly to the use of soft power in its attempts to shape international norms - preferably codifying them in international treaties but, when not,

at least evolving better standards of behavior. This soft power is said to be wielded both directly via persuasion of policymakers and business leaders to ‘change their minds about what is the right thing to do’, as well as indirectly via ‘altering the public's perception of what governments and businesses are doing, [in that w]hen public pressure is generated, politicians act to please their constituents and businesses must respond to keep investors and consumers happy’. (ibid: 31)

Well, maybe. But many activists and a few scholars have recognized that this triadic relationship among the modern state, market actors, and civil society has produced practices and distributions of power that are widely and even increasingly unequal, hierarchical, hegemonic, coercive, and commandist as we move to the transnational level. Thus, there is a growing recognition among reformist NGOs within 'global civil society' that their facile transposition of liberal state-oriented assumptions, practices, and aspirations of demanding recognition, rights, resources and behavioral change from emerging global governing agents run the very real risk of replicating and even reinforcing their own marginal status on the transnational level.

But before feeling too sorry for the lowly Northern NGO in the global pecking order, let's have a closer look at power relations *within* the networks they have spearheaded. For NGOs have largely replicated the stratified state-corporate-civil society relationship within their own so-called first-generation transnational advocacy networks, in a kind of slave-becomes-the-master inversion. These networks, which prevailed prior to the most recent cycle of contention and continue in a less hegemonic form today (Bennett 2005; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Reitan 2007), entail limited, policy-oriented campaigning aimed at governments and some corporations led by Northern-based NGOs. The latter broker strategic coalitions with other like-minded organizations as well as with beneficiary groups on whose behalf they advocate, but who have little say over the agenda. This network structure of well-resourced and connected NGOs standing up and in for oppressed and voiceless Third World constituencies thus mirrors the unequal, hierarchical, and commandist power logic of the nascent neoliberal global polity in which they are embedded - but now the NGO gets to play government, their donors the corporate polity members, while beneficiaries are cast in the weakest role of challenger, or even simply subject.

This paternalistic model has been increasingly challenged in the current cycle of contention, as the once-perceived passive beneficiaries became activists themselves (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 78; Reitan 2007). Their insistence on a greater voice in issues that impact their lives and in the networks that purport to advance their interests has caused a marked shift in how networks are structured - that is, in how power flows within and also beyond their issue-network to interact with others -as well as in the nature of their demands. Thus there

has been a discernible trend away from the first generation *NGO advocacy model* toward *hybrid network structures*.

These hybrids combine some features from the first generation with those of a second model, or what Bennett (2005) termed *direct activism social justice* characterized by diffuse forms of power. These are inclusive collectivities that favor diversity, linking multiple issues through horizontal networks, and adopting social technologies that facilitate greater autonomy and leaderless networks that provide political capacities for communication. What has emerged are polycentric networks combining direct mass activism in diversely targeted campaigns proliferating via the internet. These networks are antagonistic to state and corporate actors in a way that first generation campaigns were not. Yet they maintain the earlier model's attempts to influence and pressure powerful actors and some form of organizational apparatus, but which privileges internal democracy and transparency (Reitan 2007).

This hybridity is apparent in the diverse network and organizational designs of Our World Is Not for Sale, Via Campesina, Jubilee South, Friends of the Earth International, the World March of Women, the global anti-war and anti-bases networks, and the recent Climate Justice Now. What they have in common is popular participation and greater Global South leadership; multi-sector strategies which include networking across issues and actors toward structural transformation that would replace neoliberal globalization with comprehensive alternatives; a more critical and openly antagonistic position toward governance bodies and especially transnational economic and financial actors; and thus employing direct, non-violent action and mass mobilization in their repertoire of contention, in addition to popular education and lobbying of key government actors.

This shift toward a hybrid network structure has heralded major changes for the once dominant NGO. While they continue to play important roles in a number of networks resisting neoliberal globalization and other social ills, in the most recent cycle of contention they are no longer their sole initiators or directors. NGOs have become lodged, partly by force and partly by choice, within larger webs of activism growing up around them. They have responded to this reversal of fortunes along a continuum between two poles.

At one extreme is a flat-out refusal to relinquish the command position within their networks or their persuasive-accommodationist-cooptable role vis-à-vis the state and corporate powers that be. These NGOs struggle to hold onto their privileged position atop the 'civil society' heap, and thus simply replace their rebellious Southern beneficiaries - now called 'partners' but in name only - rather than ceding real power to them. They carry on with business as usual, which entails elite lobbying on the one hand supported by professionally-branded, media-friendly, popular, but rather toothless sign-on campaigns, both of which

result in raising large sums of money from government, corporate, faith-based and individual donors in the North.

Yet they have also found themselves criticized by many Southern-based movements and progressive NGOs, abandoned by former alliance partners, and at turns co-opted, marginalized, or frustrated by their government and corporate interlocutors. They've also been shut out of some networks altogether: This is done directly through 'identity-group only' rules barring their participation, as with the Via Campesina and the Indigenous Environmental Network (see Reitan 2007: ch. 5). It is also commonly achieved indirectly via the more confrontational and transformational stances adopted by new networks comprised of former 'beneficiaries' such as Jubilee South and Climate Justice Now!, as well as by radical autonomist networks like the Peoples' Global Action and the direct action network at the COP15, Climate Justice Action, whose tactics and strategies the old-style NGO eschew and at times openly denounce.

But the above is only one end of the spectrum of NGO reactions to this shifting terrain. A more pragmatic and progressive stance has been to accept and adapt to their new, de-centered and more explicitly partisan role of embedded NGO. These organizations have emerged as key facilitators, brokers, and supporters of popular, grassroots-based, Southern-led movements and networks, and have done so via listening and learning, hard-won trust, mutual respect, reciprocal solidarity, joint action, and promoting bottom-up power. I would argue that most NGOs who attempt to work across borders have experienced these tensions and been confronted with this choice between *commandist advocate* and *embedded partisan*. In choosing one or the other role as their ideal, the hybridized networks in which they are involved display a corresponding tendency toward either the first generation advocacy model or second generation direct-action social justice.

NGO NETWORKS IN ACTION AT THE COP15

This is true of the two main networks in which NGOs played key coordinating roles in the lead-up to the 2009 UNFCCC negotiations, Climate Action Network (CAN) and Climate Justice Now! (CJN). Yet although these NGOs tend to conceive of their internal role - as well as their network's relationship to governance and corporate actors - differently and thus often compete and conflict, the two networks have nonetheless remained linked through shared history, meeting spaces, members in common, informal information exchange, support of Southern governments, and coordinated action.

CAN is the oldest and largest civil society network participating in the UN climate talks, emerging out of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Thus, any influence that NGOs have had on this treaty process can largely be credited to CAN members. The network's leaders have been mainstream environmental groups such as World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace,

though they've recently been joined by influential social justice NGOs like OXFAM and Christian Aid. Its secretariat in Washington DC coordinates activities, information exchanges and strategies among twelve regional offices worldwide, publicizes its campaigns, raises funds and collects membership dues. Its stance, while increasingly critical, has largely focused on 'sustainable development' - that is, human and economic development that does not compromise either's continued growth nor unduly harm the planet. In this regard, it is very much steeped within the liberal socio-economic and political discourse of universal, yet differentially-assigned, rights and obligations based on each country's level of development. CAN's lobbying and campaigning efforts promote democratic government regulation at both the national and international levels through 'fair, ambitious and binding' targets and treaties, sustainable economic growth supported by technology and aid transfers to the South, and individual behavioral change.

CAN's network structure and aims thus tend toward the first generation advocacy model, with all its attendant tensions. These came to a head at the UN climate talks in Bali in 2007 (COP13). CAN members, including Friends of the Earth International and some national affiliates voiced concerns about lead Northern NGOs promoting their own governments' interests over those of the developing and poor countries. They also accused them of blocking the network from adopting more critical and activist stances against powerful governmental and economic actors and in defense of the planet and its vast majority of people. These critiques resonated with some Southern-based networks and *embedded partisan* NGOs who were coming to the climate talks for the first time. They began meeting and holding actions separately from CAN and, by the COP13's end, twenty groups issued a press release launching a new network, Climate Justice Now! (2007).[5] This new network's reference to 'justice' highlights its commitment to fight for social, ecological, and gender justice simultaneously, as well as demanding reparations for 'climate debt' to be paid to the South. Furthermore, it is telling that CJN's critical and activist stance against the UNFCCC process - charging it as undemocratic, marginalizing voices from the South and the most affected by climate change, and as proposing false, weak, and profit-oriented solutions that fail to address the scale of the crisis - are the very same criticisms its participants leveled against CAN upon their exodus.

Going into the COP15, CAN members had to compete with the upstart CJN for UN accreditation badges, and were rather put off to find that 40 percent went to the new alliance. The two networks were made to share the NGO room in the official Bella Center as well as to coordinate times for press conferences - both of which were conflictual. When NGO access to the Center was severely cut back in the final days of negotiations, CAN members migrated to the Klimaforum space, where CJN had been hosting well-attended and open informational and mobilization meetings all week. Yet CAN proceeded to string

tape and check badges in their cordoned off section of the hall, excluding non-network activists and the public from their ‘sensitive’ discussions.

These conflicts notwithstanding, the two networks did cooperate by sharing information informally via their overlapping members such as Christian Aid, and more formally, by CAN continuing to publish and distribute their free daily conference newspaper, the ECO. Further, both networks supported the joint demand of the Africa group, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the Group of 77 Developing Countries (G77) and China to hold the developed world to legally binding reduction targets and to a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol.[6] Finally, CJN, joined by Climate Justice Action (discussed below), marched under the banner 'System Change not Climate Change' in the 12 December permitted march organized by CAN members' Global Campaign for Climate Action (GCCA; see Hadden 2010; and Björk 2010), where up to 100,000 turned out. And some CJN members have credited CAN for their ability to orchestrate media-savvy and popular sign-on campaigns such as TckTckTck, which the younger, less well-resourced, and more confrontational CJN has not yet been able to do.

POST-, PRE-, AND ANTI-MODERN VISIONS OF POWER AND GLOBAL ORDER: WITHIN AND AGAINST EMPIRE

While social-democratic currents continue to denounce finance capital and corporate encroachment of the state’s responsibilities and authority and thus to call for re-embedding economies within reinvigorated welfare states while democratizing and strengthening global governance structures, a markedly different vision of governance and power emerges from the revolutionary and radical wings of contemporary scholarship and activism. In the current context of multiple and inter-related crises wracking the global economy, finance, energy and environment which have in turn exacerbated global inequalities, deprivation, violence, and war, leftist discourse and practice have shifted. No longer isolated voices crying in the wilderness against the once hegemonic but now largely discredited (though still functioning) neoliberalism, the crux of the debate has rapidly moved beyond Keynesian and Polanyian-style reforms toward rethinking and practicing anew radical and utopian projects. These strive to learn from both the failures of past communist experiments as well as the successes of non-capitalist and non-Western socio-economic arrangements that have persisted over centuries.

Thus, a major rethink of 21st century communism is underway, centered especially on experiments in 'post-anarchism' conjoined with pre-, post- and anti-modern autonomism and de-coloniality (see Adamovksy 2007; Balakrishnan 2003; Conway 2007; Day 2005; Graeber 2004; Graeber and Grubacic 2004; Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004; Harvey forthcoming; Holloway 2005; IIRE 2005; Juris 2008; Mignolo 2009; Notes from Nowhere

2003; Sullivan 2005; Turbulence Collective 2007a, b, 2008, 2009). Critical theorist Slavoj Zizek (2009: 7-8) captures this rising red 'phoenix from the ashes' mood when he writes, ‘the time for liberal-democratic moralistic blackmail is over. Our side no longer has to go on apologizing; while the other side had better start soon. ... Today... it is permitted to know and to fully engage in communism’. Marxist geographer David Harvey (2009: n.p.; see also Harvey forthcoming) similarly argues:

> While traditional institutionalized communism is as good as dead and buried, there are ... millions of de facto communists active among us ... ready to creatively pursue anti-capitalist imperatives. If, as the alternative globalization movement of the late 1990s declared, ‘another world is possible’ then why not also say ‘another communism is possible’?

This 'other possible communism' owes much of its dynamism to the resurgence of anti-state and anti-capitalist anarchism and autonomism. While reanimating the classical debates and dichotomies between revolutionary Marxists and anarchists,[7] the resurgence has also precipitated a truce of sorts between the two currents. Harvey (2009: n.p.) notes that this revival has tended to eschew commandist strategies of seizing the state in favor of experimenting with networked social organizational forms aimed at circumventing the market and capital, bringing about ‘a convergence of some sort between the Marxist and anarchist traditions that harks back to the broadly collaborative situation between them in the 1860s in Europe’.

Returning to our earlier left and right bank analogy, it seems that the Marxists have decamped to the join the livelier party among the Bakunin clan on the other side of the river, leaving their state-oriented, social-democratic Kantian brethren high and dry in the process. And this move has generated a creative ferment around re-imagining power, the state, sovereignty, and global governance, as witnessed in the jazz-like fusions of neo-and post-Marxist, autonomist, *operaist,* and anarchist praxis. Among the first, most paradigmatic, and widely resonant of these hybridizations are Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's (2000, 2004) conceptions of the *rhizomatic empire* and the counter-imperial *multitude*. Empire in their definition has co-evolved with the global market and production circuits, and is the new global order, form of sovereignty, and collective ruling subject, heralding a new logic and structure of rule. Empire is said to regulate global exchanges and transverse boundaries without establishing a territorial center of power. To the contrary, it is:

> a *decentered* and *deterritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid

identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command (Hardt and Negri 2000: xi–xii).

This elaborate conception of global governance and power flows infuses the classical tripartite governance structure of imperial Rome with post-structuralist Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic network, wherein nodal points proliferate on an open plane and connect with all others. The top three tiers, or plateaus, of the rhizome constitute Polybius's imperial *monarchy*, which exercises control through the destructive power of the bomb. The US holds the pinnacle nodal position, wielding a monopoly of force. Its most powerful allied states reside just below, using inter-governmental organizations to regulate international monetary exchanges and exercising power over culture and biopolitics, or the power to regulate social life from the inside. The two center plateaus comprise Polybius's *aristocracy*, which exercises financial control via judgment. Networks of transnational corporations bring the command structure of the higher monarchical tier to life. Below the corporate nodes are the semi-peripheral states, which filter the powers above and discipline their subject populations.

Finally, the nodes and relations at the base of the imperial rhizome constitute the *democracy* matrix. Here reside peripheral governments of the Global South, operating alone and through forums like the UN General Assembly. Also at the base are a range of groups seeking to capture, tame, mediate, and 'represent' the popular interests of the multitude, such as NGOs, religious organizations, and the media. The multitude is regulated by and made subject to this ethereal web of control primarily through superstition and fear, aver Hardt and Negri. There is no possibility of escaping the imperial rhizome, nor any ground for constructing collective actors or political programs beyond empire.

In this seemingly totalizing new order of global imperial sovereignty, Hardt and Negri posit that a counter-hegemonic global class—the *multitude*, nonetheless has the potential to act within and also against empire. Imperial control is conceived as parasitic, feeding off the productive energies of its multitudinous host. This constitutive power of the multitude makes empire possible; yet it can also potentially destroy it and construct a postimperial, global society with radically different flows and forms of power (Hardt and Negri 2000: xv, 359-61).

This they argue is because imperial 'biopower' emanates from command nodes and casts itself as a transcendent sovereign authority that imposes order - a would-be global Leviathan. In contrast, the multitude is involved in bottom-up 'biopolitical production', which Hardt and Negri conceive as immanent to society and creates relationships through collaborative forms of labor which give content to democracy. Whereas the modern, vertical form of biopower creates a *people*, the *nation*, and indeed a *civil society*, the post-(or late-)modern, horizontal, biopolitical production constitutes the *multitude* as a multiplicity of

identities or subjectivities that cannot be reduced or subsumed under a single unity (Hardt and Negri 2004: xiv, 93-95).

A major reason why Hardt and Negri's rather obtuse paradigm has resonated among contemporary radical activists is because it largely valorized their prejudices and actions. Since states and 'civil society' organizations are seen as ensnared within the parasitic imperial rhizome, attempts to influence them only feed the monster and contribute to one's own enslavement. Hardt and Negri (2000: 58) champion the spontaneous, localized, uncoordinated and largely *incommunicable* rebellions already going on, assuring that these acts leap up directly to strike at empire's heart. Further, 'resistance, exodus, and the emptying out of the enemy's power' (ibid: 69) are advised, along with 'new political weapons' like queer kiss-ins, carnival, mimicry, street demonstrations, and illegal immigration (ibid: 347). Thus refusing and resisting all forms of hierarchy and organization while engaging the state on solely antagonistic grounds were seen as necessary steps toward building a desirable world. Very much in this vein, Zapatista scholar-activist John Holloway (in IIRE 2005: 47-8) encouraged anarchists and autonomists to:

> refuse to let the state identify leaders or permanent representatives of the movement...[for] our forms of organisation are very different from those of the state...there is no symmetry between them...This multiplicity, this cacophony of struggles and experiences should be respected, not channeled into a party ...[or] winning of state power. The problem is not to take power, but to construct our own power...to do things differently...to create a different world.

This 'cacophony of struggles and experiences' included the 'non-branded' strategies and tactics (Day 2005) of Indymedia, affinity groups, Reclaim the Streets, and the direct action black, pink, and yellow blocs seen at street protests - many of which coalesced for a time into the Zapatista-inspired Peoples' Global Action (see Reitan 2007: ch. 6). Non-branded practices were also observed among indigenous movements beyond the Zapatistas, including the North American Mohawk Nation, aboriginal governments and community structures in Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Bolivia, and Ecuador, as well as among some radical feminists and gay activists (Day 2005; Conway 2007; Holloway 2005; Mignolo 2009; Notes from Nowhere 2003).

What these struggles had in common was said to be a progressive form of 'micropolitics' (Day 2005), or the politics of minority rather than majority. Micropolitics pursues non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, and non-coercive relationships and forms of power based on a solidarity of mutual aid and shared ethical commitments. Contemporary

radical activism, or what Canadian post-anarchist scholar Richard Day (2005: 4) termed the 'newest social movements', entails:

> conscious attempts to alter, impede, destroy or construct alternatives to dominant structures, processes, practices and identities [and]...seek to expose, challenge, diminish and/or destroy existing logics, forms and concentrations of power, and at the same time to construct new forms via diverse experiments and small-scale practices.

Thus, antagonistic and anti-institutional micropolitics were arguably the *zeitgeist* for the better part of this cycle of contention. Yet this form of politics has come to be seen by many as insufficient if the cycle is to continue and intensify - a limitation that Hardt and Negri foresaw and which they hedged in their ambiguous descriptions of the 'multitude' as a new form of collective actor. The question of whether micropolitics and autonomous experiments can survive, let alone multiply and link up, in the face of an increasingly hostile imperial terrain in the wake of 11 September 2001 can no longer be avoided. In this context, 'verticalist' Marxist-Leninist critiques have begun to ring a bit truer, even in the ears of 'horizontalists'. UK Trotskyist political philosopher Alex Callinicos (IIRE 2005: 65), for example, in his debate at the European Social Forum with John Holloway, countered: 'If we simply have fragmented and decentralised and localised activity, all cultivating our autonomous gardens, capital can isolate us and destroy or incorporate us piece by piece'. Likewise, the French Trotskyist philosopher Daniel Bensaïd (in ibid.: 11) warned: 'Those who thought they could ignore state power and its conquest have often been its victims: they didn't want to take power, so power took them'.

From these ongoing dialogues and experiments between Marxist and anarchist/autonomist tendencies, many in the latter camp have come to provisionally accept the former's call for some degree of internal organization and engagement with state power. For example, when asked to reflect on mistakes over the last decade of struggle, PGA founder Olivier De Marcellus (2009: 30), who helped organize the Geneva to Copenhagen caravan to the COP15, stated, 'ten years ago most of us thought that our real ideological victories could produce concrete gains and change - radicalise unions, parties, etc....Meanwhile, the (Northern) masses remain passive. Perhaps they, or we, are awaiting credible visions, and forms of organisation...?' Another activist involved in Reclaim the Streets and now the Climate Camp movement in the UK similarly revealed:

> Then my question was: how to network local activisms and facilitate global exchange? Now my question is: how to forge a militant universalism and construct a

> generic will? Organising perhaps not on the *horizontal* plane, but on the *diagonal*? (McLeish 2009: 7).

Argentine autonomist Ezequiel Adamovksy (2007: n.p.) put it plainly: 'Horizontality needs institutions (badly)'---though novel ones that mimic their cooperative, egalitarian, and biopolitically-networked forms. The Turbulence (2007a, b, 2008, 2009) collective, whose members have been active in mobilizations during this cycle of contention as well as in critical reflection in the pages of their scholar-activist journal, summarized this collective learning process:

> The counter-globalisation movement was suspicious of - often even opposed to - institutions *per se, constituted* forms of power. This suspicion was...well-founded...[in] that neoliberal ideology had successfully colonised most social democratic parties and trade unions. But when the crisis of neoliberalism irrupted, it became apparent that...antagonism against institutions as an end in itself is a dead end....Moments of antagonism are either part of ongoing processes of building autonomy and constituting new forms of power, or they risk dissipation, or even worse, backlashes (Turbulence 2009: 6-7).

So while Northern-based radicals have slowly come to recognize the need for organization and engaging the state, it is not solely the revolutionary Marxist left's arguments that have led them to do so. It is also, and perhaps even more so, due to the growing knowledge of and networking with successful indigenous movements in places like Bolivia and Ecuador, and more generally the rising tide of native militancy across the Americas, which is itself articulating in novel and contentious ways with the 'pink tide' of Leftist parties coming to power in Central and South America. Indigenous communities and rural social movements have played decisive roles, for example, in pushing through radically new constitutions in Ecuador and Bolivia which recognize a 'pluri-national' state that is home to many autonomous nations with distinct economic, political, legal and cultural forms.

In addition to disaggregating the legal fiction of the unitary and sovereign state, these constitutions radicalize the notion of rights by guaranteeing the right to each groups' self determination and, in the case of Bolivia, the rights of mother earth, or *pachamama* (see Mignolo 2009). These developments, which are the culmination of centuries of struggle against Westernization and capitalism, at once expand, collapse, and transcend the European leftist categories. By moving from resistance to antagonistic engagement with the state, they have managed to fundamentally transform the very nature of the Western unitary state, its indivisible sovereignty, and its limited guarantees of liberal rights.

These communities have sustained unique social, political, cultural and economic systems that pre-date colonialism, capitalism and the European state form. But rather than promoting their autonomous models as universals to be exported *pace* Christianity, Liberalism, or Marxism-Leninism, these indigenous experiments - along with the hybrid state forms and new categories of rights they are articulating - are rather ‘an invitation to organise and re-inscribe communal systems all over the world...erased and dismantled by the increasing expansion of the capitalist economy’ (Mignolo 2009). This is how the Northern, urban autonomist ‘blue indians’ may once again be converging with the ‘real indians [sic]’ in practicing *Zapatismo* at home, which was at the heart of the now nearly defunct Peoples' Global Action (Reitan 2007: ch. 6). As Mignolo (2009: 31) avers: ‘the Zapatista dictum of the need for “a world in which many worlds fit” springs to mind as we try to imagine a planet of communal systems in a pluri-versal, not uni-versal, world order’.

DIRECT ACTION NETWORKS AT THE COP15

The ongoing vibrancy, increased pragmatism, and growing valorization of indigenous struggles were all exemplified in the largest campaigning network spearheaded by direct action autonomists at the COP15, Climate Justice Action (CJA).[8] It most active members included Danish and German direct action, anti-capitalist and social experiment groups, No Borders, and Climate Camp networks. They were joined by a number of CJN's mass-based organizations and embedded partisan NGOs including Via Campesina, Friends of the Earth, Indigenous Environmental Network, and Focus on the Global South.

This diffuse collectivity strove toward the second generation, direct action ideal - with all its attendant difficulties: CJA was launched in 2008 as a horizontal network based onconsensus decision-making and the principles of autonomy and trust. Of the three main networks it has been the most critical of capitalism and firmly committed to civil disobedience and direct action to safeguard the environment. Given its anarchistic roots, CJA statements and actions bordered on antagonism toward the UN and interstate system and instead championed solutions to the climate crisis emanating from grassroots, workers', and popular social movements linked into a global movement of movements. Consensus decision-making in a new and diverse network whose most active members were also the most radical meant that CJA's planning meetings and online discussions were volatile from the start. As the COP 15 actions grew nearer, the consensus process came to a standstill and eventually broke down. During the summit itself, decisions were mostly made by a core group of activist-spokespersons, whose phones were being tapped and who, one-by-one, were arrested by the police.

In spite of this internal contention, decision-process breakdown, and state decapitation strategy, due to the efforts of CJA activists (and especially the Copenhagen

logistical group Climate Collective), hundreds of mostly young Europeans were housed, fed, organized, entertained -and searched and harassed by the police at night -in their Ragnhildesgade and Teglholmen convergence centers. In addition, CJA mobilized thousands to take part in mass, direct and antagonistic action over several days, the largest action being the 16 December Reclaim Power march on the Bella Center of approximately 3,000, which was co-organized with CJN.

CJA was an experiment in increased openness and pragmatism on the part of all activist tendencies involved, coupled with a valorization of autonomous indigenous movements. For while CJA promoted direct activism, localized solutions, and horizontality, they also pledged to coordinate closely with other international climate and social justice activists coming to Copenhagen across the political spectrum and to facilitate their taking action while there. To build broadly for their Reclaim Power march, they organized a rally and party in the free community of Christiania where Naomi Klein and Michael Hardt shared the platform with one of CJA's main spokespeople, Tadzio Mueller (detained by undercover police the next day upon leaving a Bella Center press conference and held until the negotiations were over). Danish CJA activists hosted several planning meetings in the months leading up to the COP15 and then met daily with CJN network members via skype to coordinate the NGO walkout to meet the marchers to then hold the People's Assembly for Climate Justice, which were the three-pronged tactics of Reclaim Power. For the march CJA organized a speakers' truck, arranged permits, and separated into affinity groups clustered into a direct action green bloc, a bike bloc, and a permitted blue bloc to march on the Bella Center and breach the police line and fence to hold the Peoples' Assembly inside the perimeter.

CJN members joined the CJA blue bloc and formed an additional yellow (badge) bloc of NGO delegates who were no longer allowed into the Bella Center under the banner ‘No Decisions about us without us—Climate Justice Now!' CJA and CJN also coordinated inside disruptions and a walk-out of some 300 UN observers and participants led by the Indigenous Peoples Caucus, among them the Indigenous Environmental Network. This was to protest the lack of inclusion in the final agreement of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Bolivia's demand that the rights of Mother Earth be recognized. Those leaving were beaten back by riot police on an icy bridge. Meanwhile, other CJN members, among them the Social & Climate Justice Caravan from the WTO meeting in Geneva to Copenhagen, were invited by CJA to be the main speakers for the Peoples' Assembly which did take place, outside - not inside - the fence, because attempts to breach it were repelled with police teargas and billy clubs.

As the breadth of scholarship and practices surveyed above attest, contemporary global activism is as complex as the global processes, actors, and power flows it contests.

Again, if we fail to appreciate and examine it in all its diversity, we will likely fail to understand its significance and latent tendencies or to explain its origins, behavior and impact. To bring some order to this diversity, this chapter employed the three main historic categories of the European left -social democracy, Marxism, and anarchism -and then argued that indigenous autonomy and de-coloniality is at once expanding, collapsing and transcending these categories. By using these lenses provisionally and flexibly, we were able to explain the conflicts but also to discern the linkages among network activists mobilizing along the reformist-revolutionary-radical continuum in the most recent cycle of contention. For although each tendency holds distinct conceptions of power and organization as well as relationships to bureaucratic state and corporate actors, they nonetheless have recognized the complexity of globalization and the powers they are up against, and thus the need for multiple activist strategies to engage with and ultimately transform both. Contemporary activists have managed to mitigate and often bridge their differences in order to form a loose chain of communication and action, which has hung together and arguably even gained strength over the past 15 years. This networked chain has allowed global activists to coordinate their diverse sources and forms of power, so as to wield that power collectively.

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NOTES

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[2] I accept that it is colonialist, discursive violence to subsume indigenous movements in this Western-derived tripartite system -see Mignolo (2009) for this thoughtful critique. Yet they do share some affinities with the latter tendency, and so I have chosen to include them provisionally herein. But ultimately, as will be argued later, they explode, implode and transcend these categories.

[3] It should be noted, however, that these same scholars argue that scaling up to the transnational level remains secondary to, and embedded within, engagement in the domestic political sphere. See Tarrow 2005: ch. 3; Tarrow 1998: ch 11; and Sikkink 2005.

[4] In Gramscian terms, this would be described as the terrain of ideological or hegemonic power.

[5] This CAN-CJN split somewhat mirrors - in issues and actors - that which occurred within the Jubilee 2000 campaign and out of which Jubilee South was born (see Reitan 2007: ch. 4).

[6] CJN also strongly supported the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) countries' spokesman Evo Morales in his call for 49 per cent emissions reductions. In addition, CJN member the Third World Network provided expertise to a number of Southern governments, working with their under-staffed delegations long into the night to come up with negotiating positions.

[7] These are between cosmopolitanism vs. localism, unity vs. diversity, the collective subject vs. a multiplicity of struggles, strategy vs. practice/process, party formation and organizing unions vs. autonomous direct action, counter-hegemony vs. anti-hegemony, politics vs. anti-politics, resisting/smashing/seizing the state vs. refusal/withdrawal/creation of new social practices, political parties vs. loose associations, revolutionary violence vs. pacifism, delegate organizations vs. federations, strategic rationality vs. spontaneous improvisation, command vs. affinity, and discipline vs. love and rage.

[8] A smaller, more radical anarchist group, Never Trust a Cop (NTAC), also staged direct actions during COP15. While not part of the other networks (having broken with CJA in the lead up to Copenhagen and having no contacts with CJN or CAN), NTAC activists were still indirectly linked to CJA via the Climate Collective, who coordinated housing and information-sharing for both.