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EPISTEMOLOGGICAL STRUGGLE AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZING: APPLYING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ZAPATISTA ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION

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August 1999

Working Paper 295

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ISSN 0921-0210

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ABSTRACT

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) has, as a Mayan organization in modern, mestizo Mexico, challenged the epistemological hegemony of modernity, from its own location and history, including both centuries of Western economic domination and a wealth of organizing experiences over the past thirty years. This provides an important reference point for 'cross-border, cross-movement' initiatives, appearing since the middle of the 1990s, that struggle against increasing capitalist domination around the globe and which contain within them diverse cosmovisions. These new spaces provide a possible location for confronting the modern epistemology and the global domination that it justifies.

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1. INTRODUCTION[*]

This paper seeks to provide relevant information and suggestions to political organizers working on 'cross-border cross-movement' initiatives, particularly those directed against the increasing dominance of neo-classical economic policies and the expansion of capitalist control over lives and livelihoods, as well as those which search to construct futures which are independent of this control. In the process of writing and exploration, I have become more firmly convinced that the problems facing international organizers are deeply interrelated with problems of how social movements are studied and interpreted which reflects broader problems within Western social sciences.

Recent initiatives in 'cross-border', 'cross-movement' organizing have run into the issue of differing 'worldviews' or epistemologies and have either ignored or only perfunctorily engaged it. This is, largely, the same response given to epistemological difference by those who study social movements. The result is that the epistemology of modernity continues to be hegemonic, reproducing the dominant relations of power, both in the social sciences and in the 'movements'.

I consider this hegemony to be problematic for three reasons. First of all, the promise of 'modernity', and 'modernization', have been used to legitimate the expropriation of colonial, and later Third World, material resources since the middle of the nineteenth century, by capitalist (and state socialist) world powers. They have played an especially powerful role since the Second World War, when the new, 'independent' nations would (supposedly) be able to choose their own destinies.

Secondly, I find many limitations to the way that modern society is organized; limitations which are traceable to the epistemological foundations upon which modern thinking is constructed, some of which are discussed in the second section. This criticism is based on my own experience of growing up and living in the US as a boy and later man, and of living and working in the Highlands of Guatemala for eight years. This latter experience has made me aware that other epistemes have their strengths and weaknesses, as does the modern one.

Through the spread of capitalism and the modern state, the modern epistemology becomes dominant, changing and destroying others in its wake.

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[*] This Working Paper is a shortened version of my Master's Thesis (Pollack 1998).

Historically, this type of occurrence is not unique to the relationship between modern and non-modern[1] epistemologies but, in my own (normative) view, that does not justify it.

And lastly, from the point of view of someone who is critical of 'modernity', the disappearance of other epistemological frameworks implies a reduction in the possibility of finding solutions to the problems promoted by modern ones.[2] Assuming that some of the problems of the modern world are rooted in its epistemology, it is at this level that changes may need to occur. This type of change will probably not be produced from within the modern episteme, and is more likely to be the result of interaction with others.

There are then two struggles that must be waged simultaneously. One struggle is that of the many struggles, of people fighting for their present and future in a myriad of manners. The second is to open up the modern epistemology to the recognition of other ways of understanding and interpreting the world, the struggle to create, as the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) has termed it, 'a world in which many worlds fit'. In practice the two are often intertwined in local struggles which challenge social constructions and institutions that serve to hide exploitation, racism, gender inequalities and other systemic practices of social injustice. Their joining is also becoming relevant, on an international level, through some of the 'cross-border cross-movement' initiatives discussed in the final section.

I have chosen to analyze in depth the particular history of the EZLN for two reasons. Firstly, because it has been able to combine these two struggles in a very public manner, clearly and repeatedly engaging the Mexican government in ways that give importance to a Mayan *cosmovisión*, relating it directly to the material needs of the EZLN membership and the Mexican people. Secondly, within the EZLN itself, because

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[1]The use of the term non-modern should not be understood to mean a single category, in the sense that all epistemologies that are not modern are 'the same' and classifiable as 'non-modern'. I would like, rather, to point out the variety among them rather than their similarities. At the same time, 'non-modern' should not be understood to mean having never had contact with modernity, nor even having been unaffected by it. There are obviously many situations where boundaries between modern and non-modern epistemologies are difficult to define and I am using the term as a type of shorthand to imply that the epistemology under discussion is not primarily modern in its make up.

[2]There is increasing interest, particularly among environmentalists, and others, toward non-modern understandings. There is a history within the modern world of looking outward toward other societies, but these initiatives have often disappeared, usually after having been accused of 'romanticization', 'mysticism', etc., in short, heretical of modern understandings. See Nandy (1992: 268).

of its specific history, there is a tolerance for pluralism and, most importantly, a recognition by the 'modern' members of the organization of the validity of the Mayan epistemology as *a* means of interpreting the world. This particular point is of great relevance for future international organizing that would attempt to avoid reproducing systems of dominance in which non-modern epistemes are devalued or ignored.

In the universities, the location within modernity responsible for the continued intellectual legitimization[3] of modern epistemological hegemony, the process of interrelating the two struggles is less advanced, partially because the discussion of 'post-modernism' and postmodernity has been such that the 'non-modern' (the 'other', or perhaps that part of the self, that is outside of modernity) seems to have been forgotten. Even among those who have rejected modernity as a universal goal, there is an assumption that somehow modern thinking transforms other worldviews that it touches into itself, as if once having come into contact with modernity, all non-modern forms lose their specificity and become uniformly modern. At the same time, some postmodern writing has made all understanding (including that of suffering and struggle) sufficiently relativized that the role of the intellectual in relation to these realities has been dismissed. The difficulties within the academy are also affected by the hesitancy of Marxist scholars (the intellectuals who have traditionally taken stances in support of various popular struggles) to recognize as legitimate those struggles which do not fit into the modern categories, pushed forward by actors who refuse to identify themselves as 'peasants' or 'workers'.

This paper attempts to make a move toward reintegrating the university into these issues through a discussion of the relationship between popular struggle and epistemological hegemony. If interpretations continue to be monopolized by the modern episteme, then domination of the non-modern by the modern will continue to be justified in the name of 'development', 'growth', etc. In this regard, intellectuals have a key role to play, if they choose to accept it.

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[3]See Bourdieu (1985) particularly his discussions of 'cultural capital' and 'symbolic capital', Bourdieu & Passeron (1990: esp. 196-7) and Spivak (1988)

2. GLOBAL RESTRUCTURING

From development to free market

Three key strands were woven together, albeit inconsistently, after the Second World War, both in the decolonization and 'development' processes of the Third World and the reconstruction and welfarist policies of the First. These strands reflect the dominant ideas and forces within the US and Western Europe during this period: the pursuit and implementation of formal, liberal democracy; the nexus between national and international capital; and the state-as-provider/organizer.[4] While these strands were brought into a comfortable arrangement that lasted from shortly after W.W.II until the mid-1970s, since that time the state has lost its role as provider, and its role as 'organizer' has consequently shifted toward that of the 'night watchman', assuring only the frameworks necessary for efficient capitalist production.[5] Since the 1980s, when Eastern European countries began receiving International Monetary Fund (IMF) guaranteed loans (Chossudovsky 1991: 2533-4), and increasing dramatically after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the ex-Second World, under the tutelage of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), finds itself confronted with the same three strands of post-war liberalism. Thus, at present, provisions that were previously provided by the state have been drastically cut, particularly in the Second and Third Worlds, and often franchised out to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Since the late 1960s, improved technological efficiency, the movement of industries from the old industrial core of the North to other parts of the world, and the increasing speed of transactions on the international capital and financial markets have

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[4]The idea of the State as provider/organizer was almost a universal between 1945-1975 in the 'Communist World' as well. Formal, liberal democracy has been more of a goal than a reality, initially promoted in the Third World in the 1950s, it has returned, as a prinicple in the 90s. The relationship between national and international capital has had a key role all the way through, but with the end of Keynesian policies, beginning in the early 1970s, the strength of international (particularly financial) capital increased relative to that of national capital (and labor) in First World countries (Gill 1990: 112-4).

[5]Although IMF and World Bank (WB) policies in the early 1980s nearly ignored the role of the state, in the late 1980s they changed, defining the state as necessary to maintain an administrative framework around which the market could work, and the political stability necessary for it to do so (See Drainville 1995: 65-67; Nelson (1996:627-630). These corresponded to attempts by the IMF to 'bring some of the poor (and the not so poor) into coalitions...broad enough to provide sustained support for adjustment policies' (Polak 1991: note 31 p. 7-8 cited in Drainville 1995: 67).

all been features of a major shift in the world economic system. This shift has been termed the 'global restructuring'[6] of the world 'economy'[7]

The motor for this process has been a powerful capitalist sector, increasingly international in its makeup, that has succeeded over the past 25 years in battering down national controls on domestic economies and in providing themselves with a liberty of movement and of action heretofore unseen. These changes have been made possible through state participation in international agreements such as the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), in supranational institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as national legislation (particularly donor country policies). As First World states, particularly the US, force through international agreements which increase corporate power,[8] they create the conditions which promote global restructuring. Yet this process, only possible through direct state involvement, is often publicly presented as an inevitable outcome, rather than the result of inter-state negotiations and discussion (McMichael 1996a: 38).

This restructuring comes on the heels of the post-war period of massive capitalist expansion in the context of state guided or directed economies which promoted universal 'modernization'. Both Keynesian and state socialist economic thinking supported nation-state guidance or direction of capitalist development and, with the support of the expanding academic disciplines of 'development economics' and later 'development studies', these paradigms were implemented in almost all states of the world.

Since the 1970s, '[c]apitalism has slipped the fragile leash won through centuries of struggle in national contexts' (PGA 1998: 12-3). The move toward neo-classical economic thinking (neo-liberalism) has meant an end to the role of the state as provider, and a consequent shift in the modernizing vision that had underpinned 'development'. While some theorists have claimed that neo-classical economics is the most 'efficient' way of providing public services, the change in this direction has meant

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[6]The restructuring here refers to the changes underway since the mid-1970s toward a 'free' market. The global economic crisis occurring as I write this paper is speeding up a different restructuring of the financial markets that began after the crash of the Mexican Peso in December 1994 (McMichael 1996a: 45).

[7] Most discussions of the 'economy' are limited to monetary transactions in the 'formal' sector. This isolates a particular type of 'exchange' from all others, and at the same time disembeds 'economics' from the social relations in which it occurs. See Polanyi 1992 [1957], Granovetter (1992)

[8]See Stichele (1997: 6) and (1998:8)

that the provision of services through 'welfarist' and state socialist policies are no longer held up as models for the Third World to emulate. The 'promise' of modernity, understood as the provision of material well-being for all, made possible through state guidance over, or direction of, capitalist industrialization, and preferably accompanied by some degree of political freedom, is no longer a goal of 'development'.

This change has been forced from above by Western powers and especially the US, leaving the young (and not so young), Southern states very much weakened. 'Development', the dominant ideology on a global level since the Second World War, and an often very fragile conception of 'nationhood', have been the key legitimating factors for many states since their creation (Nandy 1992: 268-9). As a move into modernity (development) is no longer understood as improving material well-being, but rather in terms of national integration into the global market economy (World Bank 1980 cited in McMichael 1996a: 33), the institutions, processes and ideological banners associated with it are increasingly being questioned and are losing their legitimacy in many Third World countries.

The restructuring of the global economy has meant a loss of power for nation-states, as what had previously been national decisions are increasingly made by IFIs and major donor countries (Kothari 1995). It has also promoted a withdrawal of the state from the provision of social services and of support for domestic economies, provoking radical changes in social structures which had been built around such state support, causing untold suffering while new forms of social organization are constructed (or not).

Economic marginalization has been the source of many types of social movement organizing. These efforts are sometimes new, but are often continuations of previous struggles. All of them occur in a context where the promise of Western modernity is weakened and in which non-modern epistemological frameworks are potentially given more credence by this loss of legitimacy. Nonetheless, many of the movements, even those whose rhetoric may eschew Western modernity, continue to struggle for some or all of its goals, while others choose different paths.

Social and political consequences

Marginalization

The implementation of neoliberal policies has created increasing marginalization around the world, expressed both through increasing differentiation between rich and poor countries, and between rich and poor people in any given country, North and South. Marginalization has been recognized by the WTO (Stichele 1997: 8), the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (DAC/OECD 1996: 1) as well as by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1998: 2). In general, these institutions would define marginalization in a way that corresponds to the definition of 'expulsion' which is described below, and would assume that lack of participation in the global economy is, by definition, a negative thing.

There are two types of marginalization that have occurred with global restructuring: the expulsion from the 'formal' economy and state services on one hand and the destruction of non-capitalist forms of social organization on the other, pushing groups from situations of 'relative autonomy' into ones of marginalization. This latter process is not new to the present era of economic restructuring and is, effectively, the history of capitalist expansion itself (Luxemburg 1968: 416).

In those Third World states that have undergone structural adjustment programs (SAPs), marginalization has meant a reduction in access to services previously provided, or heavily subsidized, by the state such as health care, education, urban transportation, price controls on basic foods, guaranteed prices for primary products, etc. The elimination of state support for these different parts of life, necessary for daily survival, has meant that social relationships have been rearranged so that daily life can continue forward. Initial responses to these shocks in many parts of the world are often 'IMF riots' in which the policies of that institution are directly brought into question by popular protest (Chossudovsky 1991; McMichael 1996b: 129).

Reduced state funding for public services also provokes job loss or salary reduction for functionaries, weakening support for governments among the middle classes. Some state employees have been able to move into the (relatively well paid) NGO sector as a means of augmenting or replacing lost income but, as university and secondary school graduates discover that their skills are not employable, they swell the

ranks of an increasingly dislocated middle class[9]. The lack of employment opportunities for those trained through Western educational systems reveals that this education is only usable in the context of a modernizing state and capitalist expansion. Their skills are often not relevant (or at least difficult to apply) to the efforts and struggles of people and communities to better their lives unless these efforts coincide with capitalist investment or state planned modernization.

The reduction in state provision of support has been yet more drastic in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, combining with falling wages and increasing unemployment to create massive increases in poverty levels over the past 10 years (Charkiewicz 1998: 15-21; UNDP 1997: 79-80). The present situation in Russia, where bartering is an increasingly common form of exchange, where 75% of agricultural products for consumption are imported, and where unpaid backwages as of September 1998 equaled 27% of the GNP, is just the latest and most extreme crisis (Clairmont 1999).

In the First World, where some version of the welfare state has been in place during most of the post-war period, the state has been consistently moving away from the provision of services over the past two decades. Led by Reagan and Thatcher (though initiated by Carter and Callaghan [Gill 1990: 100]) spending cuts have provoked increasing levels of inequality in many of these countries (UNDP 1997: 82)[10]. At the same time improved technology and the movement of industry to countries with lower labor costs has caused an increase in rates of unemployment, at a postwar high in a number of Northern countries (UNDP 1997: 78).

In many parts of the world, state-sponsored development projects or continued capitalist expansion have resulted in massive displacements of peoples and destruction of their livelihoods (Rich 1994: 155-160). In some of these cases, the groups had previously been ignored by the state and by capitalist enterprise and in others some type of relationship may have already been established. In any event the state or capitalist expansion pushes people, and social systems, from a position of 'relative autonomy' to one of 'marginalization'. *Marginalization* refers to ejection or exclusion from a form of social organization while *autonomy*, here, means the ability of a specific social

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[9] See Hoogvelt (1997: 198) regarding how this situation affects the Islamist movements. See also Esteva & Prakesh (1998:141-2)

[10]See also UNDP (1998: 27)

formation to choose or influence its relationships with others. Though autonomy is always relative, forms of social organization are more autonomous when they have control over their own livelihoods (control over the means of production); this is equally true for indigenous groups as it is for a nation-state.

The problem of capitalist expansion and massive state projects is not unique to neoliberal global restructuring and has been very common throughout the development era (Sanderson 1993). Nonetheless, structural adjustment programs often reduce state 'regulation' on capitalist expansion while, at the same time, promoting the 'mining' of natural resources by Third World countries as a means of earning valuable foreign exchange necessary for debt repayment (Santos 1995: 313-4). Both of these often promote outmigration, the entrance of local populations into wage labor systems, and ecological damage.

The movement from relative autonomy into 'marginalization' has often been repeated in the history of capitalist growth, but the movement out of systems of state support and protection, however limited those may be, is perhaps a unique phenomena to the present era. It is these two categories of 'marginalized' people who make up the bodies of the larger social movements presently active around the globe. The ways in which these people mobilize, however, depend upon the specific history of the region and the particular way in which restructuring is implemented in that region.[11]

Political weakening of the nation-state

Global restructuring has made the nation-state, particularly in the Third World, into a 'transmission belt from the world economy to the domestic economy' (Cox 1992: 144). This new role has also been accompanied by an increasingly repressive function which has become necessary to combat social unrest resulting from cutbacks in social sector spending (Chossudovsky 1991: 2533).

Repression occurs at the same time that 'democratization' is being celebrated in Eastern Europe and Latin America as well as forced on Africa. 'Democratization' in this sense is understood to be the creation of state level liberal democratic political systems in which governments are chosen through free and fair elections (Baylies 1995; Carothers 1995). In a nutshell, foreign donors and the IFIs are promoting the creation of

'liberal democracies' to run governments that are charged with implementing policies created by the same IFIs.

This (rather absurd) situation is recognized by many grassroots organizations as well as larger social movements, resulting in two different, though sometimes compatible, strategies which are also relatively new, particularly in comparison to the state-centered focus of many social movements over the past half century: initiatives for local political and economic control, relatively free of governmental interference; and more recent attempts at international organizing against neoliberal policies.[12]

Other movements demand that the state act to fulfill the responsibilities that it had (in theory or in practice) under the 'development state', or try to win control of the state (through arms or elections) so that they can do it themselves (Petras 1997; Veltmeyer 1997). Generally speaking, whether these movements describe themselves as Communist, religious or 'ethnic', any hopes they may have of rearranging the national economy are limited by the heavily indebted nature of most Third World nations and their dependence on outside investment. While national governments can and do make a difference in the living situations of their citizens, binding ties to foreign investors and multilateral lenders make these differences relative. Attempts at weakening or severing those ties risk economic isolation which, by provoking domestic hardship, are also likely to result in loss of political legitimacy.

After restructuring

The changes in the global economy, beginning in the late 1960s with the economic slowdown of the postwar 'golden years', the structural changes put into place during the 1970s, and the eventual dominance of the neoliberal economic paradigm by the late 1980s and 90s, have brought in their wake massive changes in social structures in many parts of the world. The East Asian, Russian, and Brazilian economic collapses are promoting a quick rethink on the part of economists about trying once again to bring the global economy under some type of regulatory control (Sachs 1998).

On the ground level, the responses to the various crises promoted since the beginning of global restructuring in the 1970s are infinite in nature and represent

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[11]See Pollack (1998: Chapter 3) for my own attempts at understanding religious, 'ethnic', and 'livelihood' movements around the world.
[12]See Brecher & Costello (1994); Danaher (1994); Lynch (1998); Roberts (1998); De Angelis (1998).

creative responses to difficult situations. These responses meld with other trends already present in different societies prior to neoliberal restructuring and draw on long local histories which stretch back into colonial, and pre-colonial times. The failure of the state-centered, modernizing system to allow for stable livelihoods for the 'social majorities'[13] is pushing many to look into other forms of social organization that attempt to work on a local level, and to reconsider the role of the state, as well as that of the global economy. In many cases, this rethinking takes place outside of modern understandings of politics, but are nonetheless interpreted by social scientists and by political organizers from within the modern[14] perspective. This practice is based on the assumption that the modern episteme can correctly interpret all actions, even those made by people who do not share the epistemological framework in which modernity is embedded.

The sheer dominance of the modern epistemology, both in the corridors of power and the corridors of opposition creates two grave problems for those would seek to struggle against continued neoliberal restructuring. Firstly, for those on the 'Left', it becomes impossible to develop egalitarian alliances with groups which do not share the modern epistemological framework, because their analysis and projections are immediately discarded. Secondly, the possibility for modern thinkers to learn from other epistemological frameworks is lost. As a result, political projects are restricted by the modern epistemology, one which offers as many pitfalls as advantages.

3. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL HEGEMONY OF MODERNITY[15]

'Life itself appears only as a means to life.'

Karl Marx[16]

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[13]Esteva & Prakesh (1998) use the terms 'social majorities' and 'social minorities' to try and negotiate the difficulties involved in discussing the 'North in the South and the South in the North'. 'Social majorities' refers, generally, refers to the poor of the world, while 'social minorities' refers to the rich. Though the terms cannot fully come to terms with the complexity of the situation, they are useful categories.

[14]Regarding 'postmodernism', I recognize that there is an increasing tendency for deeper criticism of modern thinking than there has been in the past, but this trait has long been present in the West (*inter alia* Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain originally published in 1924). It is a welcome criticism, but it seems impossible to understand it as not just another permutation of modern thinking. In any event, the differences between it and 'modernism' are minimal relative to the differences between these two (taken as a whole) and non-modern forms of thought. At the same time, post-modern self-criticisms (should) allow new spaces for non-modern thinking to be weighed with more seriousness.

[15]This section reflects the influences of many authors including, but not limited to, Esteva & Prakesh (1998), Santos (1995), Giddens (1971), Pateman (1988).

'Where the state is the only environment in which men can live communal lives, they inevitably lose contact, become detached and thus society disintegrates.'

Emile Durkheim[17]

'Man is dominated by acquisition as the purpose of his life: acquisition is no longer a means to the end of satisfying his material needs. This reversal of what we might call the 'natural' situation, completely senseless from an unprejudiced standpoint, is evidently as definitely a leading principle of capitalism as it is foreign to all peoples not under capitalistic influence.'

Max Weber[18]

I use the term ‘epistemological hegemony of modernity’ to describe an attempt at clarifying the relationship between what might be termed ‘cultural imperialism’ and global systems of accumulation. By focusing the discussion on ‘modernity' rather than on 'the West' I want to highlight the fact that in the West as well, the modern episteme is hegemonic, but not universal. It should also be made clear that in centers of power, outside the West, the same episteme is, largely, the dominant one. Through a discussion of ‘epistemological differences’ (perhaps not the most adequate term, though I fail to find a more appropriate one) I wish to highlight the profundity of the divergences between various ways of knowing, and the importance of these differences for politics, economics, culture, social organization etc. My goal in this endeavor is to recognize that ‘differences’ are not superficial, superstructural, nor inevitably doomed to disappear into the modern episteme. Through an excavation of these non-modern epistemes, it may be possible to find new ways forward that are not structured around modern institutions and processes.

The political dominance of the West has promoted the hegemony of the modern episteme, legitimating the destruction of non-modern forms of social organization through ‘modernization’ and the promised benefits of modernity. The appropriate means indicated to arrive at this end have been the nation-state and capitalism, which have served, *inter alia*, to simplify accumulation in the North.

My own sense is that the modern episteme has its positive aspects, as well as its flaws, and there is no reason to assume that it is a universal good. Historically, a judgment would require not only a critical look at the horrors of life in the modernized world, but also a careful analysis of that part of the world that has been subject to it.

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[16]Marx (1971: 101).
[17]Durkheim (1964: 28-29) cited in Giddens (1971: 104).
[18]Weber (1920-1 v. 1:44) cited in Giddens (1971: 126).

I share with many modern thinkers a desire for material well-being, for a fair distribution of both power and of goods, and I would support those who fight for those things. Those goals are not unique to modernity, however, and in order to struggle for them, it is not necessary for actors to identify with the processes and institutions[19] associated with it.

Modernity

In this discussion, I use the term 'modernity' as a reference both to a period of Western history, extending from c. 1800 to the present, and the economic system, culture, social relations, and epistemology that have developed during that period in the West and since spread to other parts of the world. In this description of 'modernity', these various pieces (economy, social relations, culture, epistemology) form an organic whole, and are not separable from one another. There is no pride of place given to one or another of them.

My goal in defining 'modernity' is not to trace it back through history to ‘enlightenment thinking' nor the traditions and ideas of Christianity, as that has been done elsewhere (Latouche 1996, Salomon 1995), but rather to discuss some of its key features as it has developed over the past two centuries. The majority of this section refers to the West during the 19th and 20th centuries, a period in which many modern processes and institutions were spread more consistently in the geographic space of the West and were internalized into the knowledge base of individuals and society as a whole. I recognize that it is impossible to understand the growth of modernity in the West without contextualizing it in the West's relationships with other parts of the world, but space will not permit such a detailed analysis. Nonetheless, there is some discussion about the expansion of modern processes, institutions and epistemology outside of the West.

I will discuss modernity by describing some of the processes which I consider to be its key features, trying to show how these have interacted over the past two hundred years, focusing principally on 19th and 20th century Europe and North America, as they

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[19]See Pollack (1998: Chapter 2) for an account of modernity which discusses some of its principal instutions (agricultural and industrial capitalism, the nation-state, the nuclear family, and the social sciences), as well as the processes discussed here below.

changed from agriculturally oriented rural societies to more urban ones, with ever increasing capitalist industrial production.

I make my own analysis, inevitably, from a modern perspective, that is to say from within modernity, and I draw on much of the same social scientific writing that has defined and legitimated modernity. There is a tension here which I find revealing in the sense that the same authors who have studied modernity, from within, have provided ample bases for criticizing it. What I do in this section is just to eliminate the supposition that modernity is inevitable or necessarily desirable. In the present global context, the negation of this assumption is relevant for many who have been pushed out of non-modern forms of societal organization, only to find themselves excluded from modern ones. It is also relevant for those who are frustrated with the modern world, who recognize its limitations and are searching for other forms of organizing society.

Individualization, 'secularization', and rationalization are processes that continue as modern institutions expand both in terms of their geographical influence and in terms of their penetration into the 'lifeworld'. They are also *characteristics* of modernity and can at times be used as *indicators* which measure its spread and influence.

Individualization[20]

Both Marx and Durkheim recognized, with consternation, that modern society was developing in a way such that the broad scope of human relationships was becoming increasingly defined solely by the economic aspects of social interactions. Both authors saw this process leading toward increased 'individualization', a significant and negative change. Durkheim considered the problem to be of a 'moral' and not economic nature, and described it in terms of *anomie*, a problem created by societal changes occurring too rapidly and not permitting the creation of corresponding collective social values. Marx focused on the impoverishment of the worker's '*inner life'* (Marx 1971:96), the original alienation of the individual from his own self, experienced through the alienation of his labor, one of the ramifications of which is the alienation of the individual from others (Marx 1971: 103).

By focusing on the individual and the worsening quality of his or her relations with others, both of these modern writers betray one of the epistemological bases that modernity shares with Christianity: the possibility of conceptually separating the individual from his or her relationships; the possibility of isolation. This had already been mapped out in the Christian tradition which identified the soul of the individual as a candidate (or predestined) for heaven: 'for the Christian, virtue and piety do not consist in material procedures, but in interior states of the soul' (Durkheim 1969: 323 cited in Giddens 1971: 115-6).

The process of individualization, brought forward by the new economic relations, as Marx and Durkheim noted, was accompanied by the construction of a 'secular' philosophy and legal system which reflected this change. In the liberal (and Rousseauian) contractarian tradition, the individual was released from his or her previously ascribed status and made 'free' to enter into the various contracts (labor, social, marriage) that still provide the legal definitions of the relationships between individuals in the three principal institutions of modernity: the state, the market and the nuclear family. The change from ascribed status to that of the 'free' individual was legitimated by the concept of abstract 'rights' possessed by all (though originally only property-holding men). These rights are based on an imagined equality of condition among all individuals which supposedly exists prior to entry into the various contracts, and whose falsity has been criticized on class, gender and 'racial' grounds (Pateman 1988, Fraser & Gordon 1994).

As the individual was increasingly defined in abstract terms, she/he also became universal both for liberals and for Marxists.[21] By abstracting the individual, she/he became decontextualized, allowing the image of the individual to become more uniform. This universalization and uniformization is the negation of the differences which are expressed in the various epistemologies that have existed throughout history and which continue to exist today.

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[20]Regarding individualization and the individual, see Caust (1992), Esteva & Prakesh (1998: Chapter 3), Bourdieu (1996), Truong (1998).

[21] 'Though man is a unique individual...he is equally the *whole*, the ideal whole, the subjective existence of society as thought and experienced' (Marx & Engels 1956: 539 cited in Giddens 1971:13).

'Secularization'

Modern thinking and the modern epistemology are considered to be 'secular' because they are constructed on the belief in human rationality. The divine is to be found in 'rational' thinking[22] which excludes any understanding beyond the scope of human reason. In this system, the 'invisible hand of the market', the possibilities of 'scientific socialism', or the sanctity of 'human rights'[23] can be understood as 'truths', similar to religious dogmas. The *belief* in any of these three ideas requires an abstraction from historical and social realities: a leap of faith capable of ignoring the fact that the applications of these rational construction bear fruit with little resemblance to the abstract ideals that they represent. Nonetheless, because these beliefs are built upon *rational* thought, they are considered to be secular. In the process, *faith* in abstract rationality is hierarchically positioned above the concrete interactions of a 'personal' nature, and also above *faith* in abstract *non*-rationalities.

Tariq Banuri has described all societies as using two forms of 'knowledge', the 'personal' and the 'impersonal'. The 'personal' are those which are based upon the intimate knowledge of a specific situation or person whereas the 'impersonal' are abstracted forms which are applicable 'universally' (Banuri 1990). The modern episteme proposes a way of knowing which puts the 'impersonal' into a hierarchical position above the 'personal'. This hierarchization is reflected in the modern public/private division in the West[24], the modern/traditional division between the 'West' and the 'Rest' and, importantly, the marginalization of 'personal' ways of knowing, banishing them to the netherworld of the 'irrational'. Banuri's insight provides us with a means of looking at the modern/non-modern forms within the West (the heart of modernity), and also to recognize that its 'rationality' (the impersonal knowledge that he refers to) is not foreign to other epistemologies, but just given a higher status in the modern one. In this way, a critique of 'modernity' is not reduced to a critique of the West, nor does it eliminate the

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[22]Thornstein Veblen sarcastically described the rational economic agent upon which classical economics is constructed as a 'lightning calculator of pleasure and pains' (Veblen 1980:73 cited in Hodgson 1994: 61).

[23]See Santos 1995 (p. 329-337) for more on the history of human rights.

[24] See below and Pateman (1988), Fraser & Gordon (1994), and Vogel (1994) for more on how the creation of the abstract 'rights' in the 'public' sphere of the 19th C. resulted in the creation of a 'private' sphere in which women and children were left with not only no 'rights', but also no recourse outside of the family.

rationalities of other epistemologies, and it also helps to explain how modern epistemological frameworks, strengthened by modern institutions (the nation-state, industrial and agricultural capitalism, the nuclear family, the social sciences), can seep so easily into, or on top of, others.

All three of the 'faiths' mentioned above reflect the 'religion of progress', a belief in the ever-improving condition of humanity, that became part of the epistemological foundation of modern thought in the middle of the 19th century. Salomon (1995) saw in this 'religion', and the social movements that it spawned, new means of arriving at the Christian heaven, a version of which could now be constructed on earth.

The addition of the evolutionary perspective in the late 19th century brought more strength to the 'religion of progress'. Even prior to Darwinism, humanistic modern thinkers were clear in their goal of harnessing technology in order to create a better world for all. The evolutionary model led many to assume that modernity (and now postmodernity?) has been the ongoing endpoint of a single history of humanity. This assumption, combined with the ever expansive appetite of capitalism (or perhaps the other way around), would later give rise to ideas such as 'the white man's burden' and the 'modernization' theory of development whose expressed goal of remaking the Third World in the image of the West remains the principal one in the development discourse of today, though ideas about how to achieve it have changed over time.

It is the definition of modernity, by modern thinkers, as 'secular' that lays out its strongest claim to epistemological hegemony. Because it is based on a belief in 'rationality' (a form of knowledge understood to be superior to both the non-secular and the 'personal'), modernity can coexist with, and/or be imposed upon, other epistemologies. Following along the lines of its Christian precursor, modernity is universal: just as Christianity was able to subsume into itself the earlier religious traditions of Europe and the Americas, modernity claims the capacity to swallow whole all the religions and epistemologies of the world, which become, in the most recent understandings, 'cultural differences'.

Rationalization

The application of 'rational' thinking, mentioned above, is intimately related to the technology that would allow for the *rationalization* of capitalist production which

permitted and promoted a utilization of resources more efficient for the increased accumulation of capital. The same ‘impersonal’ forms of organization were used in the expansion of already existing state bureaucracies and professional armies, contributing, in turn, to the rationalization of Western societies. The rationalization of both the state and the market allowed for the increasing abstraction of the person into the 'worker' or 'citizen', in this way promoting the parallel process of individualization. This trend has accelerated during the twentieth century with the increasing importance of another descriptive category, the 'consumer', whose individual tastes and desires are created, and catered to, by the market. In the First World of the 20th century, the role of the ‘worker’ has diminished in importance relative to that of ‘citizen’ and the ‘consumer’, corresponding to the changes in the global economy which increasingly define the role of the First World as that of consumer for the global market, reflected in the rise of the ‘service sector’ in those countries.

The ever-increasing rationalization of the market and the state, and their increasing penetration into daily life in the 'modern world' has been described by Habermas as the 'colonization of the life-world' (Habermas 1989). The increasing provision of 'goods' and 'services' by the market and the state, through their rational and efficient systems, reduces human relationships into recreational contacts, ungrounded in the various tasks (reduced to the categories of production, reproduction and consumption) which make up life. This tendency is reinforced by post-Fordist systems of production and distribution (service sector) which reduce the consistent and continued relationships between workers in the factory to temporary and inconsequential contacts between acquaintances.

The modern epistemology

Why epistemology

I have described modernity's chokehold on the world as 'epistemological hegemony'. By bringing modernity down to a level where it sits among many epistemes and where it has no hierarchical superiority, I want to give equal weight to the innumerable other *ways of knowing*. I am using epistemology to mean *'cosmovisión'*,

Weltanschauung or worldview[25], a claim to the basis for the production of knowledge. In this way I hope to give equal weight to the knowledge claims of the Mayans of what is now Chiapas, the College of Cardinals, the Dalai Lama or the Board of Directors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In this way I am calling, on a political level, for these claims to be recognized.

It is not sufficient to see a society in terms of its clothing, foods, ceremonies etc. as if these were all trappings or superstructure built upon an essentially common 'human nature'. By recognizing that different forms of social organization have different epistemologies[26], I want to emphasize the profound differences in the ways of perceiving, interpreting and understanding the world that are related to different claims regarding how knowledge is produced. These different claims have many and varied implications for the different 'spheres' of life (economic, social, cultural, etc.) into which modern thinking divides the world.

If these differences are not recognized in international organizing, and the modern epistemology is assumed to be universal, there are two principal risks. One is that international struggles will be for uniform rationalization, individualization and 'secularization' around the globe. The second is that the various struggles around the world could be weakened by the potential incapacity for groups and movements to forgo 'epistemological prejudices' among themselves.

Implications of the modern epistemology

> Yo no lloraba cuando se me morían los bebés. Ahora las mamás lloran, mi hija está llorando por su nena. Ahora hay que hacer algo para que los niños sobrevivan.
> [I didn't cry when my babies died. Nowadays mothers cry, my daughter is crying for her baby girl. Nowadays things must be done so that the children survive].
> Comments made by a Mayan, Guatemalan midwife, about her daughter's mourning (in Piazza 1995: 9).

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[25]These terms are not truly interchangeable. '*Cosmovisión'* or 'worldview' represent whole, organic understandings of the 'universe', inside of which the claims for the basis of knowledge coexist with knowledge itself and the material world to which this knowledge refers. While originally used to describe the 'world view' of the German people at the end of the 19th century, Dilthey interpreted '*Weltanschauung'* to describe the type of rapport with the world that is developed during a specific historical epoch. 'Epistemology' refers specifically to claims for the basis of production of knowledge which are separate from knowledge itself and the world in which it is situated.
The term epistemology corresponds to only one part of '*cosmovisión'*, *Weltanschauung*, and worldview, each of which is not separable into distinct pieces, of which 'epistemology' is interpreted to be one by modernity. By focusing on 'epistemology', I draw attention to the claims upon which the modern '*cosmovisión'* understands its own foundations to be constructed.

[26]This is not to say that epistemologies are constructed from material relations of production but that the two are unavoidably related, but *not* causally linked.

Thus far I have identified two epistemological bases of modernity: the concept of the isolated individual and 'progress'. These bases are not unique to modernity, but nor are they universal. The implications of assuming their universality are profound, however, especially because, through social policies and planning[27], the epistemological beliefs of the group which does the planning can affect the beliefs of those who are planned for, or around.

Modern social systems, like industrial systems, are now carefully designed by planners and, in these systems, the isolated individual is the target of policy. This means that provision of 'care' for the aged, children, the sick is based upon the idea that as long as the material needs of that person are met, 'care' has been provided. What would be called the emotional or psychological needs of the individual, *which exist only in the relationships* between people, are easily ignored by systems that see only 'individuals' and 'material needs'(Young 1990: 25). The relatively recent recognition of this problem in the West has given rise to a set of paid 'experts' (as well as unpaid volunteers) who provide human relationships for those that the 'complex society' has left isolated.

Attempts at imposing modern social policies on non-modern forms of social organization result either in epistemological shifts within the 'object' populations, a rejection of them, or their reinterpretation. 'Modernization' theories of development attempted to impose changes in the social structure that would weaken the social bonds that previously held societies together. The modernization theorists had recognized that 'development' (i.e. the path to Western modernity) would be impossible if accumulated capital was distributed through social networks. To put it in other terms, capitalist growth is based on the possibility for individuals to ignore the suffering of their fellows. After capitalist expansion occurs and non-capitalist forms of social organization are destroyed, new forms of social organization are created, either by the state through social planning, or without the state, through autonomous reconstruction, or through

[27]Social planning began in 19th c. Europe as a response to the social unrest brought forth by uncontrolled industrialization and urbanization (Escobar 1992). The growth of social planning was closely linked to the expansion of the social sciences and the struggle for control over definitions over the 'rational' organization of society (Rueschemeyer and Skocpol: 1996). It also had the function of 'normalizing' (i.e. promoting the bourgeious values and lifestyles of the time to) the working classes in the industrial centers and was applied for the same reasons at around the same time in the colonies (See Nandy 1983: 4-6 *et passim* and Horne 1998).

some combination of the two.

The need for wage labor, and later for capitalist agricultural systems, both in Europe and 'the colonies', has destroyed or unalterably modified other forms of societal organization (Polanyi 1944: 163-165) and, in the process, changed the epistemologies of those societies. Because human societies are organic wholes, in which the material, the spiritual, and the epistemological are all interrelated, the change in economic and social organization necessarily implies a change in epistemology as well. These changes are often abrupt and definitive, leading Santos (1995: 345) to make the comment 'that [c]ultural imperialism and epistemicide are part of the historical trajectory of Western modernity.'

'Global restructuring' and epistemological change.

Epistemological changes are not unique to the modern era nor to capitalist interchanges with non-capitalist societies. The notable feature about the continued 'epistemicides' perpetrated by modernity is that they tend toward a universalization of the epistemological bases of modernity in a hegemonic role. This 'funneling' of 'cosmovisions' into a single form of thinking (modernity) was accelerated by the growth of the 'development state' in the 1950s-70s.

The change from the 'development state' to an increasingly single integrated market over the past 20 years brought with it important implications for the continued dominance of modernity. While the presence of state services during the 'development era' brought with it modern epistemological frameworks, the retraction of the state in the 1980s and 90s has meant the marginalization of many people(s) from both state services and modern epistemologies. This has implied the reconstruction of old epistemological frameworks as well as the construction of completely new ones.

The hegemony of modernity

> We build your penitentiaries, we build your schools
> Brainwash education, that makes us the fools…
> (Bob Marley 'Crazy Baldheads')

> This may be the historical moment when Western ethnocentrism could begin to admit that other human worlds are possible - we are not locked in to a 'logic of development' of either the liberal or Marxist varieties.
> (Schroyer 1991 : 75)

The hegemony of modernity can be described as existing in two overlapping spheres, the political-economic and the epistemological.

Modernity and political consent

Hegemony, following Gramsci, is the capacity of the ruling classes (or an adversarial class) to establish or maintain its control over state power through coercion and the creation of consent among the ruled by means of education, use of the communications media, etc. (Gramsci 1971: 80 note 49). In this sense, the 'promise' of modernity, and especially of modernization ('development') has been the principal means of obtaining consent from the ruled, particularly (but certainly not only) in the Third World, and above all in recently decolonized (created) states. In the many cases where consent has been lacking, nation-states have been quite willing to use coercion as well, and often with international support. Nation-state legitimacy (not of the government, but of the state and the 'nation' itself) has often been based on the twin pillars of the 'development' project and on a generally weak sense of nationalism, with the threat, or active use, of repression usually present.

The legitimacy that 'development' has provided to these states and their governments must be addressed, not only in terms of the posturing of national leaders, but also in terms of the *desire* for 'development' that this represents. The 'promise' of modernity is one that appeals to many people, not because it has been forced upon them, but because the material benefits and 'political freedom' enjoyed by many who inhabit the 'modern' world (especially as they are presented) are very appealing. It would be an oversimplification, therefore, to pretend that this desire is only felt by those who have been displaced from other systems of social organization and who find themselves excluded from the modern project, though this is also a common occurrence.

But desire for material well-being and political freedom should not be confused with a desire for 'modernity'. 'Modernity' has as much to do with impoverishment and tyranny as it does with material well-being and political freedom. It would, in fact, be difficult to disassociate the growth of these modern 'achievements' from their flip-sides in many parts of the Third World, and the First.

Dignity, a concept which encompasses both material well-being and political freedom (in the sense of being able to participate in decisions about the future) is not a

modern concept, and it defies ‘rationalization’. Perhaps it is dignity, which modernity *seems* to offer to its members[28], that is so appealing to those who are excluded from it. In this way, modernity is presented as a means of achieving dignity and, more importantly, is presented as the only alternative to ‘traditional’ forms of social organization, as if imagining a distinct future were impossible.

Epistemological hegemony

Through colonization and the development state, the belief in modernity has become universalized to such a degree that it has an operative hegemony on the epistemological level. The level of hegemony of the modern epistemology is comparable to the hegemony of Christianity in Europe, and later in the Americas, prior to the Enlightenment. During this period, social criticism, moral discussion, etc. could only be framed within the dominant discourse of Christianity. It was unthinkable that a questioning of the social order or philosophy could be developed from any other source. Hence, questions were phrased within the Christian discourse, and even those who criticized from within were often labeled heretics. During the 16th and 17th century, efforts were made by a number of Catholic missionaries to protect and defend the indigenous peoples of Latin America from what they perceived as the abuses of the Spanish colonial system. These efforts were necessarily made through claims situated within the epistemological framework of the Catholic Church, even though it was that same Church that legitimated the colonization of the Americas (See Piazza 1992) and the forced labor of the indigenous peoples (See Ricard 1966; Phelan 1970).

In a parallel manner, indigenous people are now defended by 'human rights' (a modern doctrine) from capitalist expansion and ‘development’, that is to say, from modernity itself. Much in the same way that the Catholic doctrines used to defend indigenous people under colonial rule were little known to them, the human rights doctrine used to defend them now may be equally obscure, and its origin is equally

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[28] The following quote from a Mexican newspaper during the ‘First Encounter Against Neoliberalism and for Humanity’ is revealing on this point. “Surprised, [*Comandante* David] explained that some participants from the “First World say that their problems are worse than our own problems here in Mexico. There is violence, grave injustices. Even though they don’t know poverty and don’t know what it means to be lacking economically; they have a complete lack of dignity. They say that here, among the indigenous people, although there is material poverty, we have a richness of humanity and dignity.it is a great challenge to save that richness in all senses. Those of us who still have that consciousness have the big job of humanizing that large part of society that has become dehumanized” (Pérez & Enríquez 1996)

foreign. In both cases, the counterhegemonic discourse is framed within the hegemonic epistemology in order that it be heard. But the use of this counterhegemonic discourse not only empowers the hegemonic epistemology by legitimizing it; at the same time it weakens the claims of alternative epistemologies and undermines their position in ‘global’ discussion, reducing their strength at a local level, as the power of the dominant epistemology is reinforced.

There is a historic tendency toward increasing inclusiveness in the ‘rights’ discussion, depending on broader trends in Western thinking. ‘Civil rights’ of the eighteenth century were expanded to include ‘political rights’ in the nineteenth century and ‘social rights’ in the twentieth (Marshall 1964: 74). Recently, as ‘cultural’ issues have become an issue, arguments for the inclusion of ‘collective rights’ into the liberal paradigm have begun to appear.

> The aim of liberals should not be to dissolve non-liberal nations, but rather to seek to liberalize them. This may not always be possible....To assume that any culture is inherently illiberal, and incapable of reform is ethnocentric and ahistorical. (Kymlicka 1995: 94 in Thompson 1997: 788)

This comment, aside from its own extreme ethnocentrism, is interesting because it seeks to broaden the ‘rights’ discourse while ‘social rights’ are being massively reduced through the implementation of neo*liberal* economic policies throughout the world.

The international acceptance of human rights is reflective of two different, but related, currents. In the first place, their acceptance, by states (whose degree of representative legitimacy is certainly questionable) is not due to the ‘universality’ of the concept, so much as to the epistemological hegemony of modernity. The second, equally important reason for the acceptance of human rights, is their utility for opposition groups. An appeal to the respect for human rights is a means of securing Western support for these opposition groups, or at least for their right to act. Whether or not these groups actually share a belief in the sanctity of human rights is irrelevant to their use as a political strategy (Esteva & Prakesh 1998: Chapter 4), underlining once again the dominance of Western, liberal discourse at the level of international relations.

Just as ‘human rights’ is used in many parts of the world, ‘environmentalism’, ‘civil society’, and ‘democratization’ can also be used by local activists to find external support for their struggles. While these are the catchwords of the 1990s that will allow for Western support, through NGOs, donor governments or IFIs, their use by organizations in the Third World (or even in the First) does not imply that the words are

accepted by them, or interpreted by them in the same manner. This is reflected in the way that the catchword of 'socialism' has often been used in revolutionary struggles by nationalist and other groups whose goals may or may not have coincided with those of the foreign governments or solidarity groups that supported them.

The power of epistemological hegemony is reflected in the fact that organized opposition to capitalism, the primary locus of modern expansion, has traditionally come from within the modern camp, socialism[29]. Other forms of resistance have tended to either be isolated or to make some sort of compromise with (modern) socialism. The problem with this is that socialism, as it is commonly espoused, presupposes modernization. It is an attempt at making a complex, capitalist society into a social whole (Polanyi 1944: 234). Its application to non-modern societies is just as much of an imposition as capitalist modernization.

Now, political opposition can be found using the terminology of human rights, democracy, and even environmentalism. The framing of these opposition struggles in the 'globalized localisms'[30] which originate in modern thinking serves once again to weaken non-modern epistemological frameworks.

Mapping modernity

The expansion of modernity's hegemony is now at (although perhaps it has passed) its historic high point. It is still unclear whether the global recession, ongoing since the 1970s, but now approaching global crisis proportions, and the end of the 'development state', have slowed, permanently disabled or redirected the course of modernity. It is clear, however, that the neoliberal 'globalization' which continues to promote 'modernity' in the form of capitalism, pseudo-liberal democratic governments, and coercive state apparatuses, without providing for the material well-being of 'citizens', promotes a myriad of non-modern responses, largely because modernity as epistemology has not been internalized by most people, particularly those living in the Third World.

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[29]It can also be argued that 'socialism' as such predates modernity as in the often termed 'utopian' writings of Thomas More, Campanella etc. See Laidlaw (1948) for more on this history.

[30]Santos (1995: 263) describes *globalized localism* as 'the process by which a given local phenomenon is successfully globalized' and *localized globalism* as 'the specific impact of transnational practices and imperatives on local conditions that are thereby destructured and restructured in order to respond to transnational imperatives.'

A map of modernity in the world might look like three concentric circles. In the center circle would be those areas in which modernity is the clearly dominant epistemology. These would include almost all of the First World as well as most of the upper and middle classes of the Third World, Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union. These people are economically secure (though this security is certainly decreasing) and, for the most part, epistemologically modern in their outlook. At the same time, relationships outside of the 'contracted' public sphere still exist, and the Western feminist epistemological claim to 'difference' may well be grounded in the experience of 'caring', of a *not-only-rational* perspective on the world.

Many of those in this category are likely to be involved in social movements which have been identified as ‘advocacy networks’ (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Smith *et al.* 1997) such as environmentalism, human rights advocacy, the peace movement, and the anti-nuclear movement. Some sectors of this group would also tend toward autonomous movements (Katsiafacas 1997) or become involved in the various ‘grupuscules’ that the radical Western Left has shrunk into. The membership of trade unions in the First World, as well as some parts of the Third, would also be located in this circle. In their positions regarding modernity, these groups are likely to fall somewhere in a spectrum between, on one end, a desire for modernity’s continued expansion through ever increasing consumption and, on the other, a relatively radical reform of modernity that would involve reorganization of production and consumption patterns, as well as possible moves toward more participatory forms of democracy. There are also many attempts at constructions of new economic and social systems which, as of yet, have remained at a local level.

The vast majority of the world lives in the middle circle. It includes the populations of the continually expanding Third World cities and most of those living in rural areas. New members of this group are the majority of the populations in Eastern Europe and the Ex-Soviet Union. These people have stronger or weaker links to the capitalist economy and their national states. This circle also includes Third World immigrants to First World countries, and others in the First World who are increasingly excluded from many of the material benefits of capitalist modernity. In general, these people have suffered deteriorating material conditions over the past twenty years, putting them into positions of near permanent economic insecurity. Modernity for these groups may be at once a fractured history and a dream of the future.

In terms of social movements, these groups are choosing two principal strategies. One is to demand that the state assure them material well-being and (at times) political freedom (essentially that social democracy be returned, implemented or expanded; i.e. that a social contract be respected). The legitimization provided for the state need not be limited to modern ones: religious and 'ethnic' movements or governments that can offer the same results are gladly welcomed. The second strategy is to construct new livelihoods through the 'informal' sector, through repeasantization, or some combination of the two (Burbach 1998; Gibson-Graham 1995; Petras 1997). The divisions of the modern world into 'production', 'reproduction' and 'consumption' lose their rigidity as the 'personal' interacts more fluidly with the 'impersonal'. These strategies often overlap as people pressure the state for whatever they can, while at the same time building their own livelihoods.

The outer circle is now very small and includes those forms of social organization that have had little contact with modernity. These are the few remaining indigenous groups only recently brought into more demanding relationships with the modern world through its expansion into previously isolated areas of the Amazon, Borneo, etc. These groups have the greatest degree of epistemological autonomy from modernity. Recently, they are finding success in social movement organizing around indigenous issues, springing initially from defensive actions to protect livelihoods but, in the process, bringing forward critical questions about the epistemological bases of modernity, particularly of the nation-state (Santos 1995: 313-327). They have had a very positive response on an international level, both from other indigenous groups (Wilmer 1993) and from those in the first 'circle' mentioned above (Santos 1995: 323-4).

The presence of modernity through these three circles can be measured through the degree of expansion of wage labor and state power, the latter in regard to both control and surveillance as well as in the provision of health, education and other social services. With the present retraction of state service provision, the promise of modernity ceases to function as a legitimating force for the nation-state. This loss of legitimacy brings forward a number of new and old forms of resistance and construction that may use modern discourse to pursue non-modern goals, or non-modern discourse to pursue modern ones.

4. WHEN DIVERSITY MEANS SOMETHING: THE ZAPATISTA ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL STRUGGLE

> They also told us that they were studying hard what dignity is, that they are doing research and studies on dignity. What they could most understand was that dignity was service to others. And they asked us to tell them what dignity means to us. We answered them that they should go on with their research. It makes us laugh, and we laughed in their faces.
> (Comandante Tacho's comments on a conversation with government representatives about the EZLN demands that their dignity be respected.)[31]

On January 1, 1994, the date that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), in what might be called a suicide mission, declared war on the Mexican Federal Army and occupied four cities in the southern Mexican State of Chiapas. Twelve days later the Mexican government called a unilateral cease-fire and the war turned into a low-intensity conflict with all of the accompanying details: government supported paramilitary groups, massacre, thousands of displaced persons and the militarization of the state.

The rebellion, a challenge to the neoliberal restructuring which has impoverished much of Mexico and the rest of the world, has made the devastatingeffects of the present political/economic order that much more visible for those who choose to see them. The demands and the practice of the EZLN focus not only on economic injustice, however, but also on epistemological difference and its political implications. While these two aspects of the Zapatista struggle are not always equally emphasized, they are nonetheless always present. The EZLN distinguishes itself from most other movements because it chooses neither an exclusive and inward looking version of a religious, national or 'ethnic' identity, nor an imagined 'progressive' movement of modern (Marxist-Leninist, liberal, etc.) origins.

The EZLN is an army and a movement whose roots and history, like any other movement, are specific to the location which has seen it grow and evolve: the jungles and highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, Planet Earth[32], locations which force a recognition of the interrelatedness of the local, national and global levels. The indigenous *campesinos*, who make up the vast majority of the movement, are as much a product of European history as Europeans are products of theirs. Though the 'political' control of

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[31]Cited in Rabasa (1997: 414) taken from the Mexican Daily, *La Jornada* 10 June, 1995.
[32]This location is a common address for EZLN communiqués.

Spain over Chiapas ended in 1821, the economic relations that have bound Chiapas to the rest of the world, and the rest of the world to Chiapas, are stronger than ever. The cheap coffee enjoyed in the West is the product of Chiapaneco (and many other) *campesinos'* careful planting and picking, often under exploitative conditions. That same coffee also provides jobs in Northern supermarkets, advertising agencies, the stock market, etc. as well as profits for multinationals. For every $1.00 in coffee revenues that stays in Third World countries (somewhere between 25 and 50 cents actually going to the producer), another $9.00 goes to the First (Chossudovsky 1997: 88).

Just as the global economy is nothing new to Chiapas, neither is protest and rebellion, occurring periodically through colonial times and continuing after independence (Bricker 1989: 111-140, 235-248). This history has arrived at another 'active' phase in the last 30 years with a great deal of religious, indigenous and *campesino* organizing, the most visible manifestation at present being the EZLN.

Unlike many other movements, armed and unarmed, the EZLN position, in addition to the social and economic revindications which form the backbone of its demands, also questions some of the basic ideas regarding the distribution of political power within a nation-state and, more broadly, the political implications of 'diversity' at the level of epistemology or cosmovision. In the Mexican case, the power differential between the dominant and the dominated can only be understood in reference to the relative importance given in public discussion to the epistemological differences of the indigenous and mestizos. The negation and denial of the indigenous cosmovision, not only by those who oppose them, but also by those who would help them (be they Maoists, priests or state officials), has meant that all debate has taken place on the terms defined by the dominant groups.

This denial has also meant that the various ideological debates both between liberals and Marxists, as well as within the 'Left' are of secondary importance for the Mayans themselves (See Rabasa 1997: 420). The history and struggle of the Mayans in Chiapas goes back further than these differences of opinion between the '*kaxlanes*'[33]

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[33]'Kaxlan' is a Mayan term for the *Ladino/criollo*/Spanish 'other'. The term '*Criollo'* was originally a colonial term that referred to Spaniards born in the colonies. '*Ladino'* is a term used in Chiapas and Central America, often loosely equated with *mestizo*, meaning mixed-blood, used in most of Mexico and Latin America. The terms are not interchangeable and their different usage also reflects the ways that race, class and gender are structured in different Latin American societies (Piazza n.d.).

and, in many senses, regardless of which camp might gain the upper hand in the struggle, their own voices would be ignored. An important aspect of the Zapatista rebellion is that it has allowed these epistemological differences, as well as their political implications, to be openly voiced and to be heard outside of the indigenous communities.

From a perspective which sees the modern episteme as, at the very least, problematic, a political force such as the EZLN which actively questions it, and does so within a discourse of social justice (or at times of an isomorphic non-modern one), is an important actor to watch, and reflect upon, as the Left goes ambling confusedly into the twenty-first century, seemingly trapped in modernity[34] and unable (or unwilling) to look outside of it[35]. In this regard, the EZLN has successfully made contact with a number of other political actors in Mexico and around the globe (through the use of internet and email), gaining politically important support from many organizations, while simultaneously promoting and participating in new national and global networks/alliances/encounters.

Historical background

The most important features of the history of Chiapas have been relatively consistent since the Spaniards invaded the area in 1524. Struggles over land and labor have historically been intertwined with the deeply rooted racism of Chiapas society[36]. The present 'racial' boundary between '*Indigenas'* and '*Ladinos'* is a somewhat transformed version of the Indian / Spaniard boundary of the early colonial period. Economic and political power in Chiapas passed from the Spaniards to the *Criollos* to the *Ladinos*[37] of today, the class division almost always corresponding to the 'racial' one and backed up by violence whenever necessary (González Casanova 1996: 285). The struggle of the Mayans in Chiapas against the *Ladino* landowners and the Mexican

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[34]Whatever changes may have occurred in the past thirty years, the Left is tied to the institutions and the philosophical constructs of modernity: the nation-state, the isolated individual, progress, industrial society, a single and universal rationality etc. It is often also unwilling to see that Northern societies have constructed, and depend on, a global system in which the few benefit from the poverty and the oppression of the many.

[35]The recognition by Wallerstein (1996) of the philosophical biases of any 'rationality' might provide a point of departure, from which other categories can begin to be reevaluated.

[36]See Colby & Van den Berghe (1961), regarding Mayans and Ladinos in Chiapas. See Paz (1996) and Centro de Derechos ... (1996) for more on the Mayan interpretation of history in Chiapas. See also González Casanova (1996: 285).

State has been against the privilege of race and class (inevitably interrelated with gender issues) in a context of continued colonialism and coupled with waves of capitalist expansion.[38]

From invasion to revolution[39]

During much of the colonial period, when Chiapas formed part of the *Audiencia* of Guatemala, the Mayan towns of the central highlands provided a source of forced labor for the successive waves of plantations in the coastal areas of Chiapas (Soconusco), working whatever crops were earning money on the national or international market (Macleod 1980: 192). In other areas, to the north and east of the highlands, large haciendas were established by private citizens or clerical orders (Wasserstrom 1983: 38-42), some of the former remaining more or less intact to the present day, with little change in terms of the oppressive nature of relations between

Ladino owners and Mayan workers.[40] Late in the 17th century, the indigenous population of Chiapas (as in the rest of the Americas) was drastically diminished by the entrance of Old World diseases combined with the Spaniards' exploitation of local labor. Partially in response to the vastly diminished populations, the Spaniards created (as in the rest of the Americas) '*reducciones*', centralized towns which 'reduced' the widely scattered populations into a single space. The Spaniards justified the *reducciones* with the argument that Christianizing the population would be made easier if settlements were more closely observed, though they also facilitated the collection of tribute, in labor or goods, and simplified political control.

Under late 18th c., Bourbon rule, with the first signs of the oncoming liberal order both in Europe and the New World, the San Cristóbal élite began purchasing

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[37]See note 33 regarding *Criollos* and *Ladinos*.
[38]Jeremy Beckett (1996: 6) makes the following insightful comment: 'Capitalism, while relentlessly expansionary and transformative in the long haul, cannot in any case be understood as a steady progression from simple to complex, or from isolation to incorporation or from autonomy to subordination. It is often better understood as a series of tidal motions, invading indigenous territory only to recede, leaving the "natives" to pick up the pieces of their disrupted lives, before the next wave breaks.'
[39]See Wasserstrom (1983) and Favre (1973) on the history of Chiapas.

indigenous lands, previously protected by the crown. This trend would continue during the whole of the 19th c., increasing notably in the 1850s and 1860s when the Mexican government, as well as the State of Chiapas, passed a number of new agrarian laws intended to promote capitalist agriculture. These laws effectively allowed for all unoccupied lands to be declared vacant and to be purchased from the state. In many cases, claims were made on land used by indigenous communities with no legal documentation to prove ownership, a theft that left many peasants landless and which remains in the collective memory of many Chiapanecos (Paz 1996: 237-40). The land grab, and the forced labor that it permitted and promoted, reflected the expansion of capitalist agriculture in Mexico (much of it for export to Atlantic markets), which reached its apogee under President Porfirio Díaz, eventually becoming one of the key factors leading to the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1919[41].

From revolution to neoliberalism

The revolution continues in Mexican popular consciousness as perhaps *the* defining event in Mexican history, largely because the Party of the Institutionalized Revolution (PRI) that has been in power over the past 70 years continuously identifies itself with it. The history of the revolution is a complex and confusing one (Gilly 1994; Womack 1968), involving struggles within the Mexican élite, as well as peasant grassroots mobilization, the latter providing both the military strength of the revolutionaries, and the more radical ideas regarding land reform and the protection and creation of communally owned agrarian communities, the *ejidos.*[42]

During the revolution, the Chiapaneco *Ladino* élite was able to unify and militarily control the state, while the indigenous *campesinos* served in its armies. It was this same *Ladino* élite who negotiated with other regional and national leaders at the end of the fighting and '[t]hus power and land in the state of Chiapas remained in the same hands as before the revolution'(Paz 1996: 244).

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[40]A sign in Lions Club in the eastern Chiapas town of Ocosingo in 1971 read: 'In the Law of the Jungle it is willed that Indians and blackbirds must be killed' (Hernández Navarro 1994: 6-7 cited in Wager & Schulz 1995: 4).

[41]The first 'military' actions of Emiliano Zapata in 1910 were the protection of communal landholdings from claims made by local sugar plantations (Womack 1968:64).

[42]*Ejidos* are communally owned plots of land that were distributed/returned to peasant and indigenous communities as part of the land reform programs resulting from the Mexican revolution.

Though the constitution of 1919 established both protection for communal land holdings and agrarian reform, only under the government of Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s did peasants began gaining access to land. Cárdenas' land reform program formed part of a larger national strategy of development that was devised under the realities of global depression. The limited export possibilities to Europe and the US meant that nationally led economic growth through industrialization became a politically feasible alternative (Collier 1994: 31-2). The plan was based on the redistribution of land to the *campesinos* who, with the help of state extension workers, would produce surplus grains on their *ejidos* that could keep wage costs low for industrial workers in the cities. Decent prices for the *campesinos* would allow them to purchase the domestically produced industrial goods.

The effects of the revolution (usually equated with the effective implementation of Cardenist policies) are considered to have never taken hold in Chiapas, which is true to the degree that the land reform program was weakly implemented there in comparison with other parts of the country. Because they were usually able to retain the capital improvements on their plantations, as well as the best land, those large landowners subject to expropriation often continued earning profits, at the expense of the *ejido* holders, through the processing or resale of coffee grown on their former land (Wasserstrom 1983: 164). Land redistribution, where it did occur, was in areas peripheral to the central highlands including the northern and eastern parts of the state, taking place principally during the 1940s and 1950s, in part promoting the colonization and migration to the east that had already begun in the 1930s (Favre 1984: 89-92).

The PRI under Cárdenas developed a corporatist political strategy based on direct relationships between the state and organizations of peasants, workers, urban groups and indigenous people, in this way strengthening the federal government and weakening the regional élite. Power was thus consolidated in a party-state system that continued to function through clientelist practices[43] until the shifts to neoliberal policy after 1982 began to weaken its foundations. In the Highland communities, the indigenous leaders developed direct contacts with the federal government, bypassing the traditionally dominant Chiapas *Ladino* élite (Rus 1994).

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[43]This 'standard' interpretation of Mexican history has been questioned by Knight (1996) and Rubin (1990) who see the Mexican state as less than monolithic, rather a coalition of regional forces, each of which maintains a certain degree of power.

The National Indianist Institute (INI) played an important role in the highland communities from the 50s through the 80s. Working toward the inclusion of the indigenous populations into Mexican society, the INI was institutionally trapped, and divided, between a desire to recognize cultural differences while simultaneously promoting a single national identity (Rus 1994). Like other state bureaucracies, the INI[44] acted as a mechanism of co-optation by the state and a conduit to resources for selected groups. In Chiapas it worked closely with the PRI-affiliated indigenous community leaders, often disagreeing with state level authorities. Initial work in the provision of health services, education, and some legal services, as well as the creation of cooperatives, the purchase of community trucks, etc. was dropped, following national policy changes, in favor of promoting capitalist enterprises (Rus 1994: 289). The cooperatives were privatized, falling into the hands of individual community leaders, promoting a new class differentiation within the communities that grew over time and created divisions that would eventually play a role in the indigenous mobilizations of the 1980s and 90s.

In the oil (and borrowing) boom of the 1970s, sparked by the flush of petro-dollars, the Mexican government constructed large hydroelectric plants, oilfields and highways. These projects offered work to the indigenous people of Chiapas, resulting in two significant long-term consequences. One was increased income disparity within the communities and the second, after the boom, was a large number of unemployed *campesinos* flooding the job market, pushing rural wages downward (Collier 1994: 94-106).

Increasing economic inequality within the highland communities provoked or exacerbated a trend in which leaders ceased taking responsibility for the community as a whole, and began acting on behalf of the small groups of the economically well-off whose interests they shared. One aspect of the change was a move from a system in which 'economic relations were almost always subsumed in social ties' to one where the two were increasingly unrelated (Collier 1994:122): the disembedding of the economic from the social that occurs in capitalist societies as described by Polanyi, Marx and Durkheim. Social responses to the increasing marginalization and economic stratification in the Highlands were expressed in conversion to Protestantism,

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[44]For more on the INI, see Favre (1971: 356-373) and Zea (1974).

opposition political parties, and continued migration into eastern Chiapas. The acceptance of the religious and political organizers described in the following sections should be understood in the light of the newly forming social structures which the new communities were constructing in a frontier zone where ideological and social structures were few and weak.

Northeastern Chiapas 1960-1994[45]

The different currents of religious and political organizing active in eastern Chiapas, the heartland of the EZLN, all tended to focus on community decisionmaking, a process which has at times also been common in the Mayan communities of the region, though certainly receding over the past forty years. The process of creation and re-creation of 'identities' (Leyva & Ascencio 1996: 148-173) and of the community and communal forms (Marcos & Le Bot 1997: 45-6) in eastern Chiapas can be followed through the processes of colonization, religious organization and political organizing.[46] The sheer diversity among the people living in eastern Chiapas, combined with that of those who came to work with them for political or religious reasons, created a climate in which relationships with the 'other' and openness toward unknown cosmovisions were necessarily present, later informing the political initiatives of the Zapatistas on both national and international levels.

Emigration, colonization, religious influences and the Indigenous Congress of 1974

Since the 1930s, migration into eastern Chiapas has been used as an 'escape valve' by the Mexican government to decrease pressure for land reform. The colonists have come in waves, the majority from the nearby highlands though others from more distant parts of Mexico, as well as a large influx of Guatemalan refugees in the early

[45] This section is an abbreviated description of a complicated interlacing of peasant, religious, indigenous and political organizing, and relies heavily on four principal texts: Collier (1994), Leyva & Ascencio (1996), Marcos & Le Bot (1996), Obregón (1996).
[46] It is difficult to sufficiently disentangle the relationships between the different institutions and the communities themselves in order to understand how much influence was held by different institutions. It is impossible to comprehend these relationships without a recognition of racial differentiation in Mexico that makes a clear dividing line between mestizo/*Ladino* and indigenous. The concept of 'community', can be understood as a collective actor that can be isolated from the *Ladino* institutions of which community members may form a part. This understanding does not mean to imply that the 'community' is impervious to the ideas promoted by other institutions, but recognizes the existence of a 'Mayan' community that maintains a distance from *Ladino* institutions.

1980s, fleeing from a genocidal army on the other side of the border. The population of the area is mixed, the largest groups are the Tzeltales, Tzoltziles, Tojolobales and Ch'oles though other Mayans, non-Mayan indigenous people, and some *Ladinos* are also present (Leyva & Ascencio 1996: 50-51 *et passim*). These communities in the 'frontier' areas of eastern Chiapas have developed with few, if any, government services and under the effective control of the large ranchers whose decisions are implemented by their hired guns, the '*guardias blancas*' (white guards) (Obregón 1997: 162-170), creating a climate of relative (if forced) self-sufficiency and a need for self-protection (Leyva & Ascencio 113-4).

The newly colonized areas of eastern Chiapas were fertile ground for Protestant missionaries who had been present in Chiapas since the turn of the century, but whose first successes were precisely in these areas beginning in the 1950s. Many in the highland communities began converting to the various Protestant sects in the 1970s, interpretable as a response to the new class stratification and their political ramifications discussed above (Collier 1994: 57). These groups often challenged the dominant power structures of the communities and were marginalized by them, at times to the point of physical expulsion; eastern Chiapas and suburbs of the nearby city of San Cristóbal de las Casas were the preferred destinations.

The Protestant churches promoted an egalitarian form of services in which women and children were encouraged to participate on equal footing with men. Literacy training for women formed a part of their teachings, as well as the collective discussion of bible passages among *all* of the faithful (Collier 1994: 58-60). It would be inappropriate to attribute to the Protestant churches the ideas regarding women which appeared in the Women's Laws declared by the EZLN at the time of the 1994 uprising (EZLN 1995), but it would also be foolish to ignore their effect on the communities.

Since colonial times, the dominant religion in Chiapas has been a Catholicism which in the indigenous communities is heavily influenced by Mayan religious/spiritual beliefs and practices. Beginning in the early 1960s, the Catholic church, partially in response to the Protestant expansion (Collier 1994: 62), began evangelizing anew in Chiapas, later adopting liberation theology as it became popular throughout Latin America later in the decade. The dioceses and its Bishop, Samuel Ruíz, put an emphasis

on cultural issues, building an 'Indigenous Church' (Marcos & Le Bot 1997: 43) and taking on an extremely important role in the communities.[47]

In the early 1970s the government of the State of Chiapas asked the Catholic Church to organize an 'Indigenous Congress'. The network of the Church in the communities brought participants from more than one thousand communities to the 1974 event. For the first time in a meeting of this nature, the indigenous people of Chiapas were able to set the agenda (land, education, health) rather than respond to one previously set by the State. The frankness of the indigenous speakers surprised State representatives, unaccustomed to hearing the problems of the indigenous people clearly and publicly voiced. Additionally, a positive impression was made on the Mexican Left, 'who saw in it an example of the viability of a real popular (grassroots) organization integrated by communities of very different languages, ethnicities and cultural identities' (Obregón 1997: 173). Much of the organizing in the region since the Congress has been based on the Church network that had existed prior to the Congress and the organizational system, created around the congress itself and maintained until 1977.

The indigenous *campesino* organization *Quiptic Ta Lecubtesel Union de Uniones* (Union of Unions United by our Strength) was an early product of the network formed at the Indigenous Congress. The '*Quiptic'* was initially dedicated to defending the *ejidos* of several communities, at that time under threat of relocation. Over the next two decades, it would play a key role in indigenous and peasant organizing in eastern Chiapas: many conflicts between different ideological and strategic currents were played out within the organization itself (Leyva & Ascencio 1996: 148-173).

Campesino organizing

Two Maoist organizations, *Union del Pueblo* (UP) and *Política Popular* (PP) appeared in eastern Chiapas in the mid-1970s and fused shortly thereafter, maintaining the name of the latter (Obregón 1997: 177). They consisted primarily of students who,

[47] For more information on the role of the Catholic Church in Eastern Chiapas, see Leyva & Ascencio (1996: esp. 148-173). The Church's role varied from region to region, though certainly in this area, the original base of support for many groups that would join the EZLN, the Church was extremely important.

after the Tlatelolco[48] massacre of 1968 had chosen to work on organizing directly with 'the masses'. The Church had an important role in introducing these groups into the region and into the *Quiptic* (Obregón 1997: 177; Collier 1994: 73-74), allowing them to make use of the networks formed by the priests and catechists. These organizations worked toward a 'bottom-up' form of popular organizing that would give decision making power to the community assemblies. Such forms were similar to the practices used by the Catholic Church, and the Maoist organizations saw themselves as offering a more directly political means of responding to the expectations raised by the priests and catechists. Church leaders recognized the same phenomena but felt that the organizations that they had helped to build were being taken over by outsiders (Leyva & Ascencio 1996: 165-6). The competition between the Church and the leaders of *Política Popular* would continue during the following decade.

In 1977, at about the same time that UP and PP appeared in Eastern Chiapas, the *Central Independiente de Obreros Agricolas y Campesinos* (CIOAC) began organizing in the northern part of the State. Affiliated with the Mexican Communist Party, it wanted to integrate the *campesinos* into the workers struggle and challenged the government through federal *labor* laws (Collier 1994: 71) in order to gain land for peasants, effectively avoiding the rather stagnant agrarian reform bureaucracy.

The *Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata* (OCEZ) was formed in 1982 through the initiative of the *Coordinadora Nacional Plan de Ayala* (CNPA), a national coalition of independent peasant organizations officially founded in 1979. Involved in direct action as well as legal battles for peasant access to land, OCEZ always maintained a very aggressive attitude toward the Mexican government, and particularly toward the government organized national peasant union (*Confederación Nacional Campesina* [CNC]) (Collier 1994: 71).

The CIOAC and OCEZ began coordinating actions together such as road closing and hunger strikes during the 1980s, working through legal channels to promote peasant demands. By the end of the decade the OCEZ, the CIOAC and the *Quiptic*

[48]In 1968 the student movement in Mexico planned to disrupt the upcoming Olympic Games to be held in Mexico City. At one of the preliminary rallies, the army opened fire on the students, killing hundreds. After the massacre, organizing on the left moved toward three positions: active armed resistance; attempting to reform the state; and mass, grassroots organizing.

were organizing in increasingly overlapping zones in northern and eastern Chiapas (Collier 1994: 76).

Military organization

Prior to the arrival of the EZLN in 1982, there was no discussion of military organization among the different groups active in Chiapas. The EZLN formed part of the *Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional* (FLN), a Guevarist Mexico City based organization with a history stretching back to the early 1970s (Marcos & Le Bot 1997: 52). The small group of guerrillas who arrived in Chiapas from urban areas further north initially expanded slowly, making contact with the local communities through the provision of some basic health services and self defense training.

After briefly disputing a position of leadership within *Quiptic* in the 1980s, the EZLN formed the *Alianza Nacional Campesina Independiente Emiliano Zapata* (ANCIEZ) c. 1990, which was more active in the Northern part of the state and in the Highlands (Marcos & Le Bot 1997: 54). This organization was joined by some members of the OCEZ along with other independent peasant organizations, openly promoting self-defense, and covertly discussing plans for an uprising (Marcos & Le Bot 1997: 54). State repression against *campesino* and indigenous organizers in the area had become fierce, resulting in many deaths. If the organizations were to continue to struggle for land, 'self-defense' had become a necessity. The move toward choosing to take up arms *offensively* was another step, but by 1991, through their (continued) presence within the *Quiptic U.U.* and the activities of the ANCIEZ, the EZLN bases were present in the 'hot spots' of peasant protest in the state.

Economic and political pressures

The effects of the economic policies implemented after 1982, required by the IMF as Mexico became the first victim of global economic restructuring, made visible through the international debt crisis, were the key factors which led to the decision to take up arms. The changes in the Mexican economy spelled the demise of the PRI corporatist state, sparking popular responses all over Mexico. State cutbacks implemented through the restructuring policies proved especially lethal in Chiapas, 'almost an internal colony for the rest of Mexico, providing oil, electricity, timber,

cattle, corn, sugar, coffee, and beans, but receiving very little in return'(Collier 1994: 116).[49]

This restructuring included the suppression of state subsidies for coffee producers in 1988 (Collier 1994: 106), followed up in 1989 by a massive drop in international coffee prices provoked by US pressure at the International Coffee Agreement meeting, negatively affecting small scale producers in northern and eastern Chiapas. After the drop in coffee prices came a reduction in cattle prices in 1992-3, making it impossible for *campesinos* to repay loans outstanding from the late 1980s (Leyva & Ascencio 1997: 177). Additionally, in 1989 the government of the state of Chiapas, under pressure from national and international environmental groups ended forest clearance in the *Lacandón* jungle, including clearance for crops, effectively halting the expansion of areas under cultivation necessary for continued agricultural production in a rainforest area (Leyva & Ascencio 1996: 177-8) and limiting another possibility for *campesino* survival.

As a step toward entering NAFTA, in 1992 the PRI government reformed Article 27 of the Mexican constitution, abolishing land reform and opening up the communally owned *ejidos* for sale on the market, a move that may have provided the primary motivating factor for rebellion (Obregón 1997: 186). These had been the principal gains made by the Mexican revolution, and their 'betrayal' was seen as an official policy of marginalization for many poor rural Mexicans, indigenous and *Ladinos* alike. The land reform system had been functioning poorly for years, but the *possibility* of having land to work (and the autonomy that implies for a *campesino*) was at least a possible exit to an otherwise dire future.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the economic factors described above, along with the end of government sponsored development projects, weighed heavily on the *campesinos* of Chiapas. The process of economic restructuring in Mexico eliminated the possibility for the Mexican state to cushion these economic shifts. *Campesino* and indigenous protest, active in the region for decades, was increasingly repressed by the state and the private 'white guards'. The electoral fraud of 1988, in which Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) lost the presidency of the Republic through blatant fraud, eliminated any hope among the Chiapanecos for the

[49]For detailed statistics on the levels of impoverishment in Chiapas, see Collier (1994: 16).

possibility of political change through the electoral process (Obregón 1997: 184). These factors made the EZLN proposal of armed struggle into a political option, if only because there seemed to be no other.

Military action was only feasible because of the extensive organizational structures already established through the various interactions between Mayan *campesinos* and external actors over the years. However, it would not have been chosen at that particular moment if it had not been for the economic and political crisis in Chiapas[50], resulting from the economic restructuring forced on the Mexican state after it nearly defaulted on international loans in 1982. The EZLN uprising responded to political/economic phenomena which were decided in stock markets in New York (coffee and cattle prices) as well as boardrooms in Washington D.C. and Mexico City (IMF terms for structural adjustment).

Epistemological struggle

The last 30 years of history in the Mayan communities of Chiapas have been marked by the entry of new actors on a stage which was previously occupied almost exclusively by the Mayans themselves, the *Ladino* élite and the Mexican state. These new actors (Maoists, Guevarists, liberation theologists, Protestant preachers, *campesino* organizers, and others) entered the communities to further their own causes which they perceived to be the same as the indigenous *campesinos*. In almost all cases, these organizations represented national or international (Church) organizations, and their politics were closely linked to those larger groups. This is an obvious limitation of alliances and of national organizations which also has its concomitant benefits. Nonetheless, because of the discriminatory[51] beliefs of Mexican society, many of their efforts were built on intellectual constructions that allowed them to speak in the name of the people they had gone to 'help'. This represents, on a micro level, an historical problem of the 'Left'(among others), attempting to speak for people whose realities, and therefore goals, it cannot fully grasp.

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[50]Leyva & Ascencio (1997: 180) point out this combination of factors.

[51]In this case 'discriminatory' describes not only unfair treatment of indigenous people in ideally egalitarian public spaces, but also the fact that the 'public spaces' themselves are defined by the dominant epistemology, effectively forcing the indigenous people to play by a set of predefined rules which do not necessarily correspond to their own. This is closely related to the argument put forward by Wendy Brown (1993) regarding identity politics in the US.

If the EZLN is to be celebrated (Rabasa 1997: 399) as an organization that attempts to 'learn' to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern' (Spivak 1988: 295 in Rabasa 1997: 399), its success must be understood in terms of the history of interchange between subaltern and dominant actors over the past thirty years. In this case 'dominant' refers to the organizations mentioned above, organizations that, because they speak and act within the already epistemologically defined political space dominated by mestizo modernity, maintain both their relative power *and* their position as the 'other' for the Mayans of Chiapas. It is nonetheless only through this history of interchange between the indigenous *campesinos* and the mestizo organizations that a new political space has been created in which the indigenous cosmovision can be expressed publicly. It is this cosmovision which proposes the concept of 'dignity'[52], as discussed by Comandante Tacho in the epigraph. Perhaps because dignity cannot be reduced to an abstract 'rational' definition, it is only with difficulty that those who negotiate for it can be coopted, and perhaps for this reason it has so confused the PRI.

Cosmovisions or epistemologies are inseparable from the economic, cultural, social, psychological etc. realities in which we live and therefore contain within them political implications. The Mayan cosmovision (like all non-modern ones) has never been publicly discussed as anything but a 'pre-modern holdover' or a subject for study by anthropologists. Hence, since the Zapatistas began to appear publicly in 1994, they have expressed themselves *not only* to voice their demands for changes in the structure of the Mexican state, but also to verbalize the profundity of the epistemological differences which separate them from the philosophy in which the Mexican state is inscribed.[53]

The struggle for epistemological autonomy, or *at least* recognition, has been a recent addition for the indigenous *campesino* movements of Chiapas. The Indigenous Congress of 1974 has often been seen as an important take-off point for indigenous organizing in Chiapas, both because it was a moment of interchange between different groups from throughout the state, without government control, and because it allowed

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[52]See Holloway (1997), De Angelis (1998), Rabasa (1997) and von Werlhof (1997) for more on the EZLN and dignity.

[53]See von Werlhof (1997) for an attempt at understanding the use by the EZLN of such terms such as 'dignity', 'politics', 'government', etc.

for new networks to be formed. In this Congress, however, the objectives presented were not identifiably 'indigenous', but could have conceivably been proposed by any peasant group (Collier 1994: 63). The lack of reference to specifically 'indigenous' issues in this case could be taken to imply that the 'real' interests of the indigenous people of Chiapas are the same as all *campesinos*. A more appropriate explanation could be that during the Indigenous Congress 'difference' was underplayed due to fears that it would be rejected by the State and Church officials present who could have used these expressions to discredit other demands, or weaken support for them.

The 1992 San Cristóbal protest of the quincentennial anniversary of the arrival of the Spaniards in the New World made the shift toward a more openly 'indigenous' movement powerfully visible. The changes wrought in the movement over the previous twenty years of intensive organizing were symbolically manifested by toppling a statue of the Spanish *conquistador* Diego de Mazariegos (Collier 1994: 18). The international advancement of indigenous movements, not least in neighboring Guatemala, undoubtedly had an important impact on organizing in Chiapas.[54]

Within the EZLN itself, through 1992, control of the organization was officially in the hands of the mestizo leadership of the FLN in Mexico City. Only in January of 1993, (a short three months after the San Cristóbal protest), the same time that the decision was made to go to war, did the leadership of the organization move officially under the control of the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee (CCRI), a body governed by representatives of the four principal Mayan groups that make up the EZLN (Marcos & Le Bot 1997:170-1).[55]

At the time of the uprising in 1994, the Zapatistas claimed the indigenous nature of the movement (EZLN 1994), but did not assume the full epistemological implications of that recognition until later. The Zapatistas claim that this postponement was made in order to avoid having the movement pigeonholed by the Mexican State and people as 'Indigenous' and not representing broader, national problems (Marcos & Le Bot 1997: 176-7). It was only when the military situation had (seemingly) stabilized, 'civil society' support for the Zapatistas established, and peace negotiations

[54]See Wilmer (1996); Santos (1995: 323-4) for more on the international indigenous movement.

[55] Rabasa (1997: 417-8) argues that the accusation that the organization is run by *Ladinos* belies a racism that does not allow for the idea that the Mayans could lead themselves.

begun, that the Zapatistas would begin to publicly adopt a posture that expressed the reality of the epistemological differences, not as unbridgeable chasms, but as realities that must be recognized.

The Zapatista claim to a different cosmovision, part of organizing their lives and social structure, has been expressed in many ways, most concretely in the negotiations with the Mexican government on indigenous rights and culture in 1995-6 which discussed autonomy for the indigenous people of Mexico. It is also expressed through the phraseology used by the EZLN, much of it drawn from Mayan history and speech, including repeated and public references to role of 'the dead' in communicating to the living.[56] This can be interpreted as the naïveté of 'traditional cultures', or a deliberate questioning of the materialist exclusivity of modernity; appearing as it does in political tracts, the latter seems more likely.

Another example is the presence of Commandante Trinidad, a sixty year old Mayan woman, at the table with government negotiators during peace talks in 1995 (Rabasa 1997: 415). Introducing herself as a woman concerned for her 'grandchildren living under a state of siege in the rainforest' (Nash 1997: 265) challenged the stuff of modern peace negotiations, and brings the realities of 'caring' and of 'relations' into what otherwise might be a discussion on 'socio-economic issues' or the 'provision of state services'. The age and gender of Comandante Trinidad brought into question common understandings of leadership and representation, while her comments rejected the abstraction of human realities, a fundamental epistemological base of the modern cosmovision.

Perhaps the most important example of the EZLN questioning of modernity comes from its insistence on diversity, on a future that is not one of homogenization and uniformization. The implications of the EZLN positions are that 'differences' reflect the unified whole of social systems, irreducible into distinct 'cultural', 'economic' etc. spheres of life. This would mean that distinct cultures cannot and will not perdure in a world where a single set of political and economic structures are enforced. For the Zapatistas, this is not a question of 'post-modernism', but rather a statement from the position of the colonized 'other' that does not wish to be made the 'same' as the rest, in this case part of 'modern' mestizo Mexico. The Zapatistas make

this demand while not repudiating the Mexican State, their goal being to reorganize it in such a way that the hyphens between nation and state continue to be undone (Spivak 1995: 91), toward the construction of a 'civil' rather than 'national' state. This is a radical reconsideration, which questions constitutional frameworks that, however 'inclusive' they may be, are products of the modern cosmovision and therefore politically exclude, at their source, other epistemological frameworks.[57]

Dreams, planning and strategies 1994-1999

The EZLN has cultivated its relationship with Mexican society as part of their political strategy, both to create space for political change in Mexico and to protect themselves from military repression. Immediately after the uprising in 1994, Mexican society became involved in the struggle of the EZLN. It was the large public mobilizations in Mexico, as well as internationally, coupled with the Mexican government's desire to avoid the international scandal of a bloodbath on the heels of the country's entry into both NAFTA and the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), which led President Salinas to proclaim a unilateral cease-fire just 12 days after the uprising began. Massive popular protest, both in Mexico and internationally (Wager & Schulz 1995: 34-5) would later stop a military offensive in February of 1995[58]. Similar actions slowed paramilitary violence in the spring of 1998 on the heals of the Acteal massacre in which 45 indigenous peasants were killed by paramilitary forces while they prayed in their village church in December of 1997.

Already in 1994, the EZLN began implementing the extremely creative political initiatives which (while functioning poorly on the plane of traditional alliance politics on the Mexican Left) have shined as examples of the possibilities for collective, non-state organization that seeks to redefine the word 'democracy', taking it beyond periodic visits to polling stations. That summer, the EZLN organized the National Democratic Convention, hoping to create a broadbased alliance of the Mexican Left,

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[56]For examples see Holloway (1997: 38), EZLN (1996:24) and for further discussion see von Werlhof (1997: 118-120).

[57]See Santos (1995 esp. pp.325-327) for an enlightening discussion of similar subjects.

[58]The offensive of the Mexican Military in early February 1995, with arrest warrants for EZLN leaders, in violation of a 1994 law protecting the Zapatistas during the peace negotiations, came on the heels of an 'assessment' released on Jan. 13 by the Emerging Markets' Group of the Chase Bank which stated that the Mexican 'government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and of security policy.' (Halimi 1995)

drawing an impressive number of important organizations and participants, but failing to create coordination on a national level.

In August of 1995 the Zapatistas organized a plebiscite which asked whether they should become an unarmed political force in Mexican politics or should continue as an armed movement, resulting in a short lived plan to leave the armed struggle in favor of dialogue. Later that year, before a round of negotiations with the government at what should have been the first of six discussion tables, the EZLN organized a set of fifteen regional forums, with the participation of indigenous groups from throughout Mexico followed by the national 'Forum on Indigenous Rightsand Culture' in January 1996. The conclusions were brought to the negotiating table on Indigenous Rights and Culture the following month (Foley 1997:138). Unfortunately, the Mexican government refused to accept the Accord on Indigenous Rights and Culture reached between the EZLN and the government negotiating team at San Andrés in 1996, and the dialogue has since been ignored; low intensity warfare now the preferred policy. The most recent plebiscite of March 21, 1999, asking, among other things, opinions on the negotiated Accord three years after the government rejection, managed to gain the support of three million Mexicans.

The international strategy of the EZLN has been similar: creating support while promoting political discussion among diverse actors. Contacts were initially made through already existing indigenous rights networks, human rights networks, Central American and other solidarity networks, as well as, in North America, on the anti-NAFTA organizing of the early 1990s. After the early mainstream press coverage of the uprising, it was these networks, built principally upon email and the internet (Cleaver 1998; Ronfelt & Martínez 1997), that kept information flowing and allowed for the massive national and international responses to particular events discussed above.

In both the national and international contexts, the EZLN has catalyzed already existing tensions and tendencies, attempting to create discussion and interchange. The work within Mexico is the most important for the struggle of the EZLN, both in Chiapas and on a national level, and it is here where the ideals of discussion, interchange and coordination proposed by the EZLN are limited by its own organizational weaknesses and the power and influence of the established political actors on the Mexican Left. On an international level, the EZLN proposition, which begins from a non-modern location, denying the universality and desirability of

modernity, while making concrete proposals that bring together notions of social justice with a recognition of epistemological differences, is an important reference point for those who are critical of both the social realities of modern societies (in the North or elsewhere) and the global inequalities of which they form a part.

5. CROSS-BORDER, CROSS-MOVEMENT INITIATIVES IN THE LATE 1990S

Introduction

Born in the poverty and social destruction caused by the global economic restructuring of the previous twenty years, beginning in the middle and late 1990s a trend toward 'cross-border, cross-movement' organizing has become ever more visible. Though the strongest active movements today, those described as religious or 'ethnic', do not participate, these initiatives represent a new type of political action with important implications. They begin to break down the limits created by national frontiers and to negotiate the boundaries between social movements that have historically limited coordination among them. Because many of the groups involved in these initiatives do not share important features of the modern Western cosmovision, the existence of different worldviews must (or at least should) be confronted. In these situations, the dominance, or hegemony, of the modern epistemology can be brought into question, allowing for alternative visions of the future to be proposed.

These initiatives involve interchanges between, primarily, 'advocacy movements' led by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), 'livelihood movements'[59] and some strands of organized labor, though many other organizations and individuals find spaces within them. The principal reasons for this convergence are the marginalization of much of the world population as a result of neoliberal global restructuring; an increasing frustration on the part of many NGOs regarding their new and contradictory roles; and the continued weak bargaining position of labor unions that

[59] I use the term 'livelihood movements' to describe two different, but often related, phenomena: local efforts to resist the expansion of capitalist initiatives or state sponsored 'development projects' which destroy local forms of economy (Taylor *et al.* 1993; Ekins 1992; Guha & Alier 1997: Chapter 1); and efforts at construction or reconstruction of local economies, particularly in the wake of economic restructuring which has reduced or eliminated state involvement in the provision of subsidies and services, thus requiring a reorganization of local economies to address this change (Bebbington 1996; Petras 1997).

organize only amongst themselves and only on a national level. By the late 90s, these three factors are already established facts and different forms of 'cross-border, cross-movement' organizing have been tested. The possibility for constructive alliances among these actors that would promote the types of changes necessary to address the problems they set out to face is, at present, limited by the structural positions of both organized labor and NGOs. As the divisions between the 'social majorities' and the 'social minorities', both North and South, become increasingly dramatic, some sectors of the NGO world move toward a more radical critique, which, in the context of the alliances described below may yield promising results.

The presence of diverse groups that do not necessarily subscribe to modern conceptions of 'liberalism', 'Marxism', 'radical democracy', or 'civil society', brings a richness to these initiatives. While such groups are active in these new forms of international organizing, they are also marginalized within them: recognized as legitimate, but kept on the fringes of the principal discussions. Thus while women, indigenous people and other 'others' are invited to participate, it is usually understood that they act as specific groups, with group-specific goals, not easily integrated into the 'political' and 'economic' issues which are almost always seen as most important and somehow separable from those of the 'others'. The realities and importance of 'diversity' are recognized, but they are understood as the superficial differences between individuals and groups that are easily transposed onto economic and political systems as if these last were not structurally embedded in social systems that create and allow for diversity.

Technological changes allowing more rapid transfer of information are one key factor in the recent growth in the strength and capacity of these various organizations and networks. During the 70s, 80s, and 90s a change could be observed in the solidarity and human rights movements that used first FAX and later email, both to pass information among themselves and as a means of putting immediate pressure on state and interstate actors regarding concrete and urgent actions. These technological changes have vastly improved the possibilities for international organizing, particularly

in situations where public outcry can have the effect of changing state policy.[60] The quick passing of information among NGOs and other organizations also simplifies the definition of common positions for lobbying purposes (Lins Ribiero 1998: 341). The new technologies speed up the availability of counterinformation which can be used to counteract false (or the absence of) reporting in mainstream news services.

Access to this new technology tends to reflect already existing relations of power, both internationally and within organizations, particularly in poorer parts of the world (Lins Ribiero 1998: 342). However, in those *few* contexts where all have relatively equal access to technology[61], it can make for a more horizontal sharing of information among organizers and movement members.

At the same time, the use of email and the internet reinforces the tendencies toward individualization within modern societies, allowing each person to take political action from his or her home or worksite, without the need for any 'personal', human interchange. This trend builds upon the already existing 'membership organizations' *cum* social movements, developed in the US and later brought to Europe, which consist of donors who may also take on the role of 'letter writers' and 'voters'. The creation of 'social movements' that express themselves through emails, faxes, and (every so often) votes, is reflective of the 'depersonalization' of the modern world. After years of mass movements, and calls for 'direct democracy' etc. it seems that capitalism and modernity have succeeded in commodifying and rationalizing the 'new social movements' as well.

The use of email and internet sites as means of information exchange are nonetheless incredibly important in the increasing use of 'network' forms of organizing which are more horizontal in nature. This can mean a network of people that form a single group or organization, or a network of groups and organizations. This type of organizing is by no means original to the internet, and can be found in anarchist, and more recently, Western feminist forms of organization. Nonetheless, the new

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[60]The struggle of the EZLN in Mexico has been perhaps the best example of how local struggles have been rapidly made into global issues through the use of email and the internet (Cleaver 1998; Lins Ribiero 1998: 344). Another recent example of the effective use of the internet was the NGO campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) between late 1997 and mid-1998 in which NGOs mobilised letter writing and call-in campaigns in several of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries, preventing the approval of the Agreement by the OECD in April of 1998 (Drohan 1998).

[61] The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1997: 185). estimated a rate of internet use in 1994 at 1.5 persons per 10,000 in 'all developing countries' compared with 223.2 per 10,000 in the 'industrialized countries'.

technologies have made it possible for groups which are highly dispersed geographically to 'network' in ways that were previously impossible.

This section will look at four particular phenomena in present 'cross-border, cross-movement' organizing, each one unique, but all with trajectories which are, in some part, common or overlapping. The Encounters *and Network* against Neoliberalism and for Humanity[62], NGO networks and the International Forum on Globalization (IFG)[63], the Santiago Counter-Summit[64] and the People's Global Alliance (PGA)[65] all represent moments of co-ordination/interchange by social movements in response to neoliberal economic restructuring. The Encounters, the IFG and the Santiago Counter Summit are all rooted in the Americas and can claim a common reference point in the campaign against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the early 1990s. The PGA, in turn, can claim some of its own roots in the Encounters.

Encounters Against Neoliberalism and for Humanity

For one week in the summer of 1996 the First Encounter Against Neoliberalism and for Humanity was held in Chiapas, Mexico, organized by the EZLN and attended by about 3,000 participants, principally from Europe, Mexico and the US, with significant representation from the rest of Latin America, and very little from the remainder of the world. The Second Encounter was held one year later in different parts of the Spanish State[66], with approximately 2,000 people, primarily from Europe again, but with participants from approximately 70 nations (Simoncini 1998:167).

In addition to providing a show of international solidarity for the EZLN, the First Encounter succeeded in creating a space for interchange between activists, and a bit of hope in the dark days of the consolidating new world order. The first Encounter was able to establish and strengthen ties among different groups that previously had had little contact. It was not designed to create a new organization, but rather to allow for discussion, disagreement and a free flow of information among participants.

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[62]See Albertani (1997), De Angelis (1998), Lane (1997), EZLN (1996), Simoncini (1998), Piazza (1996), Esteva & Prakesh (1998: 173-179) as well as the website at *http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/3849/gatherdx.html* for more on the Encounters.
[63]See Lynch (1998) and Roberts (1998) as well as the website *http://www.ifg.org*
[64]Information on the Santiago Counter Summit is available at the website *http://tripod.com/~redchile/*
[65]Information on the PGA is available at the website *http://www.agp.org/agp/index.html*
[66]This was the term preferred by the organizers of the event to describe 'Spain'.

The discussions at the First Encounter were dominated by the West, both in terms of participants and in terms of content. This was also reflected in the Latin American presence which was primarily of European extract and worldview. The members of the EZLN, who participated minimally in discussions, preferring to listen (or sleep- at times),[67] did little to change the overwhelmingly Western tone of the discussions in which I participated.[68] Nonetheless, the ambiance of the event was colored by the Mayan communities that hosted the Encounter.

The organizers of the event had tried to make sure that all potential categories of the 'marginalized' could have a chance to discuss their specific issues. In this sense the Encounter was inclusive, if not always successfully, and not without a great deal of discussion and disagreement[69]. Though it was organized in a 'democratic' manner, in the sense that enough tables and sub-tables were arranged such that all could have a chance to participate, many forms of exclusion were to be found within the Encounter itself. The Western tone of the discussions meant that those who spoke were often those who were most willing to interrupt, while those who would politely wait their turn never had an opportunity to express their opinions.[70] Additionally, the traditional hierarchies of power (male/female, North/South, modern/non-modern) were present, with the obvious but nonetheless striking twist that any Mayan with a bandanna or ski mask was treated with infinite respect, giving credence to the Zapatista slogan: 'we cover our faces in order to be heard'.[71]

The operative conclusions of the First Encounter were three: to create a 'network against neoliberalism and for humanity', to realize a global poll on agreement or disagreement with the baseline ideas of the Encounter, and to organize a Second Encounter, somewhere in Europe, the following year. The first conclusion was already

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[67]A respectable decision given the content of many discussions.

[68]On a personal level, coming from my own work in the Highlands of Guatemala, I felt familiar with the Highlands of Chiapas and the indigenous communities. The tone and content of the discussions were therefore striking in their limited applicability to the physical environment in which they occurred.

[69]The initial proposal by the organizers was to have women's issues subsumed into a subtable that would discuss the 'excluded', prompting a vociferous response from many of the women present and the creation of an 'unplanned' women's table.

[70]This is not a 'universal' form of holding a discussion and effectively eliminates many who are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with it.

[71]The slogan refers to the fact that poor Mexican peasants have been making claims on the Mexican government for decades and it was only when they rose up in arms and covered their faces with bandannas and skimasks that the government made any pretence at listening. The fact that the same situation is more or less repeated at the Encounter is revealing. Though, to be fair, Encounter participants were completely respectful and interested in talking to those Mayans without bandannas as well.

in place, the second was almost universally ignored, and the third was to prove a burdensome task.

Over the next year, different European organizations, principally Chiapas solidarity committees, came together to discuss the organization of the Second Encounter. Before these meetings began, however, the solidarity movement itself started to split, and was weakened, principally because of differing ideas regarding the type of relationships the solidarity committees should have with national political parties in France, Italy and Spain, the three countries, other than Mexico, which had sent the most participants to the First Encounter (Albertani & Ranieri 1998).

The prevailing opinion among the European organizers was that the Second Encounter should be 'self-organized', meaning that no funding would be accepted from institutional sources, with the idea that this would promote greater freedom of expression. Among those involved in planning the Encounter, there were different ideas of what it should have been centered around. There were those who supported a continued focus on Chiapas, those who wanted to emphasize the negative aspects of the idea of 'Europe' as it was being promoted by the Maastricht Treaty of the European Union, others who considered the situation of immigrants in Europe to be a priority, and some who, 'going against the accusation of abstraction', wanted to discuss new forms of 'social and political action' (*agire politico*) (Albertani & Ranieri 1998: 20). In the end, the invitation to the Encounter was broad, allowing for discussion of a variety of themes, including all of those mentioned above.

The Second Encounter itself was again heavily dominated by Europeans (at least this time we were in Europe) and, although the theme of the Encounter was 'A World in Which Many Worlds Fit', the discussion was yet more overridingly European. One weakness in the first Encounter, the limited number of participants from outside Europe and Latin America, was improved upon, but not enough to change the general dynamic. The 'traditional' forms of doing politics and types of discussion were even more visible than in the previous Encounter. Those who adopted these strategies (controlling the microphone, controlling the translations, behind closed doors negotiations to reach particular goals, etc.) had a relatively easy time of it, as many others present not only weren't playing by those rules, but weren't even aware that anyone else was. The general sense after the Encounter was one of disappointment (mixed with appreciation that it had occurred), partially because of unrealistic

expectations, but also because of some poor organizing decisions and the ‘traditional’ forms of politics mentioned above.

The greatest frustrations centered around very different ideas of what the Encounter was about. While for some it was to be an encounter, a meeting, an interchange, for others it should have been a step, a move toward the construction of an organization, however nebulous that might be. The Second Encounter had taken as a general theme, to be discussed at all tables, the construction of the ‘network against neoliberalism and for humanity’ agreed upon at the end of the First Encounter. The ongoing discussions about this, and the eventual conclusion that the already existing networks should continue to function, without any form of centralization or greater co-ordination, reflected a consistent tension throughout the Encounter between those in favor and those opposed to creating new structures.

The ‘intergalactic encounters’ (as they have been affectionately called) were, in the end, only that. They were initiatives toward interchange, without any designs at unification. On a political level, there is no organization, no one to be ‘included’ or ‘co-opted’; nor is any participant responsible (morally or otherwise) for the actions of any other. A lack of any centralized decisionmaking structure should make unified action more difficult, but between December and February of 1998, protests against the Acteal massacre took place in over fifty countries, made possible through the ‘network’ (Simoncini 1998: 10).

NGO networks

Over the past 20 years, NGOs have had an increasingly important role in development work and the provision of services in humanitarian interventions, as well as taking on the task of advocacy/lobbying both at national and international levels, often using networks to bring together geographically and politically diverse groups. Because of the traditional North-South power imbalances among NGOs (Krut 1997: esp. 13-17), reflective of the financial flows in the NGO world, many of the larger European and US based organizations have played the principal roles in the appearance and growth of NGO-led advocacy movements. Many NGOs, whether large or small, local or transnational, are faced with serious contradictions brought on by the changes in roles they have undergone over the past fifteen years. The most important of these are their greatly increased work as service providers at both international and national

levels, filling in some of the gaps left by state withdrawal; and their increased *access* to centers of decisionmaking, acting in an 'advocacy' role on an international level, having gained entrance to United Nations (UN) sponsored conferences, and to the processes of World Bank project planning and implementation (Nelson, 1996). The strength of the NGOs in both of these areas is based on their ability to network internationally, and the capacity to take advantage of the political space that has become open to them as a result of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank enforced global economic restructuring which has handed them some of the political power regarding resource distribution that had previously been under the control of national governments. Those NGOs (a large number) that work in the field of 'humanitarian intervention' increasingly take on the responsibility of cleaning up after the inequalities and the brutalities of the present international system. NGOs have become a structural necessity for many of these operations and, by acting in this role, lose the capacity to criticize the larger processes which create the conditions favorable for 'complex political emergencies' to appear.[72]

The different advocacy networks (environmental, women, human rights, development-related, among others) have grown in parallel fashion over the past twenty years, taking advantage of both increased possibilities for communication and increased funding from private foundations, states, and supra-state bodies. NGO networks have expanded through contacts made during specific campaigns, as well as, particularly during the past decade, through participation in UN conferences and the NGO fora that have accompanied them.

The focus of the campaigns of the 'development related' NGO networks has tended to be against multinational corporations or the World Bank (Nelson, 1996; Rich, 1994: esp. 107-147), the latter often organized through pressure on the US congress, a political strategy whose long-term benefit is, at best, dubious. Although the historical dominance of US-based NGOs at the apex of many of these networks (Nelson 1996: 608-9), particularly those focused on the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI) located in Washington, has recently been somewhat weakened as organizations from other parts of the world have begun to take on lobbying roles in Washington, they still retain a

[72]See Chossudovsky (1997) on the relationship between restructuring and specific crises; Duffield (1997) and Nederveen Pieterse (1997) for more on humanitarian intervention in the broader global context.

great deal of power (Jordan & van Tuijl 1998; Nelson 1996: 616). This situation is one of many that feeds into the generalized impression of a power imbalance between Northern and Southern NGOs mentioned above.

The histories of the 'development-related' networks and the environmental networks have at times overlapped, though the environmental network grew out of specific campaigns which brought together advocacy NGOs working through international channels and grassroots organizations working locally[73]. 'Development-related' NGOs have formed networks that draw on experiences of North-South co-operation and have often allied with environmental NGOs in anti-World Bank campaigns (Nelson 1996: 615). Some of the strongest internationally oriented environmental NGOs became closely engaged with the 'development-related' networks during the 'Fifty Years is Enough' campaign in the mid-1990s against the BWI (Nelson 1996: 615-6; Danaher 1994). The greatest limitation of the environmental network is that as organizations move toward the mainstream of the Northern political spectrum, where they seek greater support, they become less and less and willing to voice substantive critiques which imply a broader analysis of the economic relationships that promote many of the environmental problems that they would hope to address.[74]

During the 1970s and 80s human rights networks grew incredibly after financial support expanded initially from North American foundations[75] and was later supported by European NGOs. This paralleled the high level of interest in the subject shown by the administration of the then US president Jimmy Carter, joining its voice to that of some Western European countries already active on these issues within the UN system. The full importance of the fact that the Ford Foundation made human rights one of its 'program priorities' beginning in 1977 (Keck & Sikkink 1998: 101), at the same time

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[73]See Keck & Sikkink (1998: Chapter 4) on environmental networks, Guha & Martínez Alier (1997) on environmentalisms, Kolk (1996) and Rich (1994: 107-147) on the campaign against the World Bank in the mid- 1980s, and Gale (1996) on the campaign against use of tropical timber.

[74]One example of this is the case of the Brazilian Amazon where during the 1980s northern NGOs, allied with the rubber tappers and the indigenous people of Amazonia in their struggles for protected areas, largely as a means of putting pressure on the World Bank, completely ignored the plight of the millions of landless peasants in Brazil who are prevented from gaining access to land in the Brazilian *latifundias* and who are periodically encouraged to colonize the Amazon rainforest. The inability of (most of) the environmental movements to promote discussion on such issues prevents them from promoting substantive changes. See Kolk (1996), Rich (1994: esp. Chap. 5).

[75]For insight into the history and power of the Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations both in the US and in the rest of the world, see Berman (1983). It seems that foundation and state support for human rights is another example of liberals recognizing the need to manage social change and thus direct change in ways that keep the capitalist system functioning. See Wallerstein (1996) for more on this discussion.

that Carter began to use human rights language in foreign relations, should not be underestimated. While the Carter Administration was closely connected to the Trilateral Commission (Center for… 1979: 52-3), the Ford Foundation was one of its funders (Gill 1990: 264 note 37) and Foundation members have observer status with the Commission (Gill 1990:148)[76]. International human rights networks have since continued to be closely intertwined with national governments (Keck & Sikkink 1998: 102).

Though human rights organizations have had an important and positive impact in many countries, it is important to recognize how 'human rights' fits into the broader picture. In addition to being a Western construction, and being historically rooted in the liberal political tradition of that particular part of the world, and being absolutely compatible with continued global devastation (there is no right to eat), human rights has been consistently manipulated by states to suit their needs. As of March 1999, it has become legitimate for a group of states to bomb another in the defense of human rights.

Women's networks have been primarily built upon the many contacts made at the various UN Conferences on Women since 1975 (Chen 1995; Keck & Sikkink 1998: 169). Much funding for women's organizations has also come from the Ford and other foundations, primarily based in the North, resulting both in accusations from within the Latin American movement of external dependence (Alvarez 1998: 311-5) and from others about the existence of unequal power relations that favor Northern NGOs (Keck & Sikkink 1998: 183). Amongst women's organizations, a number of issue specific networks have been formed internationally (Keck & Sikkink 1998: 167-170) and a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the participation of women in the various conferences organized by the UN during the 1990s.

The overlap between networks/movements has increased over the last decade, both because of cross-participation in the various UN conferences and because of co-ordination between networks during certain campaigns. One example of crossover has been the unification of international women's organizing around the issue of violence against women, tying it to the idea that 'women's rights are human rights'. This type of campaign, which puts the debate within the liberal paradigm and makes it fundable by

[76]More recently, funding for human rights organizations in Eastern Europe and elsewhere has come from the Soros Foundation, giving a new twist to 'post-Fordism'.

large US foundations, restates the 'universality' of the Western experience, as expressed by 'human rights'. In other situations such as the Ogoni struggle against Shell Oil in Nigeria, and that of the rubber tappers and indigenous people of the Brazilian Amazon against continued capitalist expansion and state development programs, issues of development, environment and human rights are all present, as are issues regarding indigenous peoples. These situations offer an interesting possibility for a deeper analysis by the different NGO networks that work on these issues, an analysis which could move toward developing political strategies which go beyond lobbying for concessions in a specific geographical region, and which search out means of changing the broader system.

International Forum on Globalization

In 1994, a number of advocates and activists, working in different organizations, particularly those connected to 'development-related' and environmental networks, formed the International Forum on Globalization (IFG), which traces its own roots to the struggles against NAFTA and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (IFG n.d.). The principal work of the Forum seems to be that of a network, interchanging information and participating in campaigns, while it also producing its own materials about 'corporate rule' and social movement organizing. The Forum's understanding of 'globalization' is closely related to a vision of 'corporate rule' according to which corporations have *recently* taken political power from states. In its documents, the Forum directs itself to social movements, stating that 'we can no longer apply a piecemeal approach to what has become a systemic problem' (Clarke n.d: par. 6). The task of dismantling corporate rule requires 'enabl(ing) social movement activists to develop their own analyses and strategies for tackling systems of corporate rule in their own countries and regions.' (Clarke n.d.: par. 7). The role of the IFG in that particular process is to provide the tools that local organizations can use to understand corporate rule.

People's Global Alliance against Free Trade and the World Trade Organization[77]

The People's Global Alliance against Free Trade and the World Trade Organization (PGA) is a broad alliance of social movements which held its first general conference in February of 1998, to plan actions in protest of the biannual World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in May of the same year. The widely disparate groups present at the first meeting, coming from 54 nations[78], were similar to those present at the Encounters described above, with the difference that the organizations present were less likely to use violent forms of struggle, principally because one of the four guiding principles of the PGA is non-violence. Considering the type of meeting, participation was fairly well balanced with 22 Third World countries present, and 8 nations from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. While the PGA draws on many sources, including NGO networks, the Encounters against Neoliberalism and grassroots movements from many parts of the world, it has also, since its formation, included more conservative organizations such as the World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF) which have more experience in bargaining with intergovernmental organizations.[79]

The Conference was marked by divisions among Marxists, liberals and others, resulting in long discussions about terminology, and the 'manifesto' of the PGA shows that mix. Though the Marxist elements dominate, 'corporate rule', 'patriarchy', and 'cultural homogenization' are also discussed in the final document (PGA 1998).

The PGA is notably more centralized than the Encounters[80] or the previous campaigns organized by NGO led groups, and the degree of organizational structure was a point widely discussed during the meeting, with some groups even promoting symbols and slogans to be adopted by the Alliance. The tension within the PGA around the issue of centralization is an ongoing one, reflected in the difference between these

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[77]There are no published references to the PGA. The following section is based on my personal experiences at the first Conference of the Alliance in February of 1998, on information available at the PGA Website *http://www.agp.org/agp/index.html*, and on conversations with other meeting participants and one organizer.

[78]These numbers come from a list of participants distributed at the conference, and should not be considered as exact.

[79] The WWF is closely associated to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), one of the most conservative environmental groups, with fifty years of experience in international lobbying (McCormick 1993).

[80]The attempt at centralization can be seen in the publications produced by the different events. While the First Encounter produced a full book which published the various conclusions of the different subtables (EZLN 1996) and the Second, a somewhat shorter, similar one (Simoncini 1998), the PGA Conference produced an 11 page 'manifesto' which attempted to synthesize the analyses and goals of the 300 participants.

proposals and the initial convocation of the Conference which called for the creation of 'a global instrument of communication and co-ordination for those who fight against the destruction of humanity and the planet by "free" trade and construct local alternatives to globalization' (PGA 1997). Nonetheless, in terms of discussion, the PGA meeting was much more structured and goal oriented than the Encounters; ideological disagreements had a different degree of importance as the results would form part of the Alliance's manifesto. Whereas the Encounters had been almost solely a question of interchange, networking and discussion, the PGA meetings had those elements plus the preplanned goals of writing a collective manifesto, planning for the May events, and deciding on a new convenors committee. Whereas both the PGA and the Encounters brought together organizations and individuals who usually act in a manner more similar to the hammock that Gustavo Esteva (1987) has proposed, the PGA has tried to create a more solid framework.

The strategies for action proposed by the PGA were to realize both local and centralized actions against the WTO during its meeting in May 1998. This meant that actions were held at the site of the WTO meeting in Geneva, but also in other parts of the world. This type of 'global' centralized and decentralized actions was something new, though it obviously built upon similar actions taken at BWI meetings as well as the Amsterdam alternative summit of 1997, the first of a number of demonstrations held in Europe parallel to European Union and Group of Seven (G-7) summits, protesting the policies of these supragovernmental bodies.

The May demonstrations in Geneva were violently repressed by the Swiss police, several participants were jailed and some internationals were expelled from the country. A few months later, an office used by the Alliance, as well as the homes of several organizers, were raided and information and computers were confiscated.[81] This crackdown was an effort by the Swiss government to crush a nascent organization dedicated to non-violent protest against a supra-national institution made up of member states supposedly representative of their populations.

Following the recommendations of Scholte (1998), who calls for the WTO to make itself more accessible to 'civil society organizations', it is possible to imagine (parts of) the PGA being pulled into a consultative role in the WTO, effectively

allowing for NGO input into WTO policy, along the lines of the NGO entrance into World Bank circles since the late 1980s, a possibility that *might*, in certain moments and in certain places, cut off the sharpest edges of WTO policies without changing the overall social dislocation that the WTO promotes.

Santiago Counter-Summit

In April of 1998 a Counter-Summit of the Americas was held in Santiago Chile, concurrent to the Summit of the Americas for Heads of State from the western hemisphere. As a concept, it drew on the parallel meetings held at the annual BWI conferences, and the 1997 alternative summit in Amsterdam, while some of those at the Counter-Summit in Santiago had also been present at the PGA Conference in Geneva. The event could be seen as step in the creation of a 'hemispheric social alliance' (Bendaña 1998) between labor and other social movements begun at a 1997 meeting in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

The Counter-Summit, bringing together indigenous movements, women's groups, environmental organizations and others, was principally sponsored by the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and its Latin America affiliates in the Interamerican Regional Workers Organization (ORIT). The presence of the labor organizations at this forum seems to be related to the fact that labor was excluded from the formal talks on the creation of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA)[82], while business had been welcomed (Bendaña 1998). This shift reflects the increasing weakness of labor organizations in relation to capital, and may signal the recognition, from the perspective of organized labor in the US (at least), that it can no longer confide in the corporatist alliances of the past and that, if it is to continue to have any strength, it will need to create new alliances that move outside of both national and movement boundaries.

This new tendency in labor organizing is also built upon a history of cross-border and cross-movement efforts in the struggle against the passage of NAFTA during the early 1990s (Gabriel & McDonald 1994). Though the movement failed,

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[81]See *http://www.agp.org/agp/unicc.htm* and *http://www.agp.org/agp/en/index.html* for more information on police repression of the PGA in Geneva.

[82]This follows the Copenhagen summit of 1995 in which the International Conference of Free Trade Unions (ICTFU) failed to get a special seat for labour with business and state negotiators and was forced to join the parallel NGO Forum (Waterman 1998: 114).

important connections were made which later played a key role in continued cross-border labor organizing (Brecher & Costello 1994: 156-7) and in international support for the EZLN after the Chiapas uprising in 1994 (Cleaver 1998: 627).

Nonetheless, the fact that First World labor organizations have suddenly become aware of their own need to organize with Third World workers, and other movements, should not be accepted without further analysis.[83] The desires of labor as expressed in Santiago are unclear. At the Counter-Summit, labor resisted the more radical positions, and at the other 'labor' counter-summit, held contemporaneously in Santiago, leaders were nearly united in unquestioning fealty to the rule of the market (Bendaña 1998). Labor's involvement in the Counter Summit can be seen as a gesture toward other social movements and as a threat for heads of state that had excluded it from the FTAA talks.

The Counter-Summit also involved many other groups with much more radical agendas, and a split was visible. Though the 'Final Declaration' of the Summit called for 'fair trade, regulated investment, and a conscious consumer strategy which privileges national development projects' (People's Summit 1998: par.3), more creative proposals were often voiced by the floor.[84]

Comparisons

The different initiatives described show, above all, a recognition of the consequences produced by neoliberal global restructuring and try to offer alternatives for the future. These are attempts to create broad networks/coalitions/alliances which address (with the exception of the Encounters) both regional and global entities that continue to gain power at the expense of national governments. All of these efforts are built upon previously existing networks and maintain network forms of organization, though some elements involved with the PGA, and some of the groups involved in the Santiago summit, are attempting to create more structured organizations.

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[83]After the support given by the AFL-CIO to US foreign policy during the Cold War, it is hard to imagine that their politics have shifted from corporatism to 'class solidarity'. The AFL-CIO foreign strategy began to change in the late 1980s after internal criticisms about their support for, and collaboration with, US government policies in Central America (Brecher & Costello 1994: 153; Boswell & Stevis 1997).
[84]The various proposals are available at *http://tripod.com/~redchile*

Strategies

On the level of strategy, the IFG offers local construction of economic alternatives and a 'new protectionism', while the PGA proposes more or less the same with the addition of direct action, on the local level as well as co-ordinated internationally, to protest corporate power, symbolized by the WTO. The Encounters welcome local construction as well as all forms of local resistance, violent or not, and informal solidarity amongst all groups. The NGO alliances have, up until now, proposed 'alternative development' forms of local construction and heavy lobbying on international decisionmakers. The Santiago summit, internally divided, promotes local construction, while also calling for inclusion into the FTAA. These strategies offer strengths and weaknesses and reflect the ever present social movement choices of negotiation, protest or autonomous construction[85].

The trend described above toward unification of the NGO led advocacy movements and livelihood movements, as well as the increasingly confrontational postures taken by them, has recently been alluded to by several authors. Zadek & Gatward (1995: 199), equating the anti-WTO protests in India and the Chiapas rebellion, see them as 'model[s] for one form of resistance to what [is] seen as the high handed approach taken by TNGOs' (Transnational Non-Governmental Organizations).[86] Though they seem to misplace the causes for grassroots frustration, placing them on the shoulders of unresponsive TNGOs (whose role, according to the definition implied, would be little more than that of service providers in a global welfare state), their comments show both a criticism toward the large Northern NGOs and a recognition of the limitations of the strategies undertaken by many of them.[87] The increasing frustration with the present state of affairs is also mentioned by Krut (1997: 35), referring to an 'NGO observer' who predicts an increase in '"uncivil" behavior from workers and communities directed at TNCs' (Transnational Corporations). The author points to an increasing awareness among NGOs that their access to UN

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[85] See Waterman (1998: 212, esp. fig. 7.1b) for more on these choices.Negotiation and protest are, in the end, the same strategy. Both seek a change in the policy or action of an adversary.

[86]These authors reject this form of protest because of the risk of violence against the protesters.

[87]This same frustration on the part of grassroots 'counterpart' organizations was mentioned by a staff member of a Dutch Cofinancing organization who said that groups they work with are appreciative of the material aid that the organization provided, but are also asking for support in providing political solutions to the problems that they face.

conferences and multilateral discussions has not provoked any substantive changes in the conclusions brought forward at these meetings (Krut 1997: 38).

Esteva & Prakesh (1998: 29-31) make a clear distinction between the actions of the Zapatistas and anti-WTO protests in India. In what appears to be a reference to the People's Global Alliance, or similar efforts, they criticize these initiatives, commenting that organizing 'against the GATT or the World Bank, at their headquarters or their jamborees, seems to be useless or counterproductive'(1998: 31) because it serves to 'clothe the emperor', giving legitimacy to power by addressing it. They correctly point out that the more resistance is focused against international actors, the more bureaucracy is put in place by these actors to try and co-opt/include those in opposition[88], legitimating themselves in the process[89]. The Zapatistas, according to these authors, while recognizing that the issues which affect them on a local level are global in nature, direct themselves toward the local problem, while also appreciating the importance of international solidarity between organizations in struggle (Esteva & Prakesh 1998: 35-36).

Epistemological openness and movement goals

In her discussion of the International Forum on Globalization (IFG), Lynch (1998) points out that it pulls together liberal ideas with more 'radical' or 'critical thinking', reflecting a long term alliance in many parts of the world that has at times been subsumed into the term 'progressive', but which should not be taken for granted. This is true for the various initiatives here under discussion as well, though, as she points out (Lynch 1998: 166), there are many *other* interpretations of the world, beginning to be voiced through these different initiatives.

Understanding global restructuring, etc. as a retreat from the ideals of social justice that modernity has promised, while ostensibly promoting liberal democratic

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[88]In the case of the World Bank, this has been borne out (Nelson 1996), and the case of the WTO, that is at least one of the suggestions being proposed (Scholte 1998). It should be noted that in the case of the PGA, protest has been responded to, thus far, with repression, rather than offers of 'inclusion' in WTO processes (Thanks to Micheline Beth Levy for pointing this out).

[89] Krut (1997: 50) points out the following: 'It is ironic that the late twentieth century has seen the unprecedented growth and influence of civil society and unprecedented decline of those national and intergovernmental organizations most open to participation. Having spent five decades lobbying at the gates of the United Nations, non-governmental groups have finally been granted access only to see that real power now lies behind other doors.'

forms of government, makes it possible to understand shifts in old alliances as well as the appearance of new actors. In this context, the openness of labor toward other social movements, as it was in the NAFTA battles and seems to be in the Santiago counter-Summit, becomes clear. The shift by 'liberal progressives' toward the unusual position that that 'corporations [read capital] rule[s] the world'[90] is a recognition that liberal democracy has failed to control capitalism, and explains their new openness to discussions which open onto the economic terrain. These shifts are coupled with increasing grassroots initiatives which do not share modern interpretations, though their struggles may be similar, or parallel, to more 'modern' movements.

One principal dividing point regarding the goals of the various initiatives discussed above, is whether new global or regional economic structures (WTO, MAI, FTAA, Maastricht), presently in effect or proposed, are reformable, or whether they should be rejected. While all the groups promote increased local political and economic control, there is a plethora of opinions about what type of alternatives can be imagined that move beyond the local. Imagining such structures is especially difficult for those groups which are dependent on the global or regional structures as they stand, and somewhat easier for those who stand on the edges or outside of them.

For this reason, those NGOs (Northern or Southern) which are largely dependent on funding by a State (their own or another) are less likely to promote alternatives which could imply an end to such funding. In the same respect, trade unions will have more difficulty in considering systemic changes that would imply moving away from a consumer society. In differing degrees, both of these groups have positions which are deeply embedded in the existing system. The projects of both of these groups[91] are largely (though not solely) to complete modernity. They propose (or at least accept) the changes to modernity that would be necessary to make it more *inclusive* and more responsible about environmental issues, but they are probably not likely to support a platform that could threaten them politically or that would call into question some of epistemological foundations upon which their positions are constructed.

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[90]Witness David Korten's testimony (1995: 1-14)

[91]The case of the NGOs is extremely varied, but those which wield most power and funding maintain this goal. This is not to say that there are not many other NGOs, large and small, that recognize and work to support alternative epistemological frameworks. See Verholst (1990) and Lynch (1998: 166-7) regarding openness to other systems of belief

The problem of what I term 'epistemological openness' in terms of cross-cultural dialogue[92], or even international organizing has been written about by many[93] and what seems to be occurring now is that discussion of these issues is taking place at the level of international organizing among many different types of groups, from grassroots movements to international NGOs (Lynch, 1998: 166). During almost all of these interchanges, the 'epistemological hegemony' of modernity still delimits most of the debate, and largely excludes alternative perspectives which do not fit into the modern cosmovision. This was brought to the fore at the indigenous table of the PGA conference in which several indigenous activists complained about the fact that they were not integrated into the other tables, but were isolated. This implied that their perspective was added to the broader discussions as that of a specific group (as were the women, the students, etc.) and that their input into the 'manifesto', and into the conference as a whole, could not question the modern assumptions which underlined the whole conference. This same procedure seems to have occurred in the Santiago counter-summit and was largely the case at both Encounters. As long as women are talking about 'women's issues' and indigenous people are talking about 'indigenous issues', their opinions, and epistemological viewpoints, will remain outside of, or tangential to, the central discussions.

This lack of interchange between modern and non-modern perspectives is negative, both because it effectively eliminates some voices from the discussion and because it reduces the possibilities of creating new visions for the future that don't all emanate from the West, or re-interpretations of the same. Unlike the modern West, most peoples of the world have been *forced* to integrate Western, modern ideas into their own understandings of the world. The West, on the other hand, wielding the epistemological power that it does, has not been forced to take into account any others, and only now is *beginning* to listen to other voices. If these voices can be heard in the context of protest/construction proposed by the various initiatives discussed in this

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[92]The relevance of other epistemologies regarding environmental practices is discussed in Redclift (1987: 151-2); regarding present 'social tension' in the world, in Truong (1998); regarding development and social struggles, in Verholst (1987: 43-51, 79-88 *et passim*). See Tully (1995) on constitutional law.

[93]See Esteva (1998), Cox (1992: 41), Waterman (1998: Chapter 7). For feminist discussions of solidarity along these lines see Fraser (1989; 1997) and Dean (1997).Cecilia Lynch (1998: 166) has pointed out that 'practice is preceding theory in this domain' in reference to the NGO linkages and unofficial fora at UN conferences in which 'Activists themselves struggle to cope with the resulting confrontation of practices and beliefs.'

section, the possibilities for more creative forms of resistance, and visions of the future, will be broadened.

6. CONCLUSIONS: EPISTEMOLOGIES, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

The efforts of the various initiatives described in the last section represent a rejection of neoliberal policies and another step in a trajectory of new forms of international organizing. They are also beginning to confront, within themselves, a challenge which most social movement theories and Western social science is still far from willing to accept: the question of different knowledge bases, 'epistemologies', as legitimate means of understanding and interpreting the world.

The implications of what is occurring on the ground, in these spaces of encounter and organization, also question the epistemological frameworks within which social sciences operate. If the *other* frameworks are not only *objects* of analysis for anthropologists and students of comparative religion, what interpretations of reality do they provide as subjects? If 'acquisition as the purpose of [...] life...is foreign to all peoples not under capitalist influence'[94], how do these 'peoples' analyze modernity? Do they offer alternatives?

There are three reasons why 'cross-border cross-movement' initiatives and the EZLN are important for further study and need to be addressed by social scientists. Firstly, they are important because they represent popular responses to capitalist power as it is expressed through global restructuring. Secondly, they show attempts at alliances which seek to negotiate, and perhaps bridge, epistemological boundaries. Lastly, because one of the epistemologies whose boundaries are being negotiated is that of the 'modern' social scientist, they challenge the foundations upon which the study itself is constructed.

At the first level of analysis, an initial study of the 'cross-border, cross-movement' efforts presents a number of important conclusions. Their very existence represents recognition on the part of local movements of the global nature of the problems they confront. These different initiatives have expanded (primarily) network

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[94]Weber (1920-1 v. 1:44) cited in Giddens (1971: 126)

forms of organizing into international arenas and have made efforts to be extremely open toward coordination and interchange among many different types of movements.

Because they come from different ideological perspectives, their differences may well result in splits over the next years though it is also possible that a middle ground could be found or that the organizations regroup in diverse ways. The strategies that they use are also mixed, but it is clear that the lobbying efforts of the large NGOs are not bearing sufficient fruits and more radical forms of action are being undertaken. This too is a trend that not all actors will support and may result in fragmentation.

Perhaps the biggest problem for groups such as the PGA and the IFG is that they can easily be brought in to 'participate' in IFI fora, along the lines of the NGO participation with the World Bank and in the process give legitimization to those institutions. The risk, on the other hand, in regard to large labor organizations is that they may be fighting only for a return to a tripartite corporatist form of government which, particularly in countries where many people are outside of the formal economy, may ignore large sectors of the population. The Encounters against Neoliberalism risk dying a silent death if their focus cannot be moved beyond providing support for the EZLN and supplying political capital for other parties and movements.

At the second level, that of organizing across epistemological boundaries, these 'cross-border cross-movement' alliances are beginning to recognize the issue, but as of yet they fail to address it with any depth. Though organizers are careful to invite *everyone*, events are organized so that conversations about 'economics' or 'politics' are separated from the 'women's table ' or 'indigenous peoples table'. The underlying assumption is that while women, indigenous people, people of color etc. are all negatively affected by global restructuring, they do not have valid input about what future forms of 'politics' or 'economics' could look like.

It is at this level that the experience of the EZLN is relevant to these initiatives. The experience within that organization of the 'modern left' confronted with and accepting the Mayan *cosmovisión* shows an uncommon degree of humility from that quarter.[95] This begs the question of whether the experience may be repeated in other

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[95]See Holloway (1997), von Werlhof (1997), Rabasa (1997), and Marcos & Le Bot (1996: esp. 126-131). Marcos describes the encounter between the EZLN and the Mayan communities in the following way: the EZLN 'still in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, suddenly discovers that there is a reality that it cannot explain, about which it cannot communicate, and with which it has to work' (Marcos & Le Bot 1996: 131).

specific local situations and how 'cross-border, cross-movement' organizing will respond to this reality that is now internal to its initiatives.

The most important contribution made by the EZLN has been its open challenging of the modern epistemology through its political actions and public statements. Though much of what they say could also be stated within a modern framework, the EZLN makes a specific point of declaring not only their indigenous identity, but also the specificity of their *cosmovisión*. As of yet, the cross-border initiatives mentioned above are not yet able to recognize and come to terms with epistemological difference. This is limiting both for those who are prevented from speaking and for those who are not permitted to hear.

This is a problem not only for movement organizers, but also for students of social movements and other social scientists. In this study, it is possible to accept the rallying cries against neoliberal globalization common to the different initiatives discussed above. What is more difficult to grasp is the possible alternative futures that the various groups involved in these initiatives may present, and to understand how they are interpreted by the groups themselves. The fact that the struggle is against capitalism does not mean that the response to it must be socialism; as in the case of the Zapatistas, the capitalist-socialist debate, forming part of the modern epistemology, is often foreign.

This leaves the social scientist in the position of recognizing an alternative epistemology[96], but few reference points as to how this can be adequately interpreted. One solution is to make the movement an 'object' of study without engaging the epistemology within which it operates. To reject that choice means to invalidate claims of epistemological difference, but to accept it challenges modern universals. By questioning those universals, social science would be able to use its own position of intellectual legitimator within modernity to undermine it. Given the role of modernity and modernization in providing an alibi for capitalist expansion and Western hegemony, such a path provides a way forward.

Regarding social movements, this would involve studying them through their own perceptions of themselves and their own interpretations. This means neither taking those impressions at face value nor taking them home to study without further contact

[96]See Emilio Rabasa (1997) for more on this argument.

between the student and the movement. It implies that the student enter into an interchange with the movements themselves, to the degree that they would permit it. The purpose of the study would therefore not be to enlighten academic understanding, but to strengthen the movements themselves.

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