

NGOs, social movements and anti-APEC activism: A study in power, knowledge and  
struggle

Abdul Aziz Choudry

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## ABSTRACT

NGOs, social movements and anti-APEC activism: A study in power, knowledge and struggle

Abdul Aziz Choudry, Ph.D.  
Concordia University, 2008

This thesis analyzes political struggles over power and knowledge within networks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements contesting neoliberal globalization. Existing studies tend to obscure tensions, contradictions and differences among organizations and movements engaged in resistance and contest of neoliberalism. Situating 'globalization' as a contemporary manifestation of older processes of colonialism and imperialism, this work draws upon and extends institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography methodologies to explicate how 'anti-globalization' practice is socially organized. Starting from a standpoint in an everyday world of activist practice, this work examines NGO, activist and official documents, and insights from the author's 'insider' status as an activist/researcher in NGO conferences and campaigns. It explicates tensions and asymmetries of power within networks throughout the Asia-Pacific that mobilized to contest the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in the 1990s. Combining a dual interdisciplinary academic and activist theoretical framework, it innovatively weaves knowledge and theory produced within social movements and activist milieus with academic scholarship. This work draws upon Marxist political economy and critical adult education traditions, critiques of dominant social movement theory, non-Western approaches to epistemologies of knowledge, organizational analysis, social history and other critical historiographies. It identifies and questions hegemonic NGO practices, arguing that hierarchies of power and

knowledge within 'alternative' milieus often reproduce, rather than challenge dominant practices and power relations, and serve elite interests rather than those of constituencies which these organizations claim to represent. This thesis troubles the NGOization of political struggles, NGO claims of representation, and the privileging of professionalized NGO and academic knowledge at the expense of voices and histories from below. In so doing, it offers new conceptual resources for future scholarship on social movements and 'civil society', as well as tools to inform activism.

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The concerns which underpin my thesis research were conceived in concrete struggles for a better world. Ultimately, I dedicate this thesis to the past, present and future generations of resistance to imperialism and colonialism in all of their forms. *Inqilab Zindabad.*

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## List of Acronyms

ABAC	APEC Business Advisory Council
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFIA	Action For an Independent Aotearoa (Aotearoa/New Zealand)
ALARM	APEC Labour Rights Monitor (Hong Kong)
ANGOC	Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APLN	Asia Pacific Labour Network
APPA	Asia Pacific Peoples' Assembly (Malaysia)
APSUD	Asia Pacific Sustainable Development Initiative (Philippines)
APWSL	Asia-Pacific Workers Solidarity Links
ARENA	Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (Hong Kong)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BC	British Columbia (Canada)
CCIC	Canadian Council for International Co-operation
CDN \$	Canadian dollar
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations (USA)
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CSIS	Canadian Security Intelligence Service
CWS	Christian World Service (Aotearoa/New Zealand)
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada)
EU	European Union
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
G8	The Group of Eight
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (now known as ITUC)
ICHRDD	International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (now known as Rights and Democracy, Canada)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMPACS	Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (Canada)
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation (formerly known as ICFTU)
JBIC	Japan Bank for International Cooperation
KMP	Kilusang Magbubukid Ng Pilipinas (Peasant movement of the Philippines)
KMU	Kilusang Mayo Uno (May First (labour) movement, Philippines)
MAI	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Aotearoa/New Zealand)
MPFA	Manila People's Forum on APEC (Philippines)
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Rural Workers Movement (Brazil))
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement

NDP	New Democratic Party (Canada)
NFIP	Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIC	Newly Industrialized Country
NSM	New Social Movement
NWF	National Wildlife Federation (USA)
NZCID	New Zealand Council for International Development
NZSIS	New Zealand Security Intelligence Service
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PCAIG	Peoples' Conference Against Imperialist Globalization
PECC	Pacific Economic Cooperation Council
PPT	Political Process Theory
PP21	People's Plan for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
PROUT	Progressive Utilization Theory
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RMT	Resource Mobilization Theory
RUPE	Research Unit for Political Economy (India)
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SBSI	Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (Indonesia Prosperity Trade Union)
SNV	originally Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers – now SNV Nederlandse ontwikkelingsorganisatie (SNV Netherlands Development Organisation)
TNC	Transnational Corporation
TRIPs	Agreement on Trade-Related aspects of Intellectual Property rights
UBC	University of British Columbia (Canada)
UBCIC	Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (Canada)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

## CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

My Ph.D. research is grounded in my own everyday/everynight world (Smith, 1987) of activism against neoliberal globalization<sup>1</sup>. The focus of my inquiry, or the *problematic*, as Dorothy Smith (1987) puts it, arises from my own concerns and struggles from within the world of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements contesting neoliberal globalization, and the ways in which these articulate to nation-states and international financial and economic institutions. These concerns relate to the power dynamics, hierarchies of knowledge and competing versions of understandings apparent in ‘anti-globalization’ activist and NGO milieus, the politics of representation, involvement in international networks and coalitions, and the connections between transnational and local contexts and struggles. My research focuses on NGO and movement networks opposed to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in the mid-late 1990s. It argues that sound analysis of social movements and NGO networks cannot and should not be disconnected from the world(s) and knowledge(s) of learning in social action (Foley, 1999).

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I use the descriptors ‘against neoliberal globalization’ and ‘anti-globalization’ interchangeably, as terms of convenience and with a great deal of caution. As Boron (2005) notes, the “semantic choice” of “the capitalist press” to use the term “anti-globalization” transforms “critics of neoliberal globalization into antediluvian monsters who seek to halt the march of history and of technological progress” (p.16). I concur with Meiksins Wood (1998), Petras and Veltmeyer (2001), McNally (2002) who argue that the term ‘globalization’ obscures and mystifies the fact that this phenomenon is a specific phase in a longer history of capitalism and imperialism. Yet as my research and other literature contends (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001, 2003; McNally, 2002; Hewson, 2005; Kinsman, 2006), it would be inaccurate to characterize all of the movement actors contesting neoliberalism as inherently anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist. Some prefer the terms “global justice”, “fair trade” or “alterglobalization” movement(s). In some respects I find all of these terms rather unhelpful and simplistic as they tend to lump together diverse movements, organizations, individuals, and others, with little acknowledgement of the wide differences in ideology, geography, history and understandings among these actors. However, I am not convinced that any of the descriptions in common usage address this concern more adequately.

In this chapter I locate myself in relation to my research topic, drawing from the tradition of critical autobiography as social research (Church, 1995). I do so to more fully account for what constitutes my everyday/everynight world of activism, in keeping with the methodological approach that I develop from institutional ethnography and political activist ethnography (see Chapter 3). I also historicize and contextualize the origins of this study, which lie outside of the academy in the course of my engagement in activist struggles against neoliberalism and colonialism in the Asia-Pacific region.

This chapter introduces and interweaves three broad themes which run through my research: 1) I draw on my own experience, Foley's (1999) work on learning in social action and Holst's (2002) concept of the "pedagogy of mobilization" (p. 87) to discuss the importance of the incidental informal learning and knowledge production in political activism; 2) I introduce and problematize the politics of valuing and validating different epistemologies of knowledge within activist and NGO milieus, including the role of academics and academic scholarship/elite knowledge forms in these settings, and challenges to epistemological superiority of Western knowledge, and; 3) I ground this research in a central pole of my analysis and activist practice, which contextualizes the contemporary phase of global capitalism – 'globalization' – as the latest manifestation of colonialism. I conclude the chapter with an overview of the thesis.

### *Locating myself – A critical autobiography*

From the late 1980s until 2002, when I relocated to Canada to commence my graduate studies, I was an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial activist, organizer and researcher

based mainly in smaller, militant activist groups and NGOs in Aotearoa/New Zealand<sup>2</sup>. Most of the organizations in which I have been involved have existed independently of state or institutional funding, adopting positions highly critical of both state and capital. These organizations combine street actions with research and education work, confronting colonial states, international institutions and processes such as the GATT-WTO (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade-World Trade Organization) and APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) and global capital in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Asia and the Pacific. Since 2002, I have remained involved in many of these networks. I have also built and maintained some involvement in various Montreal, Canadian, and North American networks, organizations and mobilizations for social and environmental justice, although my organizing role has taken a back seat to research, support and academic work.

I was not born into radical politics, but my experiences growing up in England in the 1970s and early 1980s impacted my political activist work. In my early teenage years, my religious faith fell away and I struggled to find another way to understand the world. My early political concerns were anti-nuclear issues, immigration justice, anti-racist struggles, disability rights, and a growing awareness of movements for justice in the Third World<sup>3</sup>, within Black and Asian communities in the United Kingdom (UK), and Indigenous Peoples in settler colonial societies like Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States of America (USA).

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<sup>2</sup> Aotearoa is the Maori word for New Zealand. I use the term "Aotearoa/New Zealand" when referring to the country, and "New Zealand" when referring to the government or other institutions.

<sup>3</sup> I use the terms "Third World" and "South" interchangeably in this thesis, as well as "First World" and "North".

As I discuss further in Chapter 3, the notion of disjuncture has been important in my own learning, and arises from and informs the process of my politicization and everyday world as an activist. D. Smith (1999) recalls her “experiences in the women’s movement of a dual consciousness, with the particularities of being mother and housewife, on the one hand, and, on the other, the abstracted discourses and forms of organization creating the matrix of consciousness outside the local and particular” (p. 73). My politicization can best be characterized as a jigsaw of events, moments of revelatory disjuncture, conversations, and learning by doing. Formal education did not play a particularly significant role in this process. Travelling in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Pakistan and Ireland between 1985 and 1988 exposed me to encounters with injustice in different forms and locations, and through associated informal learning experiences. In 1985, I joined (but was virtually inactive in) HART (Halt All Racist Tours) – which was part of the strong anti-apartheid movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I connected strongly to people in Ireland in relation to the British colonialism that had shaped so much of Irish history and current realities.

One of the most memorable moments of revelatory disjuncture for me in Aotearoa/New Zealand was standing with tears in my eyes in front of a war memorial in a small, predominantly Maori town in 1985 while travelling on the East Coast of the North Island. Reading a list of names of Maori war dead, I was struck by the injustice impacting men fighting for the British Crown in Europe and Africa, who returned to a land where a British colonial regime still oppressed and dispossessed them. I sought to understand the way that colonialism impacts on lives in Aotearoa/New Zealand in comparison with what I knew about struggles around racism, immigration and ‘being

British' and non-white in the UK. This came both from talking and working with Maori, reading anti-colonial writings, and from practice: my increasing involvement in support work for Maori self-determination struggles, a focus which was also linked to my own quest to work out where I fitted in New Zealand society. I compared racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand with what I had experienced and observed in the UK. As I saw the marginalization of Maori in their own land, I noted the irony of the common New Zealand claim that the country has the best race relations in the world, and experienced the hypocrisy of local varieties of racism, in both open and more subtle forms. An anti-colonial lens remains central to my activist practice and academic scholarly research. I return to theorize the connections between 'globalization' and colonization later in this chapter.

### ***Developing an anti-colonial analysis: Learning in social action***

As an anti-colonial activist, the academic literature that has most deeply influenced me has been anti-colonial texts, the writings of Indigenous scholars and activists on colonization and self-determination, Third World Marxisms, feminist scholars, particularly from the Third World, or from immigrant communities fighting patriarchy, racism, and economic injustices. I read Fanon (1963 and 1970), Césaire (1972), Cabral (1973), Sivanandan (1982), Nandy (1983), T. Jackson (1970), *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982) and other literature dealing with colonialism and decolonization. Equally, for me, socially-engaged music, fiction and poetry has often spoken to these issues and concerns in ways far more profound than prose. Moreover, countless conversations, public talks, arguments, discussions and the many forms of informal learning in the course of political

activism have been – and continue to be – extremely important. My involvement in anti-nuclear and anti-racist action which had began in small ways in England, developed in Aotearoa/New Zealand, as I worked in activist groups and small NGOs supporting Third World justice struggles, Indigenous sovereignty struggles, environmental justice, fighting poverty locally, and making connections between the global and the local.

Ever since I have been actively involved in political activism and advocacy work, I have been aware of power struggles over the direction of campaigns and movements, over priority issues, about who speaks, over words, phrases, images, symbols, targets, and about who ‘we’ are and what ‘we’ stand for. I have often been buoyed by others’ solidarity, struggle and the strength in campaigns and mobilizations, and have experienced enough moments that seemed personally or politically transformative. Yet equally, at other times, I have stood back and wondered what was really going on in this milieu and whether I really wanted to be a part of it.

After settling in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1988, I grew increasingly uncomfortable volunteering in a rather narrowly-focussed environment and peace centre in Christchurch because of my commitment to social justice and in particular, my evolving anti-racist, anti-colonial politics. Many others involved in the centre had a narrow focus on wildlife conservation and nuclear disarmament, but failed to question forms of colonial violence and injustices closer to home, and the historical, economic and political systems which I viewed as being the root cause of environmental and social problems. A bitter internal conflict erupted between the organization’s board and its paid coordinator, who was sympathetic to the questions and actions that I put forward, based on a wider definition of peace than the dominant interpretation within the organization.



Questions of ongoing colonial exploitation of the Third World, and domestic colonialism were of little interest to the dominant players in the organization, some of whom were openly racist. While Aotearoa/New Zealand underwent neoliberal economic reforms which outstripped Thatcher's policies in the UK –many in the peace and environment groups were silent. This was a manifestation of their largely uncritical support for the Labour Party government which had declared the country nuclear-free in 1984, even as it went about radical economic restructuring with negative social and environmental impacts (see Kelsey, 1995, 1999; and Bargh, 2007 on this question).

Through these and other cumulative experiences of involvement with community and activist groups, I grew to critically examine the claims of organizations that purport to work for a better world in relation to their actual practices. I also learnt that it can be difficult to challenge assumptions and power dynamics within such organizations. One is often expected to accept their claims to be socially progressive at face value, as if this places them above criticism. I soon immersed myself in other organizations and campaigns in support work for national liberation struggles. I organized against the 'first' Gulf War, the British occupation of Northern Ireland, and in support of self-determination struggles in Pacific Islands such as East Timor, Kanaky/New Caledonia and West Papua – including Indigenous Peoples' resistance to colonization in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia. I began to be involved in alternative media in the late 1980s, through both community radio and print publications. I met more and more activists who had a broader and more critical analysis and vision than the environment centre volunteers. Many, although not all, of the white left in Aotearoa/New Zealand seemed unwilling to seriously commit to supporting Maori self-determination struggles.

Many considered Maori merely to comprise a poor brown segment of the proletariat in their reductionist analysis.

I experienced more conflicts within organizations and coalitions committed to working for peace and justice, narrow agendas which dismissed racism and sexism as being unrelated to the 'real issue' as defined by dominant cliques within groups. Ego and personality politics seemed as embedded in many of these networks as in the world that we were supposed to be trying to transform. An understanding that there is no unified 'we' or 'us' in 'the movement' came quite early in my political activist experience. There frequently seemed to be a disjuncture between what was declared, and the actual practice that I observed or in which I participated. I was appalled by the scramble of aid and development agencies for donations and profile, and their often racist, decontextualized representations of the Third World.

In November 1991, Syd Jackson, the late Maori trade unionist and indigenous sovereignty activist, addressed a public meeting in Christchurch on GATT and free trade. He spoke about how free market economics and free trade was nothing new for Maori, and reminded the audience that the sense of loss of sovereignty that many white New Zealanders were expressing at that time, as privatization and deregulation delivered the economy into the hands of transnational corporations, was something that Maori had experienced far more deeply, for generations. Jackson clearly and articulately pulled together the threads of colonialism, neoliberalism, Aotearoa/New Zealand's history, and Indigenous Peoples' resistance in a way that was at once firmly located in a local context, but cognizant of global capitalist relations. The fact that I had found myself living on a low income, in a country which had outstripped other Organization for Economic

Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations in its adoption and application of almost pure freemarket economic doctrine (Kelsey, 1995), the privatizations, the layoffs, increased poverty, and the other negative social impacts meant that it was hard to avoid thinking about these issues. Through international solidarity work, I knew about the impacts of World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment in the Third World<sup>4</sup> and began to see parallels with Aotearoa/New Zealand's transformation into a neoliberal state. I was aware that this was not the first time there had been such sweeping changes in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A colonial continuum connected the present 'reforms' with the radical changes wrought by British colonization since the nineteenth century. I knew enough about the history of British India to also question the dominant Western representations of the Raj. Anti-colonial analysis has remained at the core of my political activism, and indeed, my academic research. For me, anti-colonial politics necessarily embraces strong and active opposition to capitalism, and to all forms of imperialism. In reflecting on my political education, I concur with Hall (1978) who writes "knowledge is produced and renewed by continuous testing, by acting upon one's theories, by reflecting upon one's actions, and by beginning the cycle again. It is the combination of social transformation and education that has created the kind of knowledge which forges the personal and communal commitment for sustained engagement" (pp. 13-14).

For nine years I worked for Corso, a small New Zealand justice and development NGO which had a legacy of both radicalized politics, but also serious internal conflicts. I entered Corso when the organization was just emerging from a bitter internal split. From

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 4 for more on structural adjustment.

this, a number of ex-members had formed Oxfam New Zealand and turned their backs on linking Maori liberation struggles and questions of domestic social justice which Corso addressed (alongside international concerns) in favour of a secular aid and development agency focussed solely on the Third World. Corso's relationship to other aid and development NGOs in Aotearoa/New Zealand was often strained or non-existent. It remained outside of the national umbrella group for these agencies, the New Zealand Council for International Development (NZCID), and experienced severe tensions with government funding subsidies that were offered to aid and development NGOs for its overseas partners. Corso's education and advocacy programs operated on a tiny budget but produced a body of educational resources which were well-respected among more critical activist networks in and outside of the country. Within months I found myself in conflict for challenging racist behaviour from a couple who were veterans of the anti-apartheid movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand and who in some (white) colleagues' eyes were unquestionably progressive people and above such criticisms. I stood my ground and they eventually left the organization. But it was one of many such internal conflicts, which eventually tore Corso apart a year after I formally resigned from the organization in 1999.

Christchurch's own history of a critical and independent left was also important in influencing my political education and practice. Aotearoa/New Zealand's most established corporate watchdog organization (Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa) was based there, along with pockets of militant trade unionists and anti-apartheid activists. While there were some internecine tensions and differences among the local left, they did not pose the same obstacles to joint actions in the same way as in

the bigger cities of Auckland and Wellington. Another relatively critical and supportive aid and development NGO, Christian World Service (CWS), had its headquarters in the same city, and was an active member of GATT Watchdog, and a supporter of other locally organized activist work. Corso and CWS worked together to try to keep Oxfam New Zealand from putting down roots in Christchurch. Both saw Oxfam's attempt to gain a foothold in Christchurch as a form of NGO imperialism which threatened to shut down or roll back the kinds of education and advocacy work that our smaller, and local organizations had built up over many years, linking social justice struggles in the Third World with domestic struggles against injustice. For most of the 1990s, Corso and CWS staff and volunteers were key players<sup>5</sup> in the GATT Watchdog group which had formed in 1989 to focus specifically on education and mobilization work against free trade. With very few resources, GATT Watchdog became a key activist and research organization opposed to neoliberal globalization in Aotearoa/New Zealand and internationally. I was a key organizer and researcher for GATT Watchdog from 1991 – 2002.

The Christchurch Corso office was the de facto heart of much activist activity in the city. From local organizing around inner city housing/gentrification, to opposition to the privatization of the local power company, to international solidarity work, women's groups, work on decolonization and anti-racism, and anti-globalization campaigns, much national, regional and international work happened there. At these levels I increasingly became a link person between different activist groups and struggles and invested considerable effort into building and maintaining these relationships. There were heated debates about the nature, content and direction of 'development education' within

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<sup>5</sup> GATT Watchdog started as a coalition of several NGOs and activist organizations, but developed as a

Aotearoa/New Zealand and the organization's involvement in it. There were tensions around identity-based politics, relationships and funding support from New Zealand's official aid program, and relationships with other aid and development NGOs.

My involvement in a radical non-Maori activist group, Action for an Independent Aotearoa (AFIA) oriented me towards direct action and popular education for decolonization. In the late 1980s, the activists who had formed AFIA broke away from a predominantly middle class non-Maori network of Treaty<sup>6</sup> education/anti-racist organizations which were greatly influenced by Freirian/liberation theology pedagogies, to form a more direct action/popular education group, with close ties to Maori liberation struggles. AFIA's politics were confrontational, anti-capitalist, and very clearly pro-Maori self-determination, rather than the more liberal anti-racist positions taken by the professionalized Network Waitangi. We spent much of the early 1990s in court defending ourselves after arrests at various demonstrations, learning and sharing para-legal skills. This work resulted in a number of close solidarity relationships and personal friendships with Maori activists involved in different aspects of struggles for *tinō rangatiratanga* (self-determination), as well as Indigenous activists in the Pacific whose struggles we supported as part of the Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement.

Coalition work in various campaigns exposed me to different kinds of NGOs and community organizations. My involvement in groups like AFIA and GATT Watchdog reinforced my sense that funding and professionalized modes of operation do not guarantee effective action. In our experiences of being criminalized by the state for our

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largely autonomous activist group, drawing upon members from Corso, CWS, and Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa during the period of anti-APEC activism discussed in this thesis.

<sup>6</sup> The Treaty of Waitangi – signed between representatives of the British Crown and Maori in 1840.

activities, we also experienced the way in which some ‘respectable’ NGOs and community organizations sought to distance themselves from us as visibly and publicly as they could. Indeed, operating at the margins of these NGO networks, we could observe the ways in which such funding and professionalization impacted organizational autonomy and constrained or weakened critique. As Piven and Cloward (1977) also note from their study of US poor people’s movements, it seemed from these interactions that the more institutionalized and better-funded an organization became, often the less political risks they would take, and the less actual concrete action, too.

My own overlapping practice in GATT Watchdog, Corso, AFIA, Information on Ireland (formerly the H-Block Committee) and shifting local (Christchurch and national) organizations, coalitions and campaigns against privatizations and deregulation, was honed in a harsh funding climate, during a time of serious closure of critique, and amid internal and inter-organizational conflicts and power dynamics. Part of the rationale for our involvement in Asia-Pacific networks such as the anti-APEC ones was to expose and embarrass the New Zealand government’s domestic and international policies at a time when its ministers, former politicians and senior private sector representatives were active internationally in promoting the country as a neoliberal success story on the one hand, and a model for successful race relations on the other (Kelsey, 1999; Choudry, 2007).

Harassment, confrontations with, or surveillance by the police and security intelligence agencies over a number of years, resulting from my activism, also reinforced fundamental questions about the nature of the state and ‘democracy’ in Aotearoa/New Zealand, sharpening my analysis. In Chapter 3, I will return to the significance of

confrontation as a research resource, drawing from the work of Kinsman (2006) and G. Smith (1995 and 2006).

***Formulating critical questions on social activism from the standpoint of struggle***

How does one hold on to, and formulate critical questions about the internal dynamics and contradictions in political organizing and not become so deeply cynical as to pull back altogether? Moreover, how do we formulate questions inside or outside of movements in ways that might take us in a concrete direction to inform strategy and transform power relations? As I illustrate in Chapter 5, I have experienced many troubling moments of disjuncture, sitting in meetings with representatives of NGOs critical of the anti-democratic nature of APEC, the World Bank and the WTO when the practice of their own 'alternative' organizations was often hierarchical and anti-democratic.

Being located as an activist in organizations and networks with very little funding (or access to funding) also shaped my perspective in relation to questions of the kinds of resources necessary to build debates and oppositional movements. It is a different experience from working in a relatively well-funded community organization or NGO which encounters problems with funding and *then* has to restructure how it works, including its reliance on foundation or government funding. From this perspective, I sat in numerous meetings with professionalized organizers and campaigners from well-funded NGOs wondering why their analysis and research was so constrained and why they placed so little emphasis on resourcing movements, instead of lobbying government and business. As I developed networks with social movement and NGO activists throughout the region, I also noted how so many NGOs had so few meaningful contacts



and relationships with mass movements in their own countries and in the South, and looked closer at how and who they related with, and on what basis.

Other disjunctures included witnessing or experiencing racism in networks on social justice. Similarly, I witnessed extraordinarily manipulative drafting and crafting of conference statements and documents, and exercise of power of those with professional status and credentials within meetings and in spaces supposedly concerned about democracy, economic injustice and the rights of the marginalized. I also became increasingly concerned at the ways in which such organizations, meetings and networks could overlook questions of political economy which framed and underpinned NGO activities (especially state funding and patronage), and could account for cooptation and the weakening of positions that characterized so much of this milieu.

Reflecting on my own learning in social activism, I agree with Foley (1999) that this process is often informal and incidental: “it is tacit, embedded in action and is often not recognised as learning” (p. 3). Foley also highlights the complicated and contradictory nature of learning in social movements. It can both reproduce status quo, dominant positions and ideas, but also this same experience can produce “recognitions which enable people to critique and challenge the existing order” (p. 4). Such learning, he suggests, can be “difficult, ambiguous and contested” (p. 143).

As I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5, in 1995 at the NGO Forum on APEC in Kyoto, I found that many of the same internal dynamics and power struggles at the local or national level in Aotearoa/New Zealand, were perhaps even more pronounced, as representatives of organizations and movements worked together and against each other in international arenas. Broadly, as these anti-APEC campaigns continued, a key dividing

line was between those organizations that sought to reform APEC and those which rejected it along with the neoliberal vision that it promoted. For GATT Watchdog and the Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group<sup>7</sup>, in which I was active, this spurred discussions and strategy sessions about how to situate our organization in relation to others, to discuss and acknowledge the power dynamics among the organizations represented in Japan, and to question the agendas of many of those that were there. After attending the NGO meetings on APEC in Japan, D'Souza (1995) noted:

The composition of NGO meetings is becoming increasingly important. All kinds of organisations now call themselves NGOs. It has become imperative that the term is redefined, and organisers pay attention to the claims and actual work of organisations if they wish to bring together people with common concerns for exchange of ideas and common program of action.

As I engaged in increasing international and national networking, these concerns grew more complex. Yet finding the space to fully explore such questions and analyze their implications for campaigns and the practice of a growing network of organizations was difficult. In my experience, the formal spaces and sites of these networks are not necessarily conducive to genuine reflective inquiry, and attempts to discuss and raise these issues are often met with defensiveness and denial, sometimes accompanied with appeals to put aside our differences and maintain unity for a greater good. At the same time, I encountered more and more people in these networks who voiced concerns about internal dynamics. Perhaps most significant of these were my continuing conversations and work with Indian lawyer and trade unionist (now academic) Radha D'Souza, which began when we reflected on our experiences in the 1995 NGO Forum on APEC and other

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<sup>7</sup> The Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group was essentially a small, loose network comprising GATT Watchdog activists, trade union activists from the New Zealand Trade Union Federation, and a small number of critically-engaged academics.

NGO/movement networks in the Asia-Pacific. As a result, between 1996 and 1998, I began informally planning and discussing the idea of producing a critical, collaborative document examining the 'NGO world' in conjunction with a number of activists within Indigenous Peoples', labour, environmental, and social justice organizations and movements contesting neoliberalism. This document would raise questions about the mandate and interests represented in NGO networks, whose voices are heard, who is funded, how campaigns and concepts are framed and for whose interests. I accepted that no NGO would be likely to fund such a project because of its content, and that it would have to be done without funding support of any kind. Due to my other activist commitments, this collaborative project ended up being shelved, only to be revisited as an academic thesis topic by an individual - me.

Nonetheless, in a number of my articles written for alternative media, and in speeches at conferences I have raised some of these concerns and gained a certain reputation for my questioning of the roles and interests of NGOs, and the concept of 'civil society'<sup>8</sup>, both inside and outside of academia. These articles were often reproduced in other alternative magazines and publications, particularly in Asia and the Pacific, sometimes cited in scholarly literature, and used as resource materials in numerous workshops and strategy meetings. My motivation to write came equally from frustrations with the limitations and parameters of much 'alternative' media and NGO literature - and

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<sup>8</sup> There is a broad literature about the history, meaning, and usage of the phrase 'civil society' (e.g. Cohen and Arato, 1994; Ehrenberg, 1999; Swift, 1999; Keane, 2003; Kamat, 2004). Swift notes that, in essence, "civil society involves the activity of citizens in free association who lack the authority of the state" (p. 4). Yet the relationship between those formal and informal organizations, groups, movements and networks said to comprise 'civil society' and the state and market is a matter of much debate. I discuss this term in relation to NGOs, social movements and 'anti-globalization' networks in Chapter 2, but a fuller discussion falls outside the scope of this thesis. While I concur with Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) that the concept tends to be "analytically useless and obfuscating", I use the term, with caution and in quotation marks, to indicate its loaded and contested nature.

seeing whose voices and which views are heard and valued and which silenced - as from the capitalist media. Often this 'alternative literature' did not reflect the realities of the work I was doing nor what other people were telling me about their struggles. I started writing as one other way to contribute to movements for change. But I always saw the process of writing as linked to, and arising from organizing, rather than as something that stood above the fray, and outside of the less visible and less glamorous aspects of mobilization work. These concerns about representation, power, voice and knowledge are at the heart of my thesis research.

### *Transition to the academy*

Apart from one year of an undergraduate B.A. and LL.B. joint degree in Christchurch, my research and writing work has been outside of the academic milieu. After years of shunning academia, I was also growing frustrated with challenges of maintaining independence and integrity of analysis and practice in NGO and movement networks – and being able to survive. As an activist and organizer it was very difficult to carve out time and to prioritize major inquiry above pressing campaign and organizing concerns. I decided to explore the possibilities of pursuing the concerns and questions that I have in academia, determined to keep my feet outside of the academy by maintaining my activism, to avoid flights of fancy into abstract and ungrounded theorizing.

My discussions about power and knowledge in NGO and social movement networks have continued with comrades, some of whom have held, or currently hold academic positions (in particular my friends Radha D'Souza, Cheryl Waerea-I-te-Rangi Smith, and Sunera Thobani). These conversations and people have been important,

because without knowing others that I trust and respect personally and politically who have taken the academic route while remaining engaged in struggles, I doubt I would have followed. As Cheryl Smith (1994) argues, “colonialism, racism and cultural imperialism do not occur only in society, outside of the gates of universities” (p. 13). But academic writing can be “a way of ‘writing back’ whilst at the same time writing to ourselves”.

Finding similarly located scholar-activists has not been easy. Where the authors have been critically engaged in some way beyond their academic interest in the field, many of the studies on social movements and activism (e.g. Burawoy, 1991) are written by those who during the course of their studies become political activists or are directed or drawn towards community organisations, campaigns or NGOs. It is harder to find scholarly literature which grapples with the concerns and questions which arise from a standpoint of prior engagement in activist practice that constitutes the field of research. As I discuss in relation to the production of knowledge and movement-relevant theory in Chapter 2, this is epistemologically important. I view academic literature as complementing theory, knowledge and research methodologies that have emerged from practice, rather than as necessarily providing theoretical frameworks and concepts for analysis into which the object of inquiry must fit.

### *The role of academics in the ‘movement’ and my location*

A related factor which impacts my location in regard to my research topic as I consider some questions about the relationship between academia and activist practice in the ‘anti-globalization’ work in which I have been engaged is the role which academics

play in these networks. In Chapter 5, I will discuss this question in further detail in relation to specific moments and threads of anti-APEC mobilization.

While Petras and Veltmeyer's (2001) view of NGOs tends to overgeneralize<sup>9</sup>, it does attend to important and overlooked issues of the way that NGOs fit into global and national level neoliberal economic regimes. I concur with their claim that:

Intellectuals, academics and professionals saw jobs disappear or salaries decline as budget cuts took hold, so a second job became a necessity. NGOs became a job placement agency, and consultancies became a safety net for potentially downwardly mobile intellectuals willing to spout the civil society-free market alternative development line and carry on collaborative policies with neoliberal regimes and international financial institutions (p. 131).

It is common to find directors and researchers in many NGOs who are essentially displaced academics, or those who create NGOs as organizational vehicles for themselves. To cite two prominent examples in the Asia-Pacific region, Focus on the Global South is built around Filipino sociologist Walden Bello, and Third World Network around Malaysian economist Martin Khor (Brown, 2003; Caouette, 2007).

For some years, I have questioned whether in these 'anti-globalization' networks, 'academic activists' contribute towards the growth of a professionalized NGO elite which privileges particular forms of activity such as lobbying government and policy analysis, over other, more movement-focussed forms of action, and particular kinds of knowledge. Perhaps I have become more interested in this question as I take an academic trajectory myself. Elsewhere (Choudry, 2002d and 2003d, and Chapter 5) I argue that academics are frequently constructed as 'experts' and 'spokespeople' by NGOs and activist networks. How, in this context, as Kinsman (1997) argues, are professional relations

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<sup>9</sup> The authors offer a less totalizing analysis of NGOs in Petras and Veltmeyer (2005).

“power/knowledge relations of exclusion” (p. 228) and tied to the social organization of class, gender and race in the networks that I am exploring? What are the implications for those whose voices and contributions are marginalized and excluded by forms of professionalization in these networks? I return to these questions in chapters 2, 3, and 5.

I do not mean to set up a false binary between formal and informal forms of knowledge and learning within these networks, nor between academics and activists. I think there is interplay between the information and analysis produced by NGO ‘experts’ and the incidental learning and knowledge production that people involved in social struggles discover or make for themselves. Critically engaged academics can and do play very positive roles in social struggles. Yet the disconnect between much academic theorizing about social movements and activist practice (and theorizing grounded in practice), which I encountered at university, is certainly mirrored by divisions within these ‘anti-globalization’ networks between the ‘brains’ and the ‘brawn’. There is often a tension between those professionalized actors who speak at the conferences and write the NGO policy analysis documents and critiques, and those in the mass mobilizations. This is problematic on a number of fronts. Firstly, even within many of these networks and organizations, the value of learning by doing is undervalued and ignored. The elevation and promotion of elite forms of knowledge as ‘expert’ and ‘authoritative’, bring about a sense of disjuncture alongside the claims of organizations and movements that often espouse democracy and the equal valuing of different knowledge traditions. So too, those of us who can convincingly talk and write in a discourse which meshes with academically and officially sanctioned forms are reified as the experts. This seems to reflect Foley’s (1999) contention that movements and community organizing can also

reproduce status quo dominant positions and power. NGOs and activist groups often define issues – and themselves - in a narrow, compartmentalized way, and therefore set parameters for campaigns and political action. As Said (1983) puts it, we must ask: “Who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances? These it seems to me are the questions whose answers provide us with the ingredients making a politics of interpretation” (p. 7).

### *Challenges of informal learning and coloniality*

In theorizing the concept of the pedagogy of mobilization, Holst (2002) notes how the importance and nature of learning in social movements has tended to be dismissed in the literature. For him,

social movements, through public protest that can take various forms, attempt to educate and persuade the larger public and politicians. Second, there is much educational work internal to social movements, in which organizational skills, ideology, and lifestyle choices are passed from one member to the next informally through mentoring and modelling or formally through workshops, seminars, lectures, and so forth (p. 81).

As Foley (1999), Kelley (2002), Flacks (2004), Bevington and Dixon (2005) argue, a wealth of knowledge can be brought forth from social struggles in order to analyze them (see Chapter 2). Although there is a considerable body of scholarly literature on adult education and learning, relatively few attempts have been made to theorize informal learning and knowledge production through involvement in social action. Foley (1999) examines this topic in a way which analyzes and validates the importance of the incidental learning that takes place in a variety of social struggles. Foley argues that to do this analysis “one needs to write case studies of learning in struggle, making explanatory



connections between the broad political and economic context, micro-politics, ideologies, discourses and learning” (p. 132).

In this thesis I draw from traditions in scholarly literature but also valorize non-academic, ‘movement’, and often, ‘non-Western’ knowledge(s), theorizing and ideas in this project. As I argue in chapter 2, the literature on social movements and the ‘anti-globalization movement’ tends towards abstracted, global generalizing views or case studies which are written from the point of view of people not closely associated enough with the practice to be aware of the complexities of the field (e.g. Starr, 2000; Guidry, Kennedy and Zald, 2000; Hamel, Lustiger-Thaler, Nederveen Pieterse and Roseneil, 2001). Moreover, as I illustrate, the scholarly literature is dominated by a focus on movements and mobilizations in North America and Europe. This is problematic given that my research topic focuses on the Asia-Pacific, and networks of social action which encompass both ‘Third World’ and ‘First World’ contexts.

As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 2, and illustrate in relation to anti-APEC activism in Chapter 5, many NGOs which have the material resources and organizational infrastructure to regularly produce research documents and literature studiously avoid naming or confronting fundamental issues like imperialism, capitalism or colonization in any substantive way. As I write elsewhere (Choudry, 2002d):

Cul-de-sacs of convenience and comfort are frequently constructed which exclude any focus on the issues of imperialism and colonialism, often couched in the language of “reality” and pragmatism. They invite people to question things up to a certain point, but fail to grapple with, and often obscure, the root causes of injustice.

Ultimately these NGO and movement networks are often an arena of conflict over who defines what is pragmatic and attainable.

As I elaborate in Chapter 2, my analysis also draws upon the rich conceptual resources from histories of struggles for liberation, especially in movements in the Third World. As Mignolo (2000) and Smith (1999) argue, such an analysis must break free from the tendency to elevate Western, academic theories and knowledge(s) over non-Western and indigenous ways of seeing, especially when considering actors and organizations situated in the Third World and/or Indigenous Peoples and communities of colour in industrialized nations like Canada, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. There is an accompanying tendency, even among many radical movement activists in the North, to universalize models and concepts of organizing from North America and Europe, and the questions that arise from them, and to use them as universal frames of analysis. In doing so, there is a danger of overlooking or misconstruing what are often very different histories, traditions and trajectories of movements in the Third World. As noted, my own anti-colonial activist practice draws me to attend to such questions, and grounds my analysis in scholarly literature and other traditions which address colonization and struggles for self-determination.

I turn now to detail my conceptualization of neoliberal globalization as a phase in a much older continuum of colonialism. This is important to provide background and texture to my standpoint and lens as an anti-colonial activist engaged in research which is guided by a political activist ethnography methodology (discussed in Chapter 3), and also to detail a recurring theme which runs through this thesis. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6, this analysis and the forms of resistance which ground themselves in anti-colonial resistance to neoliberalism also offer challenges and possible ways forward from hegemonic NGO approaches to social change.

### *Neoliberal globalization as (re)colonization*

Writing in the early 1960s, Fanon's (1963) visionary analysis of imperialism in post-independence Third World nations predicts a scenario where decolonized societies contend with attendant capital flight, and direct colonial rule is replaced by the intensification of foreign investment imperialism which locks newly independent peoples into new forms of exploitation. As I outline in Chapter 4, Fanon's scenario accurately describes the past three decades of experience with neoliberalism. Some approach contemporary forms of globalization as a qualitatively new phenomenon. As Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) put it, there is a dispute over the "question of whether globalization represents a qualitatively new phenomenon or yet another phase in a longer historical period of imperialist expansion" (p. 13).

Like Petras and Veltmeyer, Meiksins Wood (1998) argues that the term 'globalization' can obscure and mystify collusion between states and capital, and infer a kind of inevitability about the process. She warns that:

[w]e have to guard against treating the trends that go under that name [globalization] as if they were natural, inevitable processes, instead of historically specific *capitalist* processes, the capitalist exploitation of human beings and natural resources, aided and abetted by a direct collaboration between the state and capital (p. 14).

Thus, in sum the ideas put forth by these scholars suggest that there are real dangers in treating 'globalization' as if it were a new trend, including a failure to learn from this era's historical antecedents, and older struggles against imperialism.

A fuller debate on the nature of contemporary capitalist relations and 'globalization' falls outside the scope of this research (I discuss its main features in Chapter 4), but undoubtedly the positions taken by social movement actors on this

question influence how and where they act. Despite the very real and rapid economic and political changes which are sweeping the world, such as the transnationalization of production and resource exploitation and the internationalization of finance, I largely concur with thinkers like Boron (2005), and Eqbal Ahmad (interviewed in Barsamian, 2000) that for the most part, the structure of capitalism has not changed fundamentally, but that “its intensity and scope have” (p.113). Ahmad argues that globalization has changed neither the political or economic reality of many Third World countries since the days of colonial rule. Rather, it is another phase of colonialism and imperialism. Moana Jackson (1999 and 2007) argues that for Indigenous Peoples, in the global North and South, globalization is not a new phenomenon. As he puts it, “we are faced with a two-fold challenge, to struggle as best we can to deal with the immediate consequences of globalization. Secondly, and more difficult, to contextualize those problems within the 500-year-and-more history of the culture of colonization” (p. 105).

As I noted earlier, a central concern of both my activist practice and academic inquiry has been the framing of neoliberal globalization as a continuation of colonialism and as a fundamentally unjust system which must be confronted and delegitimized<sup>10</sup>. As M. Jackson (1999 and 2007) and others (L. T. Smith, 1999; Venne, 2001; McNally, 2002; Bargh, 2007; Choudry, 2001b and 2007; Patel, 2007) have argued, key elements of modern-day neoliberalism – the commodification of peoples, of nature, and of social relations, the favouring of individual over collective rights, and indeed the forebears of some of its major beneficiaries, transnational corporations (in the form of charter colonizing companies such as the East India Company) are not new (Kelsey, 1999;

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<sup>10</sup> This section is adapted from Choudry, A. (2007).

McNally, 2002; D'Souza, 2006; M. Jackson, 2007). Such understandings inform my approach to the topics of 'globalization', social movements and NGOs. They also signal the importance of drawing upon conceptual resources from older struggles, to pay attention to local contexts, and highlight the importance of a critical examination of historical processes. Raghavan (1990) coined the phrase "recolonization" to refer to the GATT negotiations. This frame is quite common in both scholarly literature and activist networks in the Third World (Shiva, 1997; Bagchi, 2005; D'Souza, 2006) – although some, such as Eqbal Ahmed (interviewed in Barsamian, 2000) ask whether it is accurate to talk of recolonization when they question if there was ever 'decolonization' in any real sense of the word.

Anti-colonial critiques of neoliberalism and the institutional or governmental vehicles which promote it are also found among Indigenous scholars and activists in the North (Venne, 2001; L. T. Smith, 1999, Bargh, 2007; Jackson, 2007)<sup>11</sup>. This comes in the wake of the failure of much Western scholarship to be aware of what Mignolo (2000) calls the "coloniality of difference and the subalternization of knowledge built into it" (p. 4). Some identify limitations of Marxist scholarship, at least in relation to its dominant strands in the West (Mignolo, 2000; Churchill, 1983; L. T. Smith, 1999) in dealing with colonization and acknowledging the validity of Indigenous knowledge/worldviews.

From land to water, to the corporate enclosure of nature through biotechnology and bioprospecting (Indigenous People's Council on Biocolonialism (IPCB), undated; L. T. Smith, 1999), Indigenous and other colonized peoples are at the forefront of both

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<sup>11</sup> It would be a gross misrepresentation, however, to homogenize all Indigenous Peoples' positions as inherently anti-capitalist and anti-colonial. There are many internal debates and conflicts among

analysis of, and mobilizations against neoliberalism which emphasize the way in which it commodifies everything, is fundamentally predicated on exploitation of people and nature, and embodies a colonial mindset. At a macro-economic level, under neoliberalism, Faraclas (2001) sees the debt-driven model of colonialism imposed on the South through structural adjustment programs of the IMF and World Bank connected to the “repauperization of the North” (p.70). Kelsey (1999) observes that conflicts between transnational corporations and Indigenous Peoples are rooted in colonization, with the former being new actors in an older, ongoing struggle for self-determination. “Yet”, she argues, “power is also being transferred from the colonial state, which can be challenged at the very least on moral grounds..., to more remote international corporations whose sole responsibility is to their shareholders (p. 167). The 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, and its subsequent articulation, transmitted worldwide via the Internet and other media, as an Indigenous Peoples’ struggle rooted in resistance to five centuries of colonial injustice now confronting the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)<sup>12</sup> and other neoliberal instruments also drew attention to the relationship between contemporary and older forms of imperialism (Gedicks, 2001; McNally, 2002; Flusty, 2004). Importantly, however, progressive organizations and movements, and the left in general have not been inherently sympathetic or supportive of Indigenous Peoples’ struggles for self-determination (Bedford and Irving, 2001; Churchill, 1983). I explore this in greater detail in Chapter 5 with reference to specific instances of anti-APEC campaigns.

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Indigenous Peoples regarding values and models of ‘development’ (see, for example, Kelsey, 1999; Bargh, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Free trade and investment agreement signed between Mexico, USA and Canada, which took effect on 1 January 1994.

### *Neoliberalism-as-colonialism lens for analyzing resistance*

The neoliberalism-as-colonialism analysis has found relatively greater traction and resonance, and is more widely articulated in Aotearoa/New Zealand than in Canada, the USA and Australia. Arguably, the extreme nature of the New Zealand domestic economic reforms and trade and investment liberalization since 1984 (Kelsey, 1999; Bargh, 2007; Choudry, 2007), and the higher proportion of Indigenous Peoples to the total national population (by comparison with Canada, the USA and Australia) has contributed to this.

L. T. Smith (1999) highlights the way in which international indigenous networks with a colonial analysis of ‘development’<sup>13</sup> can offer and share alternatives to the dominant model. “The sharing of resources and information may assist groups and communities to collaborate with each other and to protect each other. The development of international protocols and strategic alliances can provide a more sustained critique of the practices of states and corporations.” (p. 105). Burgmann and Ure (2004) suggest that in the context of the struggle for opponents of neoliberalism to theorize a convincing alternative, the contributions of Indigenous Peoples’ struggles for self-determination are very useful. They assert that

the practical critique of neoliberalism embodied in indigenous people’s resistance to their incorporation into the global market is one informed by an often acute recognition of not only the global dimensions of such resistance but also an acknowledgement of anti-imperialist struggles stretching back over many hundreds of years (p. 57).

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<sup>13</sup> A full discussion of development theory and practice falls outside the scope of this thesis. I concur with Biel (2000), who contends that for the South, development means “reinforcing subordination”, involving “rapid and far-reaching changes which could easily appear as though they were leading to modernisation, and to the constitution of national economies” (p.73). D’Souza (2006) argues that the ‘development project’ is a post-war project of the elites, serving to reconstitute relations between the colonies and imperial powers and consolidate monopoly-finance capitalism, while also containing and undermining struggles against capitalism and imperialism.

This has “enabled non-indigenous groups and movements to root their critique in an anti-capitalist perspective that emanates from non-Western sources” (p. 57). The authors argue that the desire for self-determination in the face of neoliberalism “often finds its most intense expression in indigenous struggles and that, as such, the role of indigenous peoples in struggles against neoliberalism has been crucially significant to its spread to other sectors of global society” (pp. 56-57).

Indigenous Peoples have in many cases been resisting corporate power, social and environmental destruction and militarization predicted as the scenario for the rest of the world under neoliberalism, for many years. To overlook, or underestimate the value of Indigenous Peoples’ analyses and strategies of resistance in relation to capitalist globalization is to seriously constrain analysis and action to meaningfully transform the dominant economic, political and social order, locally and internationally. This body of knowledge, which crystallized during the 1990s, and the conceptualization of various institutions and processes driving neoliberalism as new forms of colonial actors is a key frame of analysis for my research on social movements and NGOs opposed to APEC. It helps to view the rise of these organizations and movements through a critical lens which critiques the growing ‘civil society’ discourse that gained momentum during the 1990s. It problematizes the role and mandate of nation-states to commit to economic and social policies which further marginalize and dispossess Indigenous Peoples within the territories that they govern. But it also challenges many dominant NGO narratives, accounts of history and claims to representation, as I illustrate further in Chapter 5.

I turn now to briefly situate and outline my research question(s) and give an overview of this thesis.



### *Defining the question(s) and purpose of the research*

Currently, many NGOs claim to speak for a nebulous 'civil society', even when these organizations are often far removed from the people whose interests they claim to represent, and are unaccountable to the communities whose voices they claim to amplify. As noted by Greenfield (2001), Petras and Veltmeyer (2001), McNally (2002) and Rojas (2007), these professionalized organizations are very different from, and often in conflict with, more militant and grassroots-based movements of peasant farmers, Indigenous Peoples, women, workers and others, which frequently have long histories of resistance to colonialism and other forms of domination and oppression.

Petras and Veltmeyer (2001 and 2005) and Kamat (2004) raise a number of important questions about the role and emergence of NGOs and their impact on local and international political and democratic space. While some NGOs work closely with grassroots organizations and independent labour unions, the funding relationships, lack of grassroots base, mandate and susceptibility to cooptation by the very institutions and governments which they purport to criticize often place NGOs in striking contrast to smaller, more radical activist groups and many peoples and grassroots movements.

Some scholars (for example, Starr, 2000; Goodman, 2002; McNally, 2002) have attempted to survey and analyze the wide range of movements and organizations resisting the power of transnational capital and neoliberalism. Yet academic examinations and many NGO accounts of the 'anti-globalization' movement(s) have often tended to obscure the internal tensions, debates, contradictions and range of differences among the

organizations and movements engaged in resistance and contest of the neoliberal model of 'development' and in the articulation of 'alternatives'. This discourse has tended to be Eurocentric and ahistorical. I argue that many of these tensions, contradictions and differences are primarily located in the practices of these organizations, their interactions through networks, and their implication in capitalist social relations.

Within these networks, we need to ask whose voices are heard, and whose are marginalized, and why? Which forms of knowledge are recognized as authoritative, and which are marginalized or ignored? Which issues are addressed? Which are ignored? Why? How are debates framed, who frames them, and for what purpose? How do we understand the differences between organizations which seek to reform APEC, the WTO and other vehicles of global free market capitalism, and more radical movements which reject both these institutions and the entire free-market worldview?

Do larger NGOs dictate the confines of the discourse of 'anti-globalization', and do they amplify, filter out, marginalize or silence the voices of social movement activists from the Third World and from marginalized communities in the North? My inquiry focuses on anti-APEC networks of NGOs, social movements and activist groups in the 1990s, in which I was very active, and which foreshadowed what came to be dubbed the 'anti-globalization' or 'global justice' movement, especially after the mobilization in Seattle against the WTO Ministerial Meeting in November/December 1999. This research is intended not only as a contribution to scholarly literature, but as a resource for further study, discussion and practical action for rethinking, reshaping and intervening in power relations in these networks. As an anti-colonial activist and as a scholar I face a two-fold challenge to conduct research which is not only academically rigorous, but

which is grounded in my practice, and which will be relevant and useful to social struggles.

### *Conclusion: Overview of thesis*

Chapter 2 outlines the two dominant strands of social movement theory, then moves to critique them on a number of counts, including a discussion of their limitations for theorizing social action in the South, and their disconnect from the actualities and internal debates within movements. It then considers theoretical tools from several traditions which help inform a framework of analysis which allows for a deeper understanding of struggles over power and knowledge within activist milieus. These include an emerging area which straddles social movement theory and social activism itself, and which highlights the importance of theoretical resources which already exist from within activist settings, and challenges theory to be “movement-relevant” (Bevington and Dixon, 2005). It continues with an extended discussion about the rise of NGOs, examining this phenomenon primarily through a political economy lens. The chapter also discusses the contributions of social history and other traditions from within critical historical scholarship, the politics of historiography in relation to theorizing past and contemporary social movements, and the work of recovering “subaltern” (Gramsci, 1971; Guha, 1983) voices marginalized by elite modes of historical scholarship. I also discuss the importance of geohistory, and the politics of knowledge, colonialism and imperialism and its implications for interpreting social struggles. Finally, I discuss insights on organizational analysis derived from the sociology of organizations, with particular regard to themes of internal democracy, professionalization, bureaucratization,

and leadership. In this chapter, I interweave theoretical insights from both scholarly literature and activist/social movement accounts.

In Chapter 3, I outline my methodological approach, and examine a number of key concepts behind institutional ethnography. The sense of the term “ethnography” in institutional ethnography differs from its standard sociological or anthropological use to mean rich descriptions of how cultural and social practices operate in a particular local setting. Instead, starting from a specific social standpoint in a local setting – in my case, my activist engagement – institutional ethnography orients ethnographic practices against ruling practices and apparatuses. I return to the notion of disjuncture as a starting point for my research, and discuss the way in which institutional ethnography approaches texts. I discuss the emergence of political activist ethnography from within institutional ethnography and examine my own activist research practice with reference to it. I put forward a proposal to transnationalize institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography for the purpose of researching for movements and activists struggling against neoliberal globalization. Finally, I conclude with a brief discussion in regard to my location as an ‘insider’ researcher, and research methods.

Chapter 4 sets up the global and regional geopolitical context for the emergence of the APEC forum in the Asia-Pacific and the networks of opposition that arose to contest its neoliberal agenda. I discuss several major aspects of the neoliberal era, arising from attempts to manage capitalist crises. These include the ascendancy of finance capital, the impacts of the financialization of the global economy, and the consolidation of economic and political power of transnational corporations (TNCs). I also discuss the imposition of structural adjustment policies along with trade and investment

liberalization, and briefly outline their social, political, economic and environmental impacts. I chart the birth and development of APEC, discuss some of its key features, and outline internal tensions among the forum's members. I then build upon my discussion of NGOs in Chapter 2 as I contextualize and briefly map the terrain of networks of NGO and social movement opposition to APEC in the Asia-Pacific in the 1990s.

In Chapter 5, I look more closely at struggles over knowledge and power within the anti-APEC milieu. I draw upon my own participation in anti-APEC NGO forums, and discuss these dynamics both in relation to these activities and various forms of texts which were produced in these networks. Using the NGO forums on APEC as starting points for this investigation, I draw upon concepts from the theoretical and methodological approaches outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 to examine a number of themes which highlight internal struggles and contradictions in these anti-APEC networks. These include the politics of representation, professionalization and the exclusion of voices from below. I return to more fully examine ways in which elite forms of knowledge come to dominate in these networks, and the implications that this has for the parameters of analysis and action that are set in this milieu. I illustrate specific ways in which ruling relations socially organize NGO activities with particular reference to the 1997 Vancouver People's Summit on APEC. I also discuss ways in which dominant NGO positions and practices on APEC and neoliberalism were challenged by more critical tendencies within, and outside of, these People's Summits. As part of this discussion, I illustrate this dynamic by explicating some key aspects of the mobilization against APEC in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1999.

In conclusion, Chapter 6 draws out some theoretical and methodological implications of this thesis. In doing so, it proposes possible directions for building scholarly research on and *for* networks of opposition against neoliberal globalization – and more fundamentally – capitalism itself. It also speaks to ways in which this research, and its theoretical and methodological underpinnings, can help inform activist practice – including research within movements.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical framework**

“[T]he philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however is to change it” (Marx, 1968, pp. 28-30).

In this chapter, I lay out the theoretical approaches and traditions which inform my research. First, I outline the two dominant schools of social movement theory, and offer critiques drawn from several areas of scholarship. These include emerging trends within this field such as movement-relevant theory, critiques of North American and European theoretical approaches to social movements from the South and Indigenous Peoples’ worldviews, and challenges in relation to the privileging of Western epistemologies of knowledge and coloniality. Second, I discuss and theorize the rise, impact and political economy of NGOs in recent history and their relationship to ‘anti-globalization’ networks. Third, I argue that conceptual resources drawn from social history, and other forms of critical historiography can help to address the theoretical challenges of my research by elucidating histories from below, attending to geohistorical concerns, questioning the silencing or appropriation of marginalized peoples’ struggles by elites, and problematizing the production of historical accounts of movements, including those active in ‘anti-globalization’ actions. Fourth, I draw upon insights from the field of the sociology of organizations to examine questions of democracy, oligarchy, leadership, representation, bureaucratization and professionalization within organizations.

I put forward these theoretical approaches as conceptual tools to understand recent networks of NGOs, movements and mobilizations in the Asia-Pacific and to bridge serious gaps in social movement theory. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography methodology which I employ in this thesis starts from my own standpoint as an activist in these networks and mobilizations. These theoretical traditions complement this approach by highlighting the importance of concrete conditions and social relations in mapping the terrain of these struggles. My theoretical approach is born from, and 'writes back' to, my sense of disjuncture between much of the scholarly literature on social movements and my own standpoint, experience and knowledge as an activist and organic intellectual (Gramsci, 1971) in this milieu, offering a critique of theoretical gaps in social movement theory.

## ***I. Social movement theory***

### ***Resource mobilization theory***

Since the 1960s, two theoretical approaches have dominated social movement theory. Resource mobilization theory (RMT) emerged primarily in North America, while the new social movements (NSM) paradigms, arose mainly from Western Europe. Resource mobilization theorists, including Tilly (1988), Tarrow (1998), and McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996), theorize that people engaged in social movements act as rational actors (as individuals or collectively) pursuing common interests, primarily through building formal organizations. Resource mobilization theorists understand people in movements to be making rational choices between the costs and benefits of involvement in social movement activity. They argue that people pool or seek to gain



control of resources to follow a common end, and that this gaining or sharing of resources gives a group a capacity to engage in collective actions, and to mobilize. For Cohen and Arato (1994), “resource-mobilization theorists stress such ‘objective’ variables as organization, interests, resources, opportunities and strategies to account for large-scale mobilizations” (p. 497). RMT views social organization – and organizations (involving shared consciousness and collective identity) – as both a prerequisite for, and end result of mobilizations. This, they argue, tends to lead to the establishment of organizations and institutions to institutionalize control of resources and to mobilize more support. Such resources might include money, labour, time/commitment, land, technical expertise, or facilities.

There are two main strands of RMT. Zald and McCarthy’s (1987) entrepreneurial mobilization model emphasizes the role of movement entrepreneurs whom they believe are necessary to sustain social movement organizations, and technical and practical aspects of movements. This model, they argue, leads towards a professionalization of movement leadership, with paid middle class staff displacing grassroots leaders. In this analysis, organizations and organizers tap into middle class supporters by appealing to their conscience, even if they are not directly affected by a movement’s issues and concerns. Zald and McCarthy also explore cultural framing – the ways that a movement’s grievances, demands or message are framed both to those in power, the public, and to mobilize support among its members to take collective action (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996). Meanwhile, Tilly’s (1988) political process theory (PPT) approach focuses more on the political opportunities for social movements to act, in terms of the balance of social forces, the relationship between the state, a given

movement and other forces in 'civil society'. This also sets the parameters for the timing, types and levels of action that a movement may take, and its outcomes. By contrast with McCarthy and Zald, Tilly's PPT emphasizes the role of grassroots movement leadership, contending that there are frequently struggles between this base and middle class supporters who see the movement as an opportunity to use or control for their own interests.

### ***New social movement theory***

New Social Movement theorists such as Alain Touraine (1981) and Alberto Melucci (1980 and 1989) seek to understand the processes whereby people consciously construct group or collective identity, values and lifestyles rather than, or in addition to, developed ideologies. NSM theorists ask why 'new' social actors emerge while RMT approaches emphasize how people mobilize. NSM proponents felt that existing Marxist analyses which explained social movements in terms of class conflict, structural contradictions and crises of capitalism were reductionist and inadequate to understand emergent social movements in the Europe of the 1960s and 1970s. NSM theorists held that many of these movements seemed to emerge from middle class, rather than working class constituencies. They saw the peace, environmental, gay/lesbian and women's movements as struggles against old and new kinds of domination, in a post-industrial society with shifting boundaries between public, private and social life. Instead of concerns about material resources and redistribution, this school of thought characterized these struggles as being about quality of life issues, democracy, and articulating identities. NSM theory focuses on new forms of collective identity rather than common

interests, viewing these movements as laboratories in which people's self-understandings are transformed, and where they create cultural codes to contest the legitimacy of received points of view. This approach pays considerable attention to language, viewed as constitutive of social life in a vaguely defined "complex society" (Melucci, 1980). Most NSM theory (see, e.g., Melucci, 1980 and 1989) deals with symbolic challenges and discourse, temporary spaces and identities, in a clean break from Marxism. These movements open up spaces and expose power, but do not directly challenge ruling groups to take that power. For NSM theorists, movement actors' focus is very much on self-realization, rather than contesting state/political power.

### *Critique of dominant paradigms of social movement theory*

Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson and Tilleczek (2006) charge that "[b]y researching social movements rather than the social world that movements aim to unsettle, social movement theory often reifies activists and movements and establishes regulatory practices within academia by classifying activists and their work" (p. 11). They note, for example, that NSM theorists tend to categorize some movements as "new" and others as "old", and that some movements become classified as "cultural", and others as "economic" or "resource allocation". They suggest that such arbitrary distinctions

often result in an inability to describe and account for how social movements actually work and tend to increase the divide between "activist" and "researcher"...Social movement theory regulates activism by slotting it into categories, rather than explicating the importance of what a movement produces in the social world and what its confrontations with ruling relations bring into view (p.11).

Seeing social movements only through one of these theoretical lenses leads to a somewhat fragmented view of what are often complex, perhaps contradictory, and multifaceted movements. Notwithstanding the sense in which many of these movements appear fragmented, single-issue, and identity-centred, there is a danger in theorizing social movements in ways which construct or interpret them to fit narrow theoretical frameworks. While both RMT and NSM theories draw attention to some aspects of some social movements, their levels of abstraction and generalization, as well as the overextension of some key concepts make them problematic and limited. By focusing on a small set of variables, social movement theorists in both schools tend to ignore the dynamic and shifting nature of social movements. In other respects these theories are rather vague. PPT theorists tend towards viewing anything as a political opportunity if it appears to help movement mobilization. The concept, while potentially useful in drawing attention to the importance of situating the movement in a specific political moment and context, has become overextended. RMT focuses too much on single-issue reform movements and their organizations, while NSM emphasizes micro-politics and identity. In both cases, a political economy analysis is lacking in which to situate social movements. Neither of the major dominant approaches of social movement theory deals satisfactorily with the relationship between capitalism and the causes and concerns of social movements and organizations.

Both schools of thought are also vague about what constitutes a social movement. RMT theorists' arguments could equally account for political party organizations. Touraine (1981) argued that a social movement must be more than just oppositional, and that it must propose alternatives. Would we then recognize only those movements which

articulate alternatives in some programmatic form or vision? Or do we understand the importance of using oppositional mobilization (whether or not this involves formal organizational structures and institutions) to create spaces of resistance and processes such as direct democracy and non-hierarchical organizing as the creation of alternatives? Issues of resource mobilization and cultural/personal factors are both important to examine in understanding movements. But political and cultural aspects are interdependent. RMT theorists construct a rather rigid notion of movements and social movement organizations, implying that institutionalization of a movement is key to its success. Piven and Cloward (1977) argue precisely the opposite, stating that the drive towards formally structured organizations by organizers and activists in US poor people's movements in the 1930s and 1960s led to an abandonment of oppositional politics, cooptation by elites, and a diversion of energy away from mobilization and escalating protest movements to the sustaining and growth of organizations which become preoccupied with financial survival.

Similarly, Petras and Veltmeyer (2001, 2003 and 2005) and Veltmeyer (2007) argue that the rise of international development NGOs and the increased funding for development from governments funnelled through NGOs has led to the cooptation of movements and grassroots movement organizations by elite interests and actors, in a time of neoliberal policies on a global scale. This, they argue, has increased pressures on grassroots organizations and local NGOs to become professionalized subcontractors to governments or international financial institutions, and to distance themselves from confrontational or other oppositional forms of action. Indeed, institutionalized international and local NGOs active in 'anti-globalization' networks may be deemed by

RMT theorists as successful in gaining financial, professional and other resources, but serve to depoliticize and dampen more radical social movement activity, while also purporting to be the voices of the poor. These organizations may lack any accountability or mandate for their work, and yet fit quite neatly into a definition of successful movement organizations of RMT theorists. I will illustrate this concern with reference to examples in the anti-APEC networks in Chapter 5.

Individuals and organizations become involved in social action for a variety of reasons, bring diverse perspectives about the world with them, and consequently have different interests invested in the direction, success or failure of a movement or campaign. As Long (1997) notes, “[u]nderstanding why coalitions and larger social movements exist, fail, or succeed depends on understanding them in historical context and examining the interaction of their particular social characteristics” (p. 168). But NSM theorists overlook crucial issues of class and the continuation of capitalist relations. Indeed, they tend to apply a post-class analysis. They tend to ignore the importance of political engagements with the state, and adopt a micro-political focus on resistance which borrows from Foucault’s (1972) decentred concept of power being everywhere. This approach underestimates or even ignores state power and capital. Moreover, even if they limit their focus to Western Europe, such theorizing overlooks working class struggles such as major strike activities during the 1970s and 1980s, and the interplay between class, gender, race in milieus described as “new” social movements.

It is questionable just how “new” these concerns are, given the histories, both in Western Europe and beyond, of struggles around women’s rights, peace and the environment. Historians and social movement theorists may have overlooked earlier

struggles on these issues while focusing on other things. However, this draws attention to the importance of recovering or constructing movement “histories from below” (after the Subaltern Studies school in South Asia, e.g. Guha, 1982 and 1983), discussed later in this chapter, rather than creating theory which denies this historicity. So too, my research into struggles over power and knowledge in ‘anti-globalization’ networks in the Asia-Pacific which contested APEC in the 1990s challenges widely-held notions that this is a “new” movement. It argues that resistance to neoliberal globalization started long before Seattle’s 1999 WTO Ministerial meeting, and that more recent NGO/movement dynamics in ‘anti-globalization’ networks were prefigured in the peak period of anti-APEC activity (Yuen, 2002). I return to consider this matter in Chapter 6.

Catherine Eschle (2001) warns of a danger that the “construction of categories of analysis and political projects that universalize the particular and located experience of the theorist” leads to many social movement scholars failing to account for “multiple differences in power, form, strategy and ideology” between and within social movements (p. 74). She sees Eurocentrism and a tendency to presuppose that diverse social movements share a unified perspective as fatal flaws of the “universalist aspirations of global civil society theory” (p. 74). This approach lends itself to overlooking or redefining movements to fit predetermined theoretical constructs, and in doing so, making conscious decisions about which movements are documented and cited in academic accounts, and which are not.

### ***Limitations of dominant social movement theories in the global south***

The fact that both of these major strands of social movement theory have emerged from contexts in the global North is significant, and should lead to caution in applying them to the rest of the world. Bayat (1997 and 2000b) warns that the reductionism of the debates within dominant Northern social movement and 'civil society' theory tends to exclude or belittle the importance of modes of struggle at street level in many developing countries which are far more extensive and effective for the actors involved than conventional institutionalized forms. He warns that "the reductionism of the debates on civil society excludes and even scorns modes of struggle and expression that...are more extensive and effective than conventional independent institutions" (1997, p. 161). The existence of these modes is often difficult enough for people engaged in social activism to acknowledge, so they are doubly hard for academics to see. As Dwivedi (2001) notes, dominant social movement theory does not necessarily fit with Third World realities. Typically, he notes, movements in the South have been interpreted as emphasizing material needs. But in the case of environmental movements in the South, Dwivedi argues that the meaning and agency of environmental action should not be restricted to struggles over livelihood and survival, but that a fuller understanding would recognize multiple agencies and practices. We should also be aware of the older histories of some strands of these movements, especially in the South, and how they inform and influence modern struggles.

### ***Challenging the positional superiority of Western knowledge***

In the South and in those parts of the North which were colonized, dominant strands of political theory ignore, devalue and render invisible non-Western thought and



theory. L. T. Smith (1999) and Mignolo (2000) question the universalizability of Western theory in crossing the colonial difference into indigenous worlds or to the 'Third World', noting that the positional superiority of Western knowledge and theory dominates and displaces other worldviews. Both note the importance of understanding that theories and theorists emerge from concrete geohistorical, social and cultural contexts. L. T. Smith (1999) writes that

imperialism and colonialism brought complete disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world. It was a process of systematic fragmentation which can still be seen in the disciplinary carve-up of the indigenous world: bones, mummies and skulls to the museums, art work to private collectors, languages to linguistics, 'customs' to anthropologists, beliefs and behaviours to psychologists (p. 28).

This imperially wrought disorder and disciplinary carve-up has implications for understanding social movements and struggles in many parts of the world through theoretical lenses which claim a position of intellectual superiority and universality. We need to bear in mind the dangers of applying theories fashioned primarily in the West to contexts where indigenous forms of organizing have shaped or influenced contemporary movements. The process of systematic fragmentation which Smith describes has arguably influenced the way in which many scholars have sought to understand peoples' struggles. But among and within movement networks it also influences which voices are heard and valued, and which movements and organizations we see as representative and accountable to a broader base. Northern social movement theory cannot be unproblematically applied to Southern movements and networks in which they are active as if such theories were applicable in any given context. Such theorizing frequently overlooks or misconstrues historical, economic and cultural questions in contexts of

which the theorists have little understanding. Third World Marxists and anti-colonial thinkers have also extended and sometimes contested dominant strands of Marxist thought in Europe and North America, particularly in regard to questions of development, race and colonialism (Cabral, 1973; Fanon, 1963, 1970; Sarkar, 1998; Boron, 2005; Mathew, 2005; D'Souza, 2006). As D'Souza (2006) notes:

Several centuries of colonialism and imperialism have given to the societies of the 'Third World' general attributes that are constituted by distinctive geo-historical developments. Class, gender, race, ethnicity, environment, ecology as well as political economy are constituted by distinctive historical and geographical processes that qualify the categories of analysis developed within the context of capitalism in the 'West' (p. 17).

We should also pay attention to these processes in order to more fully understand social movements and NGOs. The networks of movements and NGOs in which I have worked in the Asia-Pacific against neoliberalism are diverse and often defy neat categorization through the application of a set of variables expounded by RMT and NSM theorists, as Bayat (1997 and 2000b) and Dwivedi (2001) have noted. They often straddle North and South. They involve multiple agencies and practices, and the construction and assertion of identities. They frequently draw from and enact local cultural forms of resistance. But they are also struggles over resources and frequently, over state power. Some are hybrid organizations, some are broad-based movements and networks with little apparent formal or institutional structure. Hybrid organizations and movements also exist in the North, and defy categorization by a framework which draws on a limited set of variables.

Fanon (1963) and L. T. Smith (1999) note that the devaluation of indigenous knowledge(s) is intrinsic to colonization, and emphasize the importance of history for struggle against old and new forms of colonization. As Mignolo (2000) argues:

The 'good' thinking on just social organizations coming from all social knowledges, past and present, South and North, East and West, are as important as the legacies of the European Enlightenment....The future of planetary knowledge requires transcending the colonial difference, the pride in the belief in the privilege of some geohistorical locations without looking at the historical conditions making them possible (p. 316).

Like Mignolo and L. T. Smith, I do not think that this stance means a total rejection of Western knowledge or theory. Rather, as Smith puts it, "it is about centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (1999, p. 39).

Challenges to the dominant fields of social movement theory have come from scholars located, or addressing aspects of social action, in the Third World, as well as criticisms from within social movement theory itself. Indigenous and Third World scholars raise important critiques about the tendency to elevate and universalize Western theories about knowledge, power and history which can compartmentalize, misconstrue or overlook peoples' struggles in the South. Another emerging area of scholarship on social movements charges that theory on movements must be relevant to social activism and builds upon literature and discussions within those movements. I turn now to discuss this approach.

## *II. Knowledge and theory from movements*

Within academia, there is relatively little awareness of the many important debates within the networks of activists, social movements and NGOs that take more critical stances in relation to state power and capital. The literature on social movements and the 'anti-globalization movement' tends towards abstracted, universalizing or

generalizing views, or case studies which are written from the point of view of people not closely associated enough with the practice to be aware of the complexities of the field (e.g. Starr, 2000; Guidry, Kennedy and Zald, 2000; Hamel, Lustiger-Thaler, Nederveen Pieterse and Roseneil, 2001). Some, like Starr (2000) rely heavily on the World Wide Web for their information about the ‘anti-globalization movement’, raising questions about what constitutes a sound methodology for researching and theorizing this field. Moreover, the scholarly literature is dominated by a focus on movements and mobilizations in North America and Europe. In keeping with both critical autoethnography (Church, 1995) and political activist ethnography (Kinsman, 2006; G. Smith, 2006; and Chapter 3 of this thesis), I draw from my experiences as an organizer and activist/researcher to extend and augment the understanding of my topic, including critical reflection of analysis, debates and discussions which I prepared or in which I participated as an organizer, researcher and writer in anti-APEC networks.

Even within movement networks purportedly committed to ‘global justice’, one finds a similar kind of subalternization of knowledge and colonial power dynamics to that found in the academy. Frequently, for example, questions of immigration, indigenous sovereignty, racism and colonialism are viewed as separate, unrelated issues by NGOs and activists critical of neoliberal globalization in the North, while they are often seen as intimately connected by movements in the South (Sivanandan, 1982; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003; Mathew, 2005). Many NGOs in the North and South replicate dominant approaches to hierarchies of knowledge by favouring academic, professionalized forms over learning developed in social struggles.

Holst (2002) uses the concept of “pedagogy of mobilization” to describe

the learning inherent in the building and maintaining of a social movement and its organizations. Through participation in a social movement, people learn numerous skills and ways of thinking analytically and strategically as they struggle to understand their movement in motion; .... Moreover, as coalitions are formed people's understanding of the interconnectedness of relations within a social totality become increasingly sophisticated. (pp. 87-88).

Holst speaks to my own experiences of politicization, of community and activist organizing, and the learning processes that take place in social action. Theory is not merely created from above to be imposed on material conditions of struggle – it is also born out of practice. Just as D. Smith (1987) notes “the basis for a political economy from the standpoint of labour, according to Marx, is precisely that it is grounded in the work and activity of actual individuals producing their existence under definite material conditions” (p. 80), so too does theory and analysis about NGO and social movement networks require such a concrete grounding.

As noted in Chapter 1, Foley's (1999) analysis is also important for informing my research because he acknowledges the way in which learning through involvement in social struggles can be contradictory and constraining. His reflections on how such contradictions and tensions were managed in the context of political education in the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, (and how tightly controlled the training was by an elite) resonates with the accusation that Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) make of NGOs. They charge that “control of intellectual fashion, publications, conferences and research funds provides post-Marxists with an important power base, but one ultimately dependent on avoiding conflict with their external funding patrons” (p. 137). Yet we cannot overlook the importance of theory and knowledge generated within movements and activist practice.

### *Movement-relevant theory*

Flacks (2004) and Bevington and Dixon (2005) raise an important critique of social movement theory which informs my research and concurs with my own standpoint as an activist/organic intellectual. They ask what use is such theorizing if it is detached from social movements and of no use to them. They note that few social movement activists read academic social movement theory, and charge that such endeavours seem to be driven by attempts to define and refine theoretical concepts which are likely to be “irrelevant or obvious to organizers” (Flacks, p. 147). Bevington and Dixon call for recognition of existing movement-generated theory and also dynamic reciprocal engagement by theorists and movement activists in formulating, producing, refining and applying research. In a similar vein, Kelley (2002) argues that “too often, our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they ‘succeeded’ in realizing their visions rather than on their merits or power of the visions themselves” (p. ix). He concurs with Flacks and Bevington and Dixon that social movements generate new knowledge, questions and theory, and emphasizes the need for concrete and critical engagement with the movements confronting the problems of oppressed peoples. Kelley also highlights the importance of drawing conceptual resources for contemporary struggles from critical readings of histories of older movements – an area that I will return to in my discussion of history and historiography later in this chapter. These kinds of knowledge and theory are often shaped by and for concrete and shifting contours of struggle. We need to recover, uncover and draw upon ideas and questions generated in the course of activist practice, and which engage with dilemmas which may not be

apparent to an external observer. A key concern of many movement activists relates to the proliferation and activities of NGOs, and I turn now to discuss this phenomenon.

### *III. The rise of NGOs*

#### *NGOs, neoliberalism and geopolitics*

The 1990s saw the further spread of NGOs and ‘civil society’ organizations and discourse worldwide. Increasingly, governments, intergovernmental organizations and international financial institutions promoted the policy and practice of ‘strengthening civil society’ along with ‘good governance’ (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001 and 2005; Veltmeyer, 2007). These are intrinsic pillars of a neoliberal policy environment, argue Petras and Veltmeyer (2005). The dominant notion of ‘civil society’ emphasizes the rights of individuals to pursue their self-interest rather than collective rights, and upholds the interests of state and capital. It also facilitates what Kamat (2004) calls the privatization of the notion of public interest. Meiksins Wood (1995) cautions the following:

‘Civil society’ has given private property and its possessors a command over people and their daily lives, a power enforced by the state but accountable to no one, which many an old tyrannical state would have envied. [...] The rediscovery of liberalism in the revival of civil society thus has two sides. It is admirable in its intention of making the left more sensitive to civil liberties and the dangers of state oppression. But the cult of civil society also tends to reproduce the mystifications of liberalism, disguising the coercions of civil society and obscuring the ways in which the state oppression itself is rooted in the exploitative and coercive relations of civil society (pp. 254-256).

I will explore a number of the questions that Meiksins Wood raises in this section in relation to the networks that are my primary focus, given the role of NGOs as key ‘civil society’ actors.

NGOs are not a new phenomenon. On the one hand, they operate in so many contexts, roles and contradictory and complex processes that it is difficult to make generalizations about them. On the other, many scholars and activists, often drawing from tools from Marxist political economy traditions (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001, 2005; Santuario, 2001; Biel, 2002; D'Souza, 2002, 2006; Kamat, 2003 and 2004; Mathew, 2005; De Waal, 1997; Wallace, 2003) have offered valuable critiques of NGOs in the context of neoliberalism, arguing that they are being integrated into global capitalist relations. For Petras and Veltmeyer, for example, most NGOs are agents of imperialism.

Politically the NGOs fit into the new thinking of imperialist strategists. While the IMF [International Monetary Fund], World Bank and TNCs [transnational corporations] work with domestic elites at the top to pillage the economy, the NGOs engage in a complementary activity at the bottom, neutralizing and fragmenting the burgeoning discontent that results from the savaging of the economy (p. 138).

Some NGOs have their roots in nineteenth century missionary and/or faith-based charitable and philanthropic work (De Waal, 1997; Gallin, 2000; Manji and O'Coill, 2002). They represent a multiplicity of agendas, functions, organizational structures, values and ideologies. While the term 'NGO' usually implies a non-profit organization, some NGOs are little more than businesses (Hancock, 1989; Jordan and Maloney, 1997; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Reinsborough, 2004). Some are volunteer-driven and claim to have a democratic structure. Others, as Gallin (2000) notes "have a self-appointed and co-opted leadership, are not accountable to any constituency other than public opinion and their funders, do not provide public financial information, and have no clear monitoring and evaluation procedures" (p. 27).

Fowler (2000) sees a number of factors which account for the growth of NGOs involved in Third World development, and their increased relationships with



governments and the private sector. He sees the rightwards shift in Northern politics during the Reagan-Thatcher era as key to “the start of the rise in official finance to, and number of NGOs that continues today” (p. 2). This was due to the move away from government to the market as the engine of growth and progress, and “meant more responsibility to citizens and their organizations” (p. 2). Although funds used to flow primarily from Northern governments or financial institutions to Southern governments, NGOs have increasingly become channels for, and direct recipients of this ‘development assistance’ (Hancock, 1989; Biel, 2000; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Wallace, 2003; Hewson, 2005). This era is also characterized by increased power of wealthy individuals and families to make decisions about who and what are worthy recipients of their private philanthropy. In many cases, and by no means only in the international development sector, NGOs have grown to fill gaps in providing services and public goods which the public sector used to provide. In many countries they also provide job opportunities for former civil servants as the public sector is downsized (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Burrowes, Cousins, Rojas and Ude, 2007). Like Petras and Veltmeyer (2001), Fowler sees another factor in the emergence of NGOs as the creation of a safer space for intellectuals and others on the left during periods of heightened repression, often under authoritarian dictatorships.

Even before the fiscal austerity and public sector cuts of the Reagan-Thatcher era, United Nations conferences, increasing intergovernmental forums, agreements, treaties and negotiations had been accompanied by a parallel process of international NGO meetings, campaigns and other activity. Improved communication technologies and international travel for those who could afford it, and a growing identification of common

issues and problems which transcended national borders also contributed to the rise in international NGO activity. The policies and statements of intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank (2008) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB, 1998) and their representatives also set parameters for which kinds of NGOs will be validated by dialogue or other forms of engagement.

With the end of the Cold War and the declared defeat of communism, the motivation for official development assistance changed. But at the national level, in the ‘triumph’ of capitalism, while many social movements on the left were engulfed in crises, neoliberal economic policies, often imposed through structural adjustment policies (see Chapter 4) provided a fertile breeding ground for organizations set up to fill gaps in services which governments would no longer, or could not provide (Faraclas, 2001; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001 and 2005; Shragge, 2003; Kamat, 2004; K. Singh, 2005; Veltmeyer, 2007). Northern government and private sector funding agencies resourced NGOs as part of an economic and foreign policy strategy to “democratize” countries through ‘civil society’ (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001 and 2005; K. Singh, 2005; Veltmeyer, 2007). This entailed support for only a limited role for a restructured state, free market economic reforms, and an increased role for NGOs and private sector organizations in the provision of social services and local development initiatives. Some NGOs contracted directly with the state to provide services, some received state and private sector funding, while others relied on charitable donations. De Waal (1997) believes that

the expansion of internationalized humanitarianism in the 1980s and 1990s reflects a retreat from accountability, akin to the dominance of neoliberalism. This is no coincidence: the internationalization of social welfare is closely linked to the decline of state authority, which is central

to the neo-liberal project. The humanitarian international may be the 'human face' of neo-liberalism, but it is a charitable face with little accountability (p. 66).

He sees both neoliberalism and international humanitarianism being used as justifications for foreign institutions to intrude into the domestic politics of Third World countries. As I have already argued, the imposition of neoliberal policies is entirely consistent with downloading responsibility for service provision and development projects from the state onto NGOs and communities. We need to seriously interrogate commonly held assumptions that NGOs are inherently benign, neutral and even apolitical actors and to critically examine the roles that they play. For Kamat (2004) and Petras and Veltmeyer (2005), the professionalization of community-based NGOs and their depoliticization works well for neoliberal regimes, keeping "the existing power structure (vis-à-vis the distribution of society's resources) intact while promoting a degree (and a local form) of change and development" (p. 20).

Business lobby groups and think tanks have also been very active in setting up NGOs, and successful in gaining access to international policy forums in this way (Kamat, 2004). Indeed, the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), (a tripartite grouping of academics, and private sector and government officials all said to be acting in their private capacities) which provided much research and intellectual direction for APEC, as well as formal observer status at APEC meetings could claim to be an NGO. Some supposedly community organizations, NGOs and movements are set up by corporations and public relations consultants in an effort to counter opposition to corporate power and shape public opinion and debate on environmental and social issues (Beder, 1997; Hager, 2002). As Beder notes, the 'Wise Use Movement' in the USA, Canada and Australia (which campaigns against environmentalists, environmental

regulation, and for guaranteed access for mining and forestry on public lands) portrays itself as a “poorly financed, grassroots movement” (p. 51). But in the USA it is “stage-managed” by a conservative foundation, the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise. Many of the groups within the Wise Use Movement receive substantial industry funding and support. In other cases, corporations sponsor or form ‘partnerships’ with existing NGOs in an attempt to improve their image. This phenomenon is well documented in Rowell (1996), Beder (1997), Burton (2001), and Lubbers (2002).

Some NGOs are essentially community service or advocacy organizations with little focus on broader social, political or economic issues, and no links to social movements. Others operate at a local and national level and combine policy analysis, lobbying, and mobilization. Others, largely but not solely based in the North, still focus solely on poverty relief overseas, and are increasingly channels for government aid and development budgets. Some maintain a very narrow, specialized single-issue focus, others have a global and local perspective. The extent to which NGOs set their own agendas, and are themselves shaped by the agendas of the forces and actors with which they engage or from whom they derive funding and support is a matter that deserves further study. I will address this matter in more detail with reference to anti-APEC networks in Chapter 5.

Like ‘civil society’, the term ‘NGO’ is itself open to manipulation and control by states and intergovernmental institutions either through legal means such as NGO registration laws or through funding relations which allow for surveillance and regulation of NGO activities. Simpkins (2003) discusses this issue in the Thai context, and Bayat (2000a) outlines government regulations on NGOs in the Middle East. Subtler forms of

government regulation exist in many Northern countries, including the power to revoke charitable or tax-exempt status, and funding relationships which shape NGO policies and positions. As I will illustrate with reference to examples in Chapter 5, the policies and statements of intergovernmental organizations and their representatives also set parameters for which kinds of NGOs will be validated by dialogue or other forms of engagement with political or economic elites.

### *Forces for de/mobilization?*

US activist and writer Patrick Reinsborough (2004) writes:

Just as service oriented NGOs have been tapped to fill the voids left by the state or the market, so have social change NGOs arisen to streamline the chaotic business of dissent. Let's call this trend NGOism, the belief – sometimes found among professional “campaigners” – that social change is a highly specialized profession best left to experienced strategists, negotiators and policy wonks. NGOism is the conceit that intermediary organizations of paid staff, rather than communities, organizing themselves into movements, will be enough to save the world (p. 194).

Just as it is difficult to define a space called ‘civil society’ separate from the state, perhaps we should ask just how non-governmental are many of these organizations? The term “NGOism” has become common among many in social movements and activist networks, especially those with commitments to decentralized, non-hierarchical modes of organizing and mass-based peoples’ movements with more radical platforms (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Reinsborough, 2004). Many social movement activists speak of the “NGOization” of movements and struggles – that is, their institutionalization, professionalization, depoliticization and demobilization (Kamat, 2004; Armstrong and Prashad, 2005; A. Smith, 2007a; Burrowes, Cousins, Rojas and Ude, 2007). Kamat (2004) argues that this process is driven by the neoliberal policy context in which NGOs

operate. Organizations must demonstrate managerial and technical capabilities to administer, monitor and account for project funding. Mass-based organizations of movements who represent their demands themselves through various forms of political mobilization have often been overshadowed or displaced by organizations which claim to represent the poor and marginalized, but in fact have no mass base or popular mandate (Faraclas, 2001; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001, 2003 and 2005; McNally, 2002; Veltmeyer, 2007). Are NGOs legitimate political actors in their own right? When they are not internally democratic, nor accountable to a mass base, how are we to understand their demands for greater democracy and transparency of states or intergovernmental institutions and their legitimacy to speak on behalf of the people?

Some NGOs have their roots in genuine social movements but become disconnected from them and institutionalized (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005; Burrowes, Cousins, Rojas and Ude, 2007). Kamat (2004) highlights a shift among community-based NGOs in a number of Third World contexts “from broad-based political education and organization of the poor to providing social and economic inputs based on a technical assessment of capacities and needs of the community” (p. 168). For Piven and Cloward (1977), “[o]rganizations endure, in short, by abandoning their oppositional politics” (p. xi). They see the preoccupation with financial survival, building and maintaining these organizations diverts energy and resources away from organizing and escalating popular protest movements, and indeed often blunting or curbing them. We can see that at the local, national and international level, where many NGOs lose their capacity (assuming that they had one) to remain critical or to support popular education and mobilization programs. Foweraker (2001) examines this tendency with reference to certain NGOs in

Chile and Brazil. Yet Rucht (2001) notes that the “shift from radical challenger groups to pragmatically oriented pressure organizations” can lead to a “re-radicalization at the fringes” (p. 220). While changed structures and self-interest in organizational survival may often lead to changed, deradicalized ideologies, this process of institutionalization can drive others to seek different models for their movements.

Some NGOs were set up by, and have managed to remain attached, and accountable to people’s movements for specific purposes (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001, 2005; Burrowes, Cousins, Rojas and Ude, 2007; Rojas, 2007). However, these tend to be exceptions. One example in the Asia-Pacific, the Philippine IBON Foundation, was born out of the Marcos years of dictatorship, set up by people’s movements and radical currents within churches as an autonomous research and databank organization. IBON works closely with a multi-sectoral people’s movement providing research and education materials for use in campaigns. IBON was an important player in anti-APEC mobilization and internationally, bringing an unusually grounded, movement-focussed and intellectually rigorous analysis of national, regional and global economic and political issues. Its close connections with mass-based social movements such as the militant Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) trade union centre, and the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) peasant farmers’ movement as well as other sectoral, national democratic movements on the left helped to maintain its accountability to people’s struggles in the Philippines. Such active and close connections to popular movements and clear roles (such as providing movement-focused research driven by people’s needs) are vital to sustain accountability and mandate for NGOs of this kind (IBON Research Department, 2003).

Some organizations are hybrid activist/social movement organizations which work at building social movements and community mobilization, and are also constituted in a way to be recognized in an organizational form which allows them to seek support from philanthropic foundations, or state funding and tax-exempt status where these exist (A. Smith, 2007b; Burrowes, Cousins, Rojas and Ude, 2007). For example, Burrowes, Cousins, Rojas and Ude note that South Africa's Landless People's Movement, and Brazil's MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – landless rural worker's movement) have strategic relationships with NGOs, many of which “were started at the request of the movements, usually to provide specific skills or resources” but “ultimately ... are not essential. If those NGOs collapsed tomorrow, the movements would remain intact” (p. 231).

Other NGOs never had grassroots to begin with. Many of the larger Northern aid and development NGOs fall into this category. Meanwhile, often funded by Northern NGOs, private foundations and government development assistance programs, some Third World NGOs have been vehicles for relatively privileged intellectuals to research, or to conduct professionalized lobbying of governments or international institutions, but have later reached out to social movements as their legitimacy and lack of a grassroots base has been challenged. Focus on the Global South and Third World Network are both examples of these kinds of organizations in the Asia-Pacific region (Brown, 2003; Caouette, 2005).

While there are concerns about NGOs taking over roles and functions of the state, without any real lines of accountability to the people, so too there are concerns about their impact on the political space and popular movements. Do NGOs open up political



space or represent a new form of regulation and containment? Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) see the vast majority of NGOs as serving to displace, destroy or neutralize social movements fighting for economic and social injustice throughout the Third World.

***Professionalized intellectual policemen? NGOs and gatekeeping***

Petras and Veltmeyer view the vast majority of NGOs as “intellectual policemen who define “acceptable” research, distribute research funds and filter out topics and perspectives that project a class analysis and struggle perspective” (p. 137). This ‘intellectual policeman’ function of many NGOs is very real. As I will discuss further in Chapter 5, many NGOs serve as a gatekeeper, regulating access to knowledge about struggles in the South, and indeed local mobilizations for social and economic justice. In Canada, for example, dominant NGOs in ‘anti-globalization’ networks have failed to address the connections between the experience of Indigenous Peoples and the racialized nature of immigration policy with the spread of neoliberalism (see Thobani, 2007 on this matter). On the other hand, organizations such as the Council of Canadians appeal to ‘Canadian values’, a sense of nationalism, and a vision of Canada which is essentially a social democratic nation-state with strong powers to regulate the economy (Barlow and Clarke, 1996; Barlow, 1997; Ayres, 1998). This has attracted criticism from activists of colour and Indigenous activists whose struggles and lived realities of racism and injustice as a result of Canadian state policies are ignored (Choudry, 2007 and Chapter 5).

A related concern is the way in which some NGOs – especially aid and development agencies with funding relationships to partner organizations in the Third

World, and some research and advocacy NGOs in both North and South - position themselves as the gatekeepers between social movements and organizations in different parts of the South. That is, they act as intermediaries, and yet their roles and interests in doing so, and the power inherent in acting in this way are frequently invisible and rarely subject to critical examination (Burrowes, Cousins, Rojas and Ude, 2007). Townsend and Townsend (2004) note that gatekeeper NGOs “command the discourse, can write the funding proposals...and are ‘in the information loop’” (p. 281), often creating a sense of powerlessness for those on the outside. In the context of the anti-APEC mobilizations, an example of an organization which plays this role would be Bangkok-headquartered Focus on the Global South, which attracts considerable funding but has no movement base to which to it is accountable. Yet through its networks and resources it is able to bring together (and also to exclude) movement and NGO actors for different projects and campaigns in which it is associated. In this process, some voices are valorized, and some silenced. Northern NGOs and social movement activists are often unaware of, or unconcerned about, whether Southern organizations and their representatives have a genuine grassroots base, or rather, whether they represent a professional class of NGO representatives with access to international networks. In their eagerness to demonstrate connections with the Third World, these NGOs tend to link with people most like them, that is, NGO professionals whose practice and discourse is rooted in liberal traditions. I will explore some of the specific contexts of NGOs and social movements in the Asia-Pacific in Chapter 5, after discussing the regional background for these organizations, movements and campaigns in Chapter 4.

### *NGOs and the ideology of pragmatism*

More insidious than the raw structural constraints exerted by the foundation/state/non-profit nexus is the way in which this new industry grounds an epistemology – literally a *way of knowing* social change and resistance praxis – that is difficult to escape or rupture. ...[T]he non-profit industrial complex has facilitated a bureaucratized *management of fear* that mitigates against the radical break with owning-class capital (read: foundation support) and hegemonic common sense (read: law and order) that might otherwise be posited as the necessary precondition for generating counter-hegemonic struggles. (Rodriguez, 2007, p. 31)

In NGO networks, there is much focus on development and development models which often obscures capitalist assumptions which underpin the dominant models being imposed. Instead, these organizations merely seek to ameliorate some of the social or environmental impacts through community development and participation-based development projects. Meiksins Wood (1995) succinctly describes some intellectual and conceptual dilemmas which I believe help to explicate some of the cleavages of NGO/trade union positions regarding APEC and neoliberalism, and the implications for the NGOization of political space in general:

Left intellectuals, if not embracing capitalism as the best of all possible worlds, hope for little more than a space in its interstices and look forward to only the most local and particular resistances. At the very moment when a critical understanding of the capitalist system is most urgently needed, large sections of the intellectual left, instead of developing, enriching and refining the required conceptual instruments, show every sign of discarding them altogether. [...] Intellectuals on the left, then, have been trying to define new ways, other than contestation of relating to capitalism. The typical mode, at best, is to seek out the interstices of capitalism, to make space within it for alternative ‘discourses’, activities and identities (pp. 1-2).

With the rise of NGOs and the enlarging of the political space that they took up arose forms of hegemonic NGO politics. I believe that many of these organizations adhere to an *ideology of pragmatism* which connects with Piven and Cloward’s (1977) observations regarding the rationale for, and effects of the institutionalization of poor

people's struggles, and Meiksins Wood's critique of left intellectuals. This ideology assumes that the most that can be hoped for in terms of social change are limited gains as opportunities permit *within* existing structures. For Kamat (2004), rather than "deepening the gains made on the basis of popular democratic struggles, NGOs are being re-inscribed in the current policy discourse in ways that strengthen liberalism and undermine democracy" (p. 171).

With their praxis and principles usually rooted in liberal notions about society and the state, many NGOs vehemently denounced or stigmatized activists and movements that drew from Marxist traditions as doctrinaire, anachronistic ideologues, excluding them from their events (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Petras, 2002), perhaps illustrating Rodriguez' (2007) concept of a "bureaucratized management of fear". Ideology and pragmatism need not exist in a binary relationship to each other. In their professionalized and institutionalized realities, and given the nature of the international political economy which helps to socially organize many NGOs in the interests of ruling through funding and other forms of patronage from elites, they enact what is often a doctrinaire ideology of pragmatism. Thus, as Greenfield (2001), Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) and McNally (2002) suggest, they operate in spaces within the "interstices of capitalism" rather than seeking to transform the system altogether. Their discourses may sound invitingly progressive at face value, but they are disconnected from social movements that confront state and capital (Petras, 2002). Instead many of these organizations focused on lobbying and trying to influence elites. In doing so they became more driven by notions of polite reformism and self-interest in the maintenance of their organization and funding relationships – and ultimately serve ruling regimes (McNally, 2002; Rojas, 2007; A.

Smith, 2007a). In some cases, these organizations have become corporate entities in their own right (Blood, 2005), part of what Rodriguez, (2007), Rojas (2007) and A. Smith (2007b) describe as “the non-profit industrial complex” (A. Smith, 2007b, p. 3), modelled after capitalist structures. In Chapter 5, I will illustrate the concept of an NGO ideology of pragmatism with reference to examples from anti-APEC networks.

We need to map the political economy of NGOs, their ideologies and claims to representation to donor organizations and broader implications in capitalist relations, asking which perspectives are amplified and which are suppressed in this process. There needs to be more critical analysis of support and/or funding given to NGOs and various ‘civil society’ initiatives such as NGO conferences by state governments and international institutions. Such analysis should also examine ways in which (after Piven and Cloward, 1977) such material support can orient organizations to prioritize institutional survival and maintenance at the expense of mobilization, and account for other ways in which NGO/movement actions may be shaped by material incentives. This has implications for the professionalization of social change (Reinsborough, 2004; A. Smith, 2007b) and the spread of forms of marketization and competition among NGOs and social movements for mobilization against neoliberalism. Petras and Veltmeyer’s (2001) analysis raises many uncomfortable – and important - questions about NGOs, social movements and ‘civil society’ which few studies of these areas have explored. Marxist political economy traditions are important in this pursuit. As Seabrook (2002) reminds us, “[t]he ghost of Marx haunts the discussions of social justice and equality of the anti-globalization movement. The failure of Communism does not invalidate Marx’s analysis of the position of the exploiters and the oppressed” (p. 9). Political economy

analysis draws attention to the politics of funding and other forms of support for 'civil society' activities which tie NGOs and community organizations into the interests of the state and capital.

How do contemporary NGOs relate to mass movements and collective struggle? In some cases there is outright hostility and suspicion towards NGOs from mass movements, especially towards those which receive government and/or foreign funding. How do the institutionalization and bureaucratization of organizational forms advance or inhibit movements for social change? I turn now to further discuss some of these dynamics in relation to the networks of NGOs and movements that have grown in opposition to neoliberal globalization.

### ***Where to look for the 'anti-globalization movement'?***

In what sense can we say that there is *an* 'anti-globalization movement'? As I will illustrate in Chapter 5 with reference to anti-APEC activism, it is rather the case of many social movements and NGOs, throughout the world, ranging across a broad political spectrum, some working in coalition with others within and outside national boundaries, sometimes in collaboration, and sometimes in outright opposition to each other. Is it not more the case of networks, many of them formal, many not, some temporary and some longer-term which comprise this phenomenon? How and where is the 'movement' said to exist? Is it an anti-corporate globalization movement, a global justice movement, an anti-capitalist movement, or something else? It depends who is being asked – and in what location one asks the question.

Prashad (2003), commenting on the North American context, says that “it is unclear whether it should be called a ‘movement’ or simply a ‘mobilization’” (p. 195). Is this movement – or movements - in our communities and neighbourhoods? At parallel NGO summits? At major mobilizations on the streets outside of official summits? Or in ongoing campaigns and solidarity links between organizations and movements? Prashad warns of an operational disconnect between many who make up the large “anti-globalization” mobilizations in the USA and what he terms “the contingent class” (p. 192) - the working poor, unemployed and communities of colour. He says that there is a tendency for the former to disregard everyday reform fights, “an integral part of the struggle” (p. 192), and to focus instead on large, intermittent demonstrations. Prashad asks whether the frontlines of struggle are at these mobilizations, or in the everyday acts of resistance and survival of the contingent class. “[T]he movement’ has come to be defined by ‘the mobilization,’ and this has major class implications for how the movement in general works” (p. 192), he contends.

In an era of neoliberal globalization, the nation-state is still a primary locus and target of struggle. Notwithstanding the political and economic power and reach of global capital, states retain powerful roles. States sign trade and investment agreements, implement neoliberal reforms, collaborate with domestic and transnational corporate elites. States cut social spending, deregulate the labour market, and maintain the armed forces and police. States set immigration laws and maintain national borders. While the chosen or imposed paths of neoliberalism have radically reshaped the nature of government and governance, nation-states have not become irrelevant or a thing of the past (Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000; McNally, 2002; Boron, 2005; M. Jackson, 2007). How,

whether, where and when social movements and organizations contesting neoliberal globalization engage with governments depends on a wide range of factors. While some NGOs maintain a focus almost solely on the international arena, and some look for new opportunities for political leverage at a supranational or transnational level, for many NGOs and social movements, the state remains both a target and terrain of struggle (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Goodman, 2002). Some NGOs cooperate closely with domestic governments at an international level, while others are diametrically opposed. Organizations which frame their demands in liberal social democratic traditions demand a humanized form of capitalism and a retooled state. Marxist and anarchist organizations and movements frequently target the state and transnational capital. Indigenous Peoples' movements often confront transnational capital and international institutions and processes like the WTO but also challenge the legitimacy of the state, constituted as it is on denial and dispossession of Indigenous societies.

Goodman (2002) raises important questions about the legitimacy of international NGOs, predominantly based in the North, to become vehicles for "people power" (p. xvii) in this international space, and also questions their political leverage and institutional capacity to perform this task. He sees NGOs that operate at this level as broadly reformist, seeking greater institutional accountability and the formulation of goals that address popular priorities rather than elite interests. But this mode of operating is elitist and only open to a privileged few with access (albeit limited and contested) to either critique or advise agents of globalization, and their willingness to operate within the parameters set by those institutions. The ability for these actors to pursue this mode of action is frequently linked to their relationships with state governments in Northern



countries and the fact that their ideologies and political platforms do not reject the fundamental principles of these institutions.

A crucial question which determines the forms and arenas for contestation is the perspective of an organization or movement on capitalism, and specifically, the form of capitalism being advanced through neoliberal globalization. Goodman offers three models of social movements under globalization. These are: (1) elite cosmopolitanism of those international NGOs seeking to impose checks on or reform intergovernmental agencies, which he dubs “globalist adaption”; (2) “localist confrontation” where struggles for forms of autonomy take place at a local or national level, usually disconnected from the global arena; and (3) “transnational resistance”. This last model refers to the way in which some movements have remained focussed on local mobilization and on state power, “especially as neoliberal integration has defined new and more authoritarian roles for the national state” (p. xxi). The latter movements have also built transnational alliances and exploited transnational political leverage. However, the models which have been used to understand these spheres frequently fail to take account of the diverse histories, forms and politics of actors, the nature of organizations, and concrete conditions on the ground. In “global civil society” (Keane, 2003) whose voices are heard? And why? What relationship do large, bureaucratic international NGOs without a mass base have with democratic social movements? When, for example, Oxfam International (2002) advocates on behalf of the Third World’s poor, or Greenpeace describes itself as the voice of “this fragile Earth” (Greenpeace website), on what basis are such claims made? Does the advocacy and lobbying of such organizations amplify the voices of people at the grassroots, or drown them out? While NGOs and social

movements sometimes seemingly put aside their differences to forge coalitions, alliances and networks on shared concerns or against common opponents, tensions and divergent views and values remain.

The process of co-optation of some NGOs cannot be divorced from the reverse side of the coin for those who refuse to operate within the parameters set from above – increased repression, surveillance and the criminalization of dissent. McNally (2002) notes that

many NGO and labour leaderships have sought to prove their respectability by denouncing those who engage in less polite forms of protest... The reality of the international Left today is a global parting of the ways, particularly in the South, where increasingly militant protests and rebellions against neoliberalism pursue a radically different strategy from the reform-minded lobbying efforts of mainstream NGOs and labour leaders (p. 198).

These differences are not merely ones of strategy and tactics, but reflect different ideological, historical and theoretical understandings. Reformist NGOs frequently reproduce media stereotyping and official statements by denouncing street protests and claiming that these are stopping their message getting heard (McNally, 2002; Cockburn and St Clair, 2002; Davis, 2002). Elsewhere I contend that those NGOs that do participate in ‘civil society’ consultations are themselves complicit in the criminalization of more direct forms of dissent which has accompanied the spread of ‘anti-globalization’ activism (Choudry, 2003a). Trade campaign literature of Oxfam (2002), Christian Aid (2002), and Greenpeace (2001), illustrates the attempts by these organizations to brand themselves as responsible, credible, reasonable representatives of ‘civil society’ by attacking those who have engaged in non-violent direct action against the WTO and the World Bank. In doing so, they also seek to distance themselves clearly and publicly from

anti-capitalist analyses of neoliberal globalization. Labour researcher and activist Gerard Greenfield (2001) writes that by

accepting globalization and focusing on the rhetoric of poverty, democracy and social inclusion, these civil society groups are in fact helping the WTO out of its crisis of legitimacy. This occurs at a time when the very thing we should be doing is deepening the crisis. More importantly, these civil society and social groups are creating conditions that would render the anti-globalization movements less dangerous both for themselves and for the political and economic elite. They've clearly missed the point. We can only be effective if we continue doing whatever it is that makes us dangerous - and do it better. It's in being uncivil society that we find we can challenge the WTO and what really lies behind it (p. 86).

In practice, the concept of “global civil society” seems to refer mainly to international NGOs which work beyond national boundaries in networks or formations around particular issues (e.g., human rights, free trade), geographical regions, and institutions (e.g. the World Bank and the WTO). To what extent do these NGOs act as a counterbalance to state-centred governance and global capital, and to what extent are their own parameters, goals, and institutional structures shaped by their interactions with these forces, or by ruling relations as D. Smith puts it? To whom are they accountable? Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald (2000) theorize a “transnational public sphere”, which brings social movements together across borders as “a real as well as conceptual space in which movement organizations interact, contest each other and their objects, and learn from each other” (p. 3). Barnett and Cavanagh (1994) write of a global civil society that will “develop global consciousness rooted in authentic local communities” (p. 430). Yet these terms are analytically vague, ahistorical, and disconnected from actual practice.

Organizations and movements critical of the terms ‘civil society’ and ‘global civil society’ point to the way in which these phrases are being promoted by the very

institutions and governments which are the targets for opposition movements (McNally 2002; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Veltmeyer, 2007). They see that the terms fit comfortably within, and indeed are taken up by, neoliberal discourse and public relations strategies of governments and international financial and economic institutions. The WTO adopted guidelines for relations with NGOs in 1996 (WTO, 1996). The World Bank electronically publishes a monthly “civil society engagement newsletter” (World Bank, 2008). I discuss the matter of official public relations strategies and tensions surrounding NGO engagement with APEC more fully further in Chapters 4 and 5.

In sum, we should be cautious in seeking to apply the assumptions made by civil society and social movement theorists in the North about the changing nature of society, post-industrialism and modes of capitalism to the global South. In many countries, as I note in Chapter 4 with regard to the Asia-Pacific, classic feudalism exists alongside, and is often intertwined with transnational corporate agribusiness, while in the cities, pockets of “post-industrial” high-tech service industries sit alongside old-style industrial production. Eschle (2001) warns that

movements that do not share the perspective of the particular group taken as an exemplar by the theorist are simply defined out of existence....Oppression and conflict within civil society and between social movement actors cannot simply be wished away or ignored, and neglect of this issue represents a central failing of post-marxist versions of civil society (p. 74).

As I have demonstrated, the dominant strands of social movement theory face criticism for their levels of abstraction, limited sets of variables, lack of political economy analysis, ethnocentrism, and irrelevance to social movements themselves. The network of movements and NGOs that is the focus of my research is one example of the ways in which such milieus are complex and difficult to fit into compartmentalized

analyses<sup>14</sup>. Having outlined some major shortcomings of the dominant strands of social movement theory, I turn now to outline more fully the importance of a number of conceptual resources derived from other theoretical traditions which will inform my research in this thesis. I have already noted the importance of historical understandings in analyzing social activism. The following section reviews and draws upon a number of approaches to critical history which may help to elucidate questions of power and knowledge in movement/NGO networks against neoliberal globalization.

#### *IV. Social history and 'history from below'*

Analytical tools from theoretical and methodological debates among historians writing about earlier social movements can help explicate internal dynamics and external contexts which shape movements and NGOs. In order to analyze the present, we need to problematize the production of histories – and not only dominant versions. We also need to pay attention to the organized political everyday uses for which historical narratives and historical readings can be used. Specifically, my research draws from the work of Indian Marxist social historian Sumit Sarkar (1983a, 1983b and 1998) and the initial promise of the Subaltern Studies school in India to generate histories from below (Guha, 1982 and 1983). These historiographical approaches, the debates within and between them, and the questions that they pose can inform the understanding of current social movements and NGOs, and the appropriation of some of those movements in the interests of elites. They contribute to my critique of dominant frames of analysis in social

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<sup>14</sup> Much of my discussion of NGOs and political space is in implicit dialogue with Habermas' theory of communicative action (1987) and social movements, as well as his critiques of failings or mistakes in some European movements.

movement theory and highlight and account for aspects of social struggles and knowledge production which tend to be overlooked by social movement theorists.

Two other conceptual threads are important to bring into this historical theorizing – geohistory and the coloniality of power. Given our differing spatial locations in the history of imperialism and colonialism, D’Souza (2004) emphasizes the importance of geohistory. She argues that we should strive for “an integrated understanding that accords primacy to geohistorical experiences in the structuration of societies and the causes of social problems”. According to Quijano, the coloniality of power refers to the ways in which a system of world power is based on a ‘racial’ social classification of the world population “expressed in the control of productive resources and capital, as social relations, including salary, as a privilege of ‘Whiteness’...[T]he most significant historical implication is the emergence of a Euro-centred capitalist colonial/modern world power that is still with us” (p. 218). Razack (2004) and Grewal (1998) also critically interrogate the coloniality of power. Both trouble the ways in which Northern actors (for example, governments and NGOs) construct themselves as innocent saviours or helpers in relation to a dehumanized, uncivilized Third World. In sum, these authors all attend to broader historical processes and systems of power, as well as the contours and specificities of how these play out, and are maintained or resisted, in local contexts.

### ***History, ideology and power***

Many historiographical discussions of social movements in pre- and post-independence India have been greatly influenced by Gramsci’s (1971) efforts to theorize and understand Italian history. Gramsci’s historical analysis of popular mass movements, the failure of the Italian left to achieve radical social change alongside the construction of

a unified Italian state, and the rise of fascism have resonated deeply with many Indian scholars (e.g. Guha, 1983; Sarkar, 1983b; A. Ahmad, 2000) who are exploring similar questions, notwithstanding different geographical and historical contexts. Later in this chapter, I will review some of the recent literature concerned with history and the ‘anti-globalization’ movement, and identify some ways in which these debates can be helpful in advancing a historical understanding of them. As activists, readings of history can greatly inform our analysis and conceptualization of the conditions we find ourselves in, and the political spaces, opportunities and strategies available to us.

History is socially and ideologically constructed. Bannerji, (1995), Guha (1983), Sarkar (1998), and L. T. Smith (1999) illustrate how historiography has played a key role in the justification of colonial rule and how the rights of the colonized to represent or define themselves are systematically excluded in the writing of these histories. For L. T. Smith (1999), history is “mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others” (p. 34). Because of this relationship with power, she argues, Indigenous Peoples have been excluded, marginalized and ‘Othered’ by dominant versions of history. In her critique of James Mill’s historiography in *The History of British India*, Bannerji sees the role of intellectuals who “interpret the reality to be ruled and inscribe this into suitable categories” (p. 50) as fundamental to providing a conceptual or categorical framework and administrative basis for British colonial rule. In critically analyzing historical accounts, we must ask whose voice is heard, whose excluded, and for what purpose.

L. T. Smith (1999) writes that “[t]he negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly ‘primitive’ and ‘incorrect’ and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization” (p. 29). Sarkar (1998) writes that imagined pasts, and selected nationalist histories can be tools to legitimate and popularize chauvinistic nationalism and rightwing extremism. As he demonstrates, the far right can draw upon anti-colonial histories of independence struggles for ammunition to fuel communalism and bigotry. This offers some important warnings to movements against neoliberalism, as groups and movements from many shades of the political spectrum – including the extreme right in many countries – mobilize in different ways against economic globalization, including reassertions or reconfigurations of highly racialized and exclusionary nationalism(s) (Krebbers and Schoenmaker, 2002; Monbiot, 2002; J. Singh, 2003).

### ***Subaltern, Marxist and feminist historiographies***

Subaltern Studies scholars have attempted to understand the consciousness that informs political action by subaltern social groups – initially, anti-colonial peasant insurgencies in colonial India. While Gramsci (1971) held that subaltern classes are by definition disorganized, lacking in class consciousness, and entirely excluded from the histories of dominant and hegemonic classes of civil society, Guha, the Indian historian whose *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (1983) is a foundational contribution to the Subaltern school, focused on finding signs of consciousness among subaltern classes - peasant rebellions in colonial India between 1783 and 1900. In doing so, Guha demonstrated their agency and autonomy, developing an analytical framework and thematized reading strategies.



Subaltern Studies initially focused on historical periods and milieus about which scarce data were available and which precluded access to oral histories and ethnographic fieldwork. The main goal of this school has been to bring forth a history from below and to explore subaltern consciousness from within instead of from above, as elitist forms of history-writing (colonial, Marxist, or nationalist) have tended to do. Sarkar (1983b) described the Subaltern school as part of a "worldwide historiographical trend, associated with imaginative use of a wider range of sources, along with a certain distrust or cynicism about more-or-less bureaucratically-organised and outwardly successful political movements" (p. 1). The tension between histories written from above, and histories from below continues in contemporary academic and popular accounts of present-day social movements.

Although much of Subaltern Studies research has focused on peasantry, it is also applied to other marginalized sectors of society, including urban poor, women, and Indigenous Peoples, in contemporary contexts as well as historical ones. It has also been taken up beyond South Asia, notably in Latin America (Mignolo, 2000)<sup>15</sup>. Guha's thematic analytical framework as articulated in *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* is an interesting interpretive tool with which to understand better and bring forth voices from movements which have often been ignored, dismissed, or reinterpreted through elite histories because of their marginal location. Sarkar (1998), a strong critic of the Subaltern School, writes approvingly of Guha's analytical

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<sup>15</sup> Mignolo (2000) raises interesting questions regarding the applicability of Subaltern Studies in Latin America. Commenting on the importation and spread of these approaches to history from South Asia to Latin America, he outlines his interest in "the politics and sensibilities of geohistorical locations in the production, exportation, and importation of knowledge" (p. 196). He cautions that "if the subalternization of Amerindian languages and ethnic cultures has been a constant issue in Latin America since the 1970s, why is this legacy being forgotten and recast in the discourse of Indian subaltern studies?"(ibid) and wonders whether its adoption in Latin America is a new form of academic colonialism.

thematization of peasant movements – “the role of rumour, the interrelationships and distinctions between crime and insurgency...” (p. 86).

The value of different reading techniques to render histories from below more visible remains pertinent for analyzing more recent and contemporary histories. Criminalization of dissent remains a key concern for social movement and NGO activists around the world, as elites often construct them as criminals or even terrorists (Choudry, 2003a; McNally, 2002; Kinsman, 2006). If, as Mignolo asserts, “the market...is becoming the global design of a new form of colonialism, a global coloniality” (Delgado and Romero, 2000, p. 8) we must critically examine the new forms of marginalization and the ways in which those who are oppressed or displaced resist and confront reconfigured forces of domination and subjugation. We must also be cognizant of the ways in which old and new forms of colonialism are understood by, and shape the context for, many contemporary social struggles. Histories of movements and struggles, whether in the distant past, recent or contemporary, produced by NGOs, activists, journalists, independent media or academic researchers must be examined with a critical lens. We need to ask whether the accounts are written from above or from below, and in doing so, ask whose voices are actually being heard.

Marxist historians understand individuals, social institutions, and societies as products of historical forces founded in material conditions. In Marx's view, the forces of production determine class positions and social relationships. Marxist historians have frequently been accused of being economistic, deterministic and reductionist in their historical accounts. They have been accused of failing to address questions of caste,

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gender and culture (Sarkar, 1998; Sangari and Vaid, 1989; L. T. Smith, 1999) and sacrificing attention to smaller details and dramas of history in order to paint a big picture narrative (Guha, 1982). Indigenous scholars (Churchill, 1992; M. Jackson, 1999) have also challenged Marxist shortcomings in understanding colonialism and Indigenous Peoples' struggles for liberation, arguing that Marxism is ethnocentric and shares similar linear notions of "progress" with capitalist schools of thought, which are undermining Indigenous Peoples' communities and the ecology.

Some Marxist scholars (e.g. Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; McNally, 2002)) have responded that many of its critics overlook extensive debates and discussions within Marxism on issues of race, ethnicity and gender. Arguably, many Third World Marxist scholars have addressed these questions as a central part of their research (Boron, 2005; Bagchi, 2005; D'Souza, 2006). Moreover, Third World Marxists have highlighted the colonial dimensions of contemporary capitalism in the Third World. In particular they attend to the importance of national liberation and self-determination – not just class struggle. They also note that contemporary capitalism can and does sustain feudalism and the dispossession of peasants while at the same time locking Third World societies into patterns of underdevelopment through the colonial control of resources by imperial powers. Third World Marxism also typically views peasant farmers as a potential revolutionary force, besides the urban proletariat (see also Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003, and 2005). While critical of some orthodox Marxist approaches to understanding the colonial world, Sarkar (1998) reminds us not to overlook “precisely that which had been central to Marxist analysis: the dialectical search for contradictions within structures” (p. 5).

Sarkar (1998) praises Indian feminist scholarship for its attention to nuance and ambiguity in contrast to “a triumphal narrative of unilinear advance in the ‘status of women’ through male-initiated nineteenth-century social reform, followed by women’s participation in Gandhian, revolutionary-terrorist or Left-led movements” (p. 41). Colonial, nationalist and Marxist historiographies have been challenged by feminist historians (Sangari and Vaid, 1989; Kumar, 1993). They question how patriarchy is reconstituted in different forms in different classes, castes and communities – including within the nationalist movement and post-independence social movements of the left. The attention paid by feminist historians to the private sphere has important lessons for inquiry into the internal dynamics of contemporary social movements, too. There is often a tendency to overlook the importance of interpersonal dynamics and relationships in academic understandings of social movements and activist organizations. This results from a male-dominated view of history which sets parameters for historical inquiry that include only the public sphere. Dominant versions of history, including left-nationalist ones, have frequently tended to focus on charismatic “leaders” and the leadership of movements by local elites. In turn, after independence, ruling groups have claimed legitimacy by identification with these struggles (Fanon, 1963 and 1970; Sarkar, 1983a and 1983b).

The ways in which elite leaders appropriate mass struggles, often aided by sympathetic historical narratives, and the processes through which elites legitimate themselves through association with these movements, while seeking to limit or undermine militant struggles for radical social change has long been a topic of interest for historians (Sarkar, 1983a and 1983b; Gramsci, 1971). Sarkar (1983b) notes, for

example, “that any leadership, even an avowedly revolutionary one, has a necessarily restrictive aspect” (p. 50), and charges that in the Indian context, “Gandhian restraints inhibited the process of mobilization for the anti-imperialist cause of large sections of the poorer peasantry, tribals, and industrial workers” (p. 51). These limitations “inevitably left a considerable variety of movements outside the ambit of mainstream nationalism” (pp. 51-52).

Sarkar (1983b) uses Gramsci’s concept of “passive revolution” to analyze how leadership in the Indian anti-imperialist struggle remained with relatively privileged groups in urban and rural areas, and how popular forces failed to build an alternative hegemony. By “passive revolution”, Sarkar refers to the process of how “attainment of political independence and unity was successfully detached by the leading bourgeois group...from radical social change” (p. 72). In this process, the nationalist bourgeoisie maintains hegemony by incorporating forces which potentially threaten its dominance, while claiming the right to speak for all sectors of society, even those which remain disempowered or marginalized. Smaller or less well-documented movements, or those which do not fit neatly into the typology being applied in standard historical frames are easily overlooked or defined as contingent on leadership by “charismatic leaders, advanced political organizations or upper classes” (Guha, 1983, p. 4). Besides the categorizations of particular strands of social movement theory, the mode of historical inquiry has a bearing on which movements and struggles are acknowledged as such, and how definitional parameters are set in this process.

### *Limitations of Subaltern Studies*

The Subaltern school seeks to fill in important methodological and historiographical gaps and to question perceived rigidities in orthodox Marxist and dominant schools of academic historiography. However, the importance of class analysis, economic and material conditions, and a focus on the state and state actors remains important, as does an awareness of the ways in which hegemony is reconfigured and maintained internationally and transnationally. Some scholars have taken the proponents and trajectories of Subaltern Studies to task over their rejection or dissatisfaction with traditional Marxist concepts of class as an organizing concept and the singular attention that some writers pay to excavating micro-histories without adequate attention to the broader contexts in which they are situated.

Subaltern Studies has attracted strong criticism, especially for its tendencies towards essentialism, retrogressive indigenism and its “over-rigid application of binary categories” (p. 90). As Sarkar notes (1998), “a tendency emerged towards essentializing the categories of ‘subaltern’ and ‘autonomy’, in the sense of assigning them more or less absolute, fixed, decontextualized meanings and qualities” (p. 88). While largely rejecting Marxist class analysis and categories, the Subaltern Studies school has created a new dualism, new binaries, heavily based on culturalism. For most Subaltern Studies scholars, a focus on “fragments” or moments of history and studies of “community” and subaltern groups have become delinked from the economy. This trend in turn articulates to the global tendency towards postmodern thought and away from materialist theories and methodologies (Sarkar, 1998). Colonial-Western cultural hegemony is set up in stark binary opposition against a kind of valorized “authentic” indigeneity, “subaltern”

consciousness and cultural values. So there is colonial domination on the one hand, and autonomy/resistance on the other. Little or no attention is paid to internal contradictions within either of these dualistic, homogenized constructs, or the possibilities that effective resistance to colonial domination might include the subversion of dominant institutions, processes or discourses. Instead, because of the all-pervasiveness attributed to Western power-knowledge it is assumed that autonomy and resistance can only take place in fleeting moments of history or in some “community-consciousness” that is “untainted by post-Enlightenment power-knowledge” (Sarkar, 1998, p. 5). Indian Marxist scholar, Aijaz Ahmad (2000) views the Subaltern School as hostile to the Left. He writes that

the all-purpose term of ‘subalternity’ is used *conceptually* as an alternative to classical Marxist categories of class structure, and *politically* as a weapon to attack the organized Left; in its various deployments, the term ‘subalternity’ becomes so mobile and indeterminate that virtually everyone becomes, in one situation or another, a subaltern (p. 143).

Indeed, how does one make assessments about who is a subaltern? Critical questions about representation and whether indeed subaltern voices are genuinely heard must always be asked. While acknowledging that colonial domination and exploitation are central to the history of colonial India, Sarkar (1998) calls for a more nuanced, self-reflective approach to history, one which recognizes

variations in the extent of colonial, cultural or other domination across times, regions, social spaces, and the possibility of earlier tensions (around caste and gender, notably) being reproduced in ways no doubt conditioned by the colonial presence, but not uniquely determined by it (p. 43).

Earlier, Sarkar had argued (1983a) that “[s]tudy of the autonomy of popular movements must broaden itself out into more wide-ranging efforts to explore popular perceptions, mentalities, cultures..... and – above all – a relentless self-questioning of all received categories and frameworks...” (p. xx). Triumphalism and romanticism are other

tendencies in historiographies of social movements, particularly nationalist ones, which can gloss over major issues of historical and contemporary concern (Sarkar, 1983a and 1998; Ahmad (2000)). Another danger is posed by totalizing histories which ignore internal tensions, paradoxes and contradictions within movements, or contradictions and tensions within systems and institutions of domination. L. T. Smith (1999) argues that the notion that history is a totalizing discourse is central to dominant approaches to history:

The concept of totality assumes the possibility and desirability of being able to include absolutely all known knowledge into a coherent whole. In order for this to happen, classifications systems, rules of practice and methods had to be developed to allow for knowledge to be selected and included in what counts as history (p. 30).

In this process, what gets excluded, and how do we go about recovering discarded knowledge and history?

### ***Democratizing the production of critical histories as a tool for analysis and change***

There is a powerful tendency to read back what we want in history, even to construct imagined pasts. Critical analyses of historiography are not only important academic pursuits, but also provide valuable resources for wider society. Sarkar (1983b, and 1998), Ahmad (2000), and others suggest ways in which certain historical readings and methodologies can lend themselves, sometimes inadvertently, to support far right chauvinism in broader society. They also show how significant popular movements can be rendered invisible or their importance minimized through being redefined as merely an auxiliary or a forerunner to a more recognized, elite movement, for example, by approaches to history which adhere to certain inflexible typologies. Feminist historians (Sangari and Vaid, 1989; Kumar, 1993) challenge historical narratives that perpetuate



patriarchal assumptions, while they develop new methodological approaches, and seek to recapture and make accessible women's voices and experiences. Sarkar (1998) writes that "an exploration of the social conditions of production of history cannot afford to remain a merely intellectual project. It needs to become part of wider and far more difficult efforts to change these conditions" (p. 46). The project of building a new kind of historical culture and democratizing the production of history seems vital, not least for my research which aims to contribute not only to academic scholarship, but to inform activist practice.

In pursuing this project, we need to ask how historical writing might enable scholars and activists to better understand the making of contemporary social movements. Who writes these histories? How are these versions of histories generated, and where are their authors situated? L. T. Smith (1999) argues:

Coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things (p. 34).

Echoing this view, D'Souza (2004) argues that while historians and history-writing cannot change society, they can contribute to developing conceptual resources which can be adapted and used by social movements seeking emancipation of societies. Therefore dialogue between historians committed to writing social history and social movement activists is crucial. I concur with Mignolo (2000), Sarkar (1998) and L. T. Smith (1999) in viewing that the shortcomings of much orthodox western Marxist thought in relation to colonialism, gender and race need to be acknowledged and challenged, but that Marxist understandings about class, capital and economics offer important insights which should

not be discarded as we inquire into contemporary social movements and the local, national and international configurations of imperial and colonial power that they confront.

### ***Historiography and the 'anti-globalization movement'***

In an era of accelerated and deepened globalization, nationalist histories, both left and right, often celebrate the nation-state and contrast it to a vision of a seamless, borderless global economy. These nostalgic and idealized accounts frequently sidestep questions of internal struggles against injustice (and often, the state itself) of Indigenous Peoples, women, workers, immigrants and other marginalized communities. Academic inquiry, media accounts and more popular histories also display similar tendencies to overlook histories from below. They do this by focussing, in a not dissimilar way to what has been discussed in a national context, through what Sarkar (1983a) describes as “a study from the top downwards” (p. 43), focussing on perceived leaders, elites and efficient mobilizations. Many grassroots struggles against neoliberalism are overlooked at a national level. But also, as McNally (2002) argues, many of the radical struggles against neoliberalism being waged from below, mainly in the global South “rarely register on the radar screens in the North” (p. 198). As I discussed in Chapter 1, some (L. T. Smith, 1999; Venne, 2001; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003, Boron, 2005, D’Souza, 2006; Bargh, 2007; M. Jackson, 1999 and 2007) emphasize the importance of locating the phenomena of neoliberalism and contemporary resistance movements in older processes, especially colonialism.

Conceptualizing a ‘global justice movement’ or an international ‘anti-globalization’ movement can have the effect of obscuring the fact that within this milieu are many diverse and complex movements and organizations, and that all of these movements and organizations are somehow geographically and historically located. The international nature of these networks certainly adds a layer of complexity to attempts to analyze them. Yet the insights, tensions, dangers and methodological considerations which arise from the debates on the historiography of social movements in India which I have discussed remain relevant. The ‘anti-globalization’ milieu is affected by several layers of contested histories. There are neoliberal versions of history which glorify free market economics and frame its critics as a mixture of Luddites, flat earth advocates, self-interested cliques, naïve but well-meaning fools, and dangerous anarchists (e.g. Friedman, 1999; Moore 1999, and 2003). Many NGOs and social movements openly contest these versions of history and counter with their own accounts (Bevington and Dixon, 2005; Cockburn and St Clair, 2002). But these alternative histories are themselves contested within movement/activist networks. These include debates as to when ‘globalization’ and in turn, ‘anti-globalization’ movements, began (Katsiaficas, 2002; McNally, 2002; Yuen, 2002; Choudry, 2007; M. Jackson, 2007).

Analytical tools, themes and debates developed by historians provide useful lenses with which to study movements and raise warning flags about pitfalls that are easy to fall into when analyzing social movements, or when, as activists, we seek to learn from history. The importance of a historical understanding is shared by a growing number of those engaged in analysis of social movements and organizations which have come to be seen as part of the ‘anti-globalization movement’. Such a perspective also informs and

connects to the methodological approach of institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography (Bannerji, 1995; Kinsman, 2000 and 2006) which I employ in this thesis, and discuss more fully in Chapter 3. Some, especially writing on movements in the global North, warn of a sense of ahistoricity which often permeates accounts of ‘anti-globalization’ movements and constructs them as recent phenomena. Yuen (2002) claims that “the Seattle demonstrations revealed a deep historical amnesia both on the part of the mainstream media, and, unfortunately, many activists themselves” (p. 7). “According to this narrative”, he continues, “the outbreak of unrest in Seattle was like the reawakening of a mastodon trapped in amber since the days of Kent State.” For many academic, media and activist accounts, the forerunners to Seattle, especially anti-neoliberal globalization actions in the South, do not seem to exist. Katsiaficas (2002) notes:

Such disregard slyly reinforces one of the world system’s central ideas: the life of a human being in the United States or Europe is worth more than the life of a Third World person. ...[P]rogressive and radical history must be qualitatively different than the history of the neoliberalist champions and their corporate masters. Our history must reflect the notion that all human life is of equal value (pp. 29-30).

As in the case of histories framed within a single nation, it is also important to strive to understand history so that we can also grasp how elites have been able to undermine, disarm and defeat movements from below. Writing on the ‘anti-globalization’ movement, Jim Davis (2002) notes:

We are not without historical precedents, for it is the history of resistance and social movements which gives capitalism many of its great ideas. A look back at the civil rights movement and the manner in which it was co-opted and neutralized is indicative of the dangers the movement now faces. And few will need to be reminded of the serial sell-outs in the chilling history of trade unionism, usually by its own leadership (p. 180).

Histories of contemporary social movements engaged in struggles against neoliberal globalization written by and about movement elites, leaders and notables, can

marginalize, omit and silence important voices, processes, events in struggles for global justice. They can also influence our movement dynamics, the setting of our parameters, aspirations and strategies. McNally (2002) concurs that sustained social analysis and historical understanding is vital for 'anti-globalization' activists.

Inspiring as the new movements are, they can easily find themselves at a variety of dead ends if they fail to understand the nature of the system they oppose and the sorts of social and political strategies necessary to radically challenge it (p. 12).

Both internationally and at a national level, within anti-globalization milieus, NGOs play an important role in influencing what comes to count as an event of historical significance. The ways in which history is interpreted, constructed, contested, narrated, or ignored is often central to the campaign advocacy and action work of social movements and NGOs which are also active players in the creation and documentation of this history. The production and popularization of historical understandings of NGOs is an area which deserves more critical attention. Many of the criticisms of NGOs resonate with historical analyses of the role of elites in nationalist social movements, but also with some of the critiques of elite forms of historiography. In turn, this affects which forms of social action and organization come to be written about or cited in scholarly literature on social movements.

The way in which many NGOs engaged in campaigns against neoliberal globalization tend to conceptualize, categorize and compartmentalize issues and causes has drawn criticism from a number of scholars and activists (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; D'Souza, 2002a and 2002b; Choudry 2002c; Katsiaficas, 2002). This approach, they argue, lends itself to decontextualized, fragmentary historical understandings and accounts, or complete disregard for history altogether. Some tend towards a view that

sees globalization as an entirely new phenomenon, without regard for historical antecedents or analyses which view it as part of a longer historical process. For many NGOs, totalizing histories or ahistoricity go hand in hand with a tendency towards a reductionist, fragmented single-issue focus. This tends to be quite different from broader social movement worldviews and positions which are grounded and take a longer term historical perspective on struggles for social change. D'Souza (2002a) argues that NGOs have de-linked the present from the past:

The struggle against imperialism and colonisation in the early 20th century against project 'progress' was inextricably linked to the idea of self-determination. De-linking 'corporate globalisation' from history, the state from capital/corporation nexus and the UN organisations from their context and role in the contemporary world, as suggested above, promotes amnesia of history that is dis-empowering... As the idea of self-determination fades from historical memory, the political space concedes, by proxy, to those seeking to make poverty and exploitation of people and nature more sustainable.

Discussing the production of histories by NGOs of the anti-WTO mobilizations in Seattle, Cockburn and St Clair (2002) claim that liberal NGOs constructed a “fantasy version of history” (p. 94). They concocted a “myth of respectable triumph” in Seattle, which downplayed or ignored altogether the role of militant direct action on the streets by thousands in their accounts of the events. “It would no doubt be polite to treat this myth-making as contemptible but harmless self-aggrandisement. But real social movements for change shouldn't be built on illusions, and the self-aggrandisement is far from harmless” (p. 95).

Returning to Gramsci's (1971) concept of passive revolution might help to analyze how elites have appropriated popular anti-neoliberal struggles for their own ends in different national and international contexts. How, for example, have particular NGOs,

political parties, trade union leaderships, and other elites claimed the mantle of ‘anti-globalization’ for their own purposes while detaching demands and aspirations for radical social change? The cooptation of leaders and the elites of the ‘anti-globalization’ world by governments and international institutions, their claims to speak and act on behalf of millions, the demobilization of radical struggles and the appropriation or assimilation of grassroots movements, resonate with previous chapters of popular struggles. Reactions to the latest wave of global capitalism have included retreats into forms of essentialism, cultural chauvinism, nationalist, or movement triumphalism. One can understand the need for inspiring, glorifying histories for mobilizing or propaganda purposes, and the reasons why valorizing all forms of the ‘local’ and ‘community’ might become a rallying cause against domination by global capital. But with these tendencies come the same dangers identified by Sarkar’s critiques of the Subaltern School. As Krebbers and Schoenmaker (2002), Monbiot (2002) and J. Singh (2003) remind us, not only has the far right in many countries mobilized against international free trade agreements, but some NGOs which claim to be part of the ‘anti-globalization’ movement have forged working relationships and alliances with chauvinist nationalist politicians, parties and organizations. A closer attention to history and political economy would surely work to seriously question such tendencies far more rigorously.

#### *V. Organizational analysis*

The final strand of my theoretical framework for analysis draws from theorists who have studied questions of power, democracy, representation, leadership, accountability and organization (Ostrogorski, 1964; Michels, 1978; Jordan and Maloney,

1997; Mumby 1988) for use in examining the NGOs and movements in question.

Michels and Ostrogorski wrote at a time when political parties and systems in Europe were adjusting to the advent of mass suffrage and rapid industrial and social change. Both saw bureaucratic machinery, technical specialization and the concentration of power over the masses in the hands of a few professionalized leaders and officials as consequences of universal suffrage and the growth of large, complex organizations. Ironically, although this appeared to be a period of democratization, with these organizational forms came strict controls on internal debate and dissent, tensions between political principles and the interests of organizational maintenance, and the growth of a self-interested oligarchy with quite different interests from the masses in whose interests they purportedly acted.

Michels (1978) studied the structure and concrete behaviour of socialist parties and trade unions in Germany, Italy and elsewhere in Europe, precisely to illustrate that those organizations apparently most committed to the extension of democracy themselves tended towards undemocratic practices and structures, and oligarchy. Michels held that bureaucracy and large-scale organization inevitably necessitated a division of labour, which in turn meant oligarchy, with “the domination of the elected over the electors, of the mandatories over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Whoever says organization says oligarchy” (p. 21). Leaders, in turn, justified the exclusion of the masses on the grounds of their incompetence. For Michels, the technical specialization “that inevitably results from all extensive organization renders necessary what is called expert leadership” (p. 31). With the emergence of a professional leadership and the delegation of tasks, he saw the beginning of the end of democracy. He held that “the principal cause of oligarchy in the democratic parties is to be found in the technical



indispensability of leadership” (p. 400). Once in power, leaders are interested in retaining power and position. With tenured, paid offices, they become a self-interested, closed caste, distrustful of, and unaccountable to the masses. In trade unions, he saw that the “great complexity of the duties ... and the increasing importance assumed in the life of the union by financial, technical, and administrative questions, render it necessary that the agitator should give place to the employee equipped with technical knowledge” (p. 301). Michels argued that vanity, the desire to dominate, and an “undue belief in personal greatness” (p. 206) are common traits of leaders. They are also “apt to imagine that [they know] the needs of the masses better than these do themselves, an opinion...which for the most part is no more than a form of megalomania” (p. 230), he wrote. Cults of personality and celebrity leadership are common among socialist parties and trade unions, he found. With the growth of an oligarchy, Michels saw new conflicts between leaders and masses:

By a universally applicable social law, every organ of the collectivity, brought into existence through the need for the division of labour, creates for itself, as soon as it becomes consolidated, interests peculiar to itself. The existence of these special interests involves a necessary conflict with the interests of the collectivity (p. 389).

Drawing analogies with the military world, Michels observed that parties tended towards oligarchy and centralization in order to effectively wage modern military warfare. But he noted that democracy “is utterly incompatible with strategic promptness, and the forces of democracy do not lend themselves to the rapid opening of a campaign” (p. 42).

Michels (1978) argued that a climate of hostility towards internal criticism and dissent existed among parties which purported to be democratic “political parties, even when they are the advocates of moral and social ideas of profound import, find it very

difficult to tolerate the utterance of inconvenient truths” (p. 269). Leaders exercise a “censorship over any of their colleagues whom they suspect of rebellious inclinations” (p. 170) and seek to co-opt or neutralize opposition within the party. So completely identified with the organization does the bureaucrat become, that “[a]ll objective criticism of the party is taken by him as a personal affront” (p. 228). The theme of cloaking power with ethical, altruistic claims runs through Michels’ analysis and will be taken up in relation to NGOs in Chapter 5. He writes: “Every government endeavours to support its power by a general ethical principle. The political forms in which the various social movements become crystallized also assume a philanthropic mask” (p. 15). While a socialist party claims that it has no leaders, this only strengthens their rule and “serves to conceal from the mass a danger which really threatens democracy” (p. 35). Political principles fall casualty to the growth of party bureaucracy and membership enrolments, while “internal dissensions [are covered] with a pious veil” (p. 367). Party positions are watered down, and its doctrines, “whenever requisite, attenuated and deformed in accordance with the external needs of the organization” (p. 367). When organization is the “vital essence of the party”, it becomes “revolutionary...no longer on lines which interest the police, but only in theory and on paper” (pp. 369-70). So to Michels, from a means, organization had become an end.

Also writing just after the turn of the twentieth century, in his analysis of British political party structures and functions with the introduction of mass suffrage, Ostrogorski (1964) drew many similar conclusions to those reached by Michels (1978). Ostrogorski found oligarchical controls, manipulation of the electorate, and a blurring of ideological differences between parties which he attributed to the organizational

pressures on parties operating under universal suffrage. He saw that the bureaucratic party machinery deemed necessary to be effective and successful prevented genuine democratic participation by the masses, heavily policed freedom of thought and expression within the ranks of the party, and set up conditions where, in order to maintain the party, principles and activities would be readily sacrificed in the hope of increasing financial and electoral support. Instead of facilitating genuine representation and participation of the masses in the workings and direction of the parties, this concentrated power in the hands of a few. Ostrogorski noted the highly orchestrated, and undemocratic nature of party organizations, made up of a tiny percentage of the party's supporters, which came to manipulate the electorate "in the interest of the party, with the pretension of doing this on behalf and by the people" (p.167). Like Michels, Ostrogorski charged that the major casualties of party organization were independent thought, spontaneity, and self-criticism. Party organizations came to represent only the leaders, not the masses. Ostrogorski saw a class dimension to this process. Firstly, the parties sought funding from upper classes to sustain the costs of a growing organizational machine. Secondly, the ex-ruling class, the middle class

now appeared in a new role, of an anything but lofty character; pretending to bow down before the masses, it let them say what they liked, allowed them the satisfaction of holding forth and of voting extravagant resolutions in the caucuses, provided that it was permitted to manage everything; and to cover its designs it developed the practice of wire-pulling (p. 290).

Like Michels, Ostrogorski saw the nature of "democracy" prevailing in the parties as a sham, yet one which was carefully presented as democratic and accountable to its mass of supporters. While the British parties had not, at that time, developed a large body of professional politicians and officials like that already existent in the organizations which Michels was to study, Ostrogorski noted with concern the growth of a class of workers

with personal interests and advantages in involvement in the party machinery, noting that as the maintenance of the party machine became paramount, politics became divorced from principles.<sup>16</sup>

The analytical insights and themes from the sociology of organizations which Michels (1978) and Ostrogorski (1964) bring complement those derived from critical history, the insights of Piven and Cloward (1977) in relation to the dangers of institutionalizing popular movements, and Marxist political economy perspectives on the nature and role of NGOs. These approaches look beyond stated claims about democracy and leadership, bureaucratization and mass organizations and examine the actualities of practice. The themes of bureaucratization and professionalization and the forms of knowledge and social organization that they produce are also key concepts in institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography which I outline in Chapter 3. By their case studies of political parties and trade unions, Michels and Ostrogorski raise important concerns and concepts that can be tested on other organizations. I turn now to consider them in relation to movements against neoliberal globalization.

### ***Organizational analysis and the 'anti-globalization' movement***

The organizations and movements which comprise 'anti-globalization' forces are heterogeneous in form, and their history and democratic pretensions vary. They represent a multiplicity of agendas, functions, organizational structures, values and ideologies. Nonetheless, the themes of bureaucratization, internal lack of democracy (while espousing democratic ideals externally), and the growth of a self-interested professionalized elite leadership run strongly through contemporary critiques and activist

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<sup>16</sup> See also Miliband, R. (1972), for a more recent analysis of the British Labour Party which raises similar concerns.

debates, particularly in relation to the recent ascendancy and spread of NGOs. Alongside these concerns run analyses which link bureaucratization with demobilization and depoliticization of mass movements, and the sacrifice of principles for the survival of a permanent organization, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Besides an examination of NGOs, I consider a critique of Michels (1978) from a contemporary trade union perspective (Moody, 1997) because I believe it raises some helpful questions in relating the analyses of Ostrogorski (1964) and Michels to contemporary contexts.

A fundamental difference between many of these contemporary organizations and the political parties which most concerned Michels (1978) and Ostrogorski (1964) is that, for the most part, the former do not base their legitimacy on notions (however flawed) of representative democracy, even if they appeal to liberal democratic ideas. Some are complex, large-scale organizations, with clear hierarchies, and a high degree of technical specialization, while others claim flat, non-hierarchical and/or collective, consensus models of decision-making. Harriss (2002) writes that “NGOs...are not necessarily democratically representative organizations, nor democratically accountable” (p. 8). They “appear to offer the possibility of a kind of democracy through ‘popular participation’, but without the inconveniences of contestational politics and the conflicts of values and ideas which are a necessary part of democratic politics” (p. 8). Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) write that for NGOs: “In many ways the hierarchical structures and the forms of transmission of “aid” and “training” resemble 19<sup>th</sup>-century charity, and the promoters are not very different from Christian missionaries” (p. 135). Gallin (2000) argues that: “Many NGOs ... originated in the nineteenth century culture of charity and philanthropy...a culture of charity is basically an authoritarian, top-down relationship

between unequal partners” (p. 28). For such organizations, particularly those characterized by charismatic leadership and unaccountable boards, the questions of accountability and mandate in regard to those that they claim to represent seem particularly troubling.

Michels (1978) and Ostrogorski (1964) situated their analyses of political organizations at a time of rapid social, political and economic change which brought new pressures and challenges to bear on political parties and other organizations. So too, any rigorous analysis of bureaucracy, democracy and oligarchy in the ‘anti-globalization’ movement must be cognizant of the recent growth of NGOs at national and global levels, and the current era of neoliberal governance through ‘partnership’ with ‘civil society’ as discussed earlier in this chapter. Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) hold that the “real mushrooming of NGOs has occurred in times of rising mass movements that challenge imperial hegemony” (p. 130) and is funded as a policy of demobilizing and containing these movements in the Third World. Discussing the divisions within contemporary “anti-globalization” forces, McNally (2002) writes that

[h]eavily reliant on donors, particularly governments, most NGOs crave a basic level of respectability in elite circles.... Hoping to be admitted into the inner sanctums of elite discussion and negotiation, many NGO and labour leaderships have sought to prove their respectability by denouncing those who engage in less polite forms of protest (p. 197).

If they are to relate with major institutional donors, subcontract to governments or international institutions like the World Bank to provide services as states restructure, or to engage politically with government and private sector elites, NGOs are expected to be hierarchical, bureaucratic and professionalized, and to contain and police militant social movements and groups. Williams (2002), analyzing NGOs in the context of the ‘anti-

globalization' movement, concurs with Michels (1978) and Piven and Cloward (1977) about demobilization and neutralization of protest movements through bureaucratization.

He writes that

grassroots organizations that adopt a bureaucratic style of organization will find that they make a good fit with dominant institutions – they are organized and operate in similar ways and can be absorbed into the elite bureaucracy with perhaps some disruption but none that is ultimately threatening to the interests of the elite as a whole (p. 11).

Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) are particularly scathing of NGO claims to democracy, arguing that the majority of them are internally hierarchical and elitist, externally servile, and that they undermine popular movements and democracy. Behind “democratic, grass roots rhetoric” (p. 132), NGO directors have total control of projects, hiring and firing, and decisions about who will be funded to travel to international conferences. “The ‘grass roots’ are essentially the objects of this hierarchy” (p. 132). Decisions are never made on the result of any kind of democratic process, they argue.

At best, after the deals have been cooked by the director and the overseas funders, the NGO staff will call a meeting of “grass roots activists” for the poor to approve the project. In most cases the NGOs are not even membership organizations but a self-appointed elite which, under the pretence of being “resource people” for popular movements, in fact, competes with and undermines them (p. 132).

One specific way that Petras and Veltmeyer contend that NGOs undermine democracy is “by taking social programs and public debate out of the hands of the local people and their elected natural leaders and creating dependence on non-elected overseas officials and their anointed local officials” (p. 132).

Davis (2002) claims that NGOs derive their authenticity “from the composite of their brand identity”, which he calls “compassionate capital”, but are “[h]ierarchical in structure...often led by careerist NGO celebrities [and] degenerate in its industrial

relations” (p. 179). Noting that a professional NGO is structured along corporate lines, Reinsborough (2004), also echoing Piven and Cloward (1977), states that this creates an institutional self-interest which can transform an organization from being a catalyst for social change into being a self-perpetuating entity.

Whether NGOs are reliant on a membership base or institutional funders, NGOs are often forced to build a power base through self-promotion rather than self-analysis. Not only does this dilute NGO agendas to fit within the political comfort zone of those with resources, it disrupts the essential process of acknowledging mistakes and learning from them (p. 196).

As Jordan and Maloney (1997) note, NGOs are often fiercely competitive, often contesting “the issue niche over which organizations have monopolistic control” (p. 184).

As already noted, Piven and Cloward (1977) see moves to build formal organizations as a fundamental cause of these movements’ ultimate failure to achieve systemic social change. They write that during periods of mass mobilization by the poor against the authorities,

those who call themselves leaders do not usually escalate the momentum of the people’s protests. They do not because they are preoccupied with trying to build and sustain embryonic formal organizations in the sure conviction that these organizations will enlarge and become powerful (p. xii).

Organization-building drew people away from the streets and into the meeting rooms. With it came a “preoccupation with internal leadership prerogatives” (p. xii) and a tendency of organizers to blunt or curb disruptive mass mobilizations while seeking support from the authorities to resource their organizations. Seeking to defuse insurgency, elites often cultivated these emergent organizations

for they have little to fear from organizations, especially from organizations which come to depend upon them for support. Thus, however unwittingly, leaders and organizers of the lower classes act in the



end to facilitate the efforts of elites to channel the insurgent masses into normal politics, believing all the while that they are taking the long and arduous but certain path to power (p. xii).

For Piven and Cloward (1977), these organizations either fade away once their usefulness to those who provided the resources ends, or, they survive by becoming increasingly subservient to those elites. As noted, the concept of ruling relations employed in institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography, which I discuss in Chapter 3, is helpful in examining the way in which ruling relations are organized through processes of bureaucratization and professionalization.

In its critique of the World Social Forum, the Indian thinktank, the Research Unit for Political Economy (RUPE) (2003) insists that NGOs bureaucratize people's movements.

Traditionally, people's movements are self-reliant: they have to raise their own resources, and are led by representatives from among the people. These representatives, to one extent or another, thus have to be accountable to the people. By contrast, NGO-led movements, while claiming to represent the people, are led by officers of the NGOs, who are paid by funding agencies to carry on activity. Naturally, they are not accountable to the people, nor can they be removed by them; so they are also free to act without regard for people's opinions. On the other hand, NGOs are accountable to their funders, and cannot afford to stray beyond certain bounds.... Political life itself is increasingly NGOized, that is, bureaucratized and alienated from popular presence and representation.

Forms of organizing and activism critical of larger-scale, bureaucratized NGOs should not escape examination for similar tendencies towards forms of elitism, professionalization, and exclusion. For example, Shragge (2003) makes the following observations commenting on the New Left in North America, which was anti-leadership, and believed that 'the people' should make decisions. He observes that

community organizers came from a privileged background, were educated, and had time to reflect on what they were doing. 'The people' were

brought in afterwards, they were to be organized. There was a real power differential created by a culture that gave greater credibility to those who were articulate and educated. In practice, power was informal and hidden, and there was little formal accountability for the organizers (pp. 92-3).

This suggests that power dynamics and struggles over which knowledge is valued is an equally poignant question in relation to smaller activist groups and community organizations as it is for larger NGOs and trade unions.

### ***Contesting oligarchical tendencies and bureaucratization from within***

US labour historian Kim Moody (1988 and 1997) contests Michels' (1978) view that bureaucracy is simply an inevitable consequence of administrative complexity, pointing to fierce struggles that took place to resist bureaucratization within the member unions of the Congress of Industrial Unions (CIO) in the postwar USA. Moody (1997) notes that "far from evolving gradually and peacefully, bureaucracy in the CIO had to be fought for and imposed against enormous resistance where it did not already exist...and aggressively defended and expanded where it did" (p. 29). Moody criticizes theorists who saw bureaucratization as inevitable. "In rediscovering Robert Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy'," he contends, they "justified the elimination of opposition and political debate" (p. 53). Moody sees that bureaucratization depoliticizes and demobilizes trade unions, suppresses debate about political or social issues, and concentrates power and decision-making in the hands of an elite bureaucratic layer far removed from the realities and interests of the rank and file they are supposed to represent.

For Moody (1997), Michels' (1978) view of unions is static and ignores deeper changes in consciousness, militancy and political conflict among the different layers of union membership and hierarchy. Moody's critique of Michels and his attention to

struggles against bureaucratization is important in considering the relationship between social movements and NGOs, where the latter frequently attempt to bureaucratize elements of the former, and where this process is often resisted and contested in both. Michels took a dim view of the capacity of the masses to counteract oligarchical tendencies and bureaucratization, blaming their “intellectual and cultural inferiority” (p. 406) and “perennial incompetence” (p. 407). Moody’s analysis warns against over-deterministic and static conceptualizations of dynamic organizations, movements, and networks. It also reinforces the importance of locating any organizational analysis geohistorically – just as both Michels and Ostrogorski (1964) sought to do in relation to the political changes at the time they conducted their research. Any organizational analysis of the internal dynamics and power relations within and among the forces of ‘anti-globalization’ must pay attention to broader political, social and historical contexts and pressures on these organizations and movements.

In sum, while the work of Michels (1978) and Ostrogorski (1964), and more recent scholarly and activist accounts which have paid attention to organizational analysis, raise important concerns about anti-democratic tendencies in organizations, leadership and power, Moody’s critique is a helpful caution against holding to over-deterministic analyses. We must not overlook histories of struggles against bureaucratization, professionalization and anti-democratic practice within organizations.

### ***Conclusion: A tapestry of theoretical strands***

Theorizing social movements, NGOs and civil society at a level which is too abstracted from the very real differences, contradictions and particularities on the ground,

especially the geohistorical context, has severe limitations (Choudry, 2002a). Analysis of social movements needs to be situated in social dynamics and concrete conditions. In order to understand social movements we need to carefully attend to the political, historical, cultural and economic forces that are at play in any one place, and explicate how they relate to the state, to capital, and to each other. The dominant strands of social movement theory tend to be reductionist, Eurocentric, and disconnected from the social movements and organizations that are the objects of its study. Dominant approaches to social sciences have often overlooked or ignored some movements simply because they do not conform to a model or typology through which the researcher approaches the subject. Inadequate attention is given to questions of geohistory, political economy, and to the politics of knowledge production, both in terms of constructing theory, and of the knowledge(s) emerging from movements. I suggest that a sounder analytical framework might draw from knowledge and theory arising from movements themselves. It would also draw upon insights from the sociology of organizations, social history, and recognize the importance of “history from below” rather than seeking to interpret movements and mobilizations solely through an imposed interpretative framework or set of variables. It would attend to the highly politicized and contested nature of historiography in order to help understand recent and contemporary social activism. Close attention must be paid to analyzing the trends of bureaucratization and professionalization in these movement and NGO networks. Moreover, as Marx notes, it is not enough for theory merely to analyze the world – it also has to be a tool for changing it.

This commitment is at the heart of my methodological approach which draws from Marx’s materialist method and feminist traditions and attends to the importance of

history, while theorizing and examining ways that power, knowledge and practice are infiltrated and organized by ruling relations. Institutional ethnography and political activist ethnography also attend to the trends of bureaucratization and professionalization which are central to my discussion of NGOs and social action in struggles against neoliberalism. Moreover, as will be shown in Chapter 3, these methodological approaches explicitly draw from both scholarly literature and validate theory and knowledge produced within movements and from other marginalized epistemologies.

### **CHAPTER THREE: Methodology - Activist research, researching activism, researching for activism**

In this chapter, I will describe my framework of analysis and rationale for application and development of methodological approaches in this study. I will discuss some key features of institutional ethnography (D. Smith, 1987, and 1990; Campbell and Manicom, 1995; and Campbell and Gregor, 2002). I will explore ways in which this methodology and its key concepts has been extended and applied in “political activist ethnography” (G. Smith, 1995 and 2006; Kinsman, 2006; Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson and Tilliczek, 2006). I will also examine how this approach can be further adapted and developed for research on the complex network of relationships, knowledge and power dynamics among NGOs and social movements engaged in ‘anti-globalization’ work during campaigns of opposition to the APEC process in the Asia-Pacific region. This methodology, combined with the theoretical traditions outlined in Chapter 2, informs my analysis of power and knowledge in anti-globalization networks in the Asia-Pacific.

In developing institutional ethnography, drawing from Marx’s material method and feminist theory, D. Smith (1987) describes it as “the project of creating a way of seeing, from where we actually live, into the powers, processes, and relations that organize and determine the everyday context of that seeing” (p. 9). Institutional ethnography is much more than simply a research methodology. D. Smith developed institutional ethnography as a line of feminist sociological inquiry. Others have put it to use by and for a range of social actors who stand outside a ruling regime. Kinsman (2000) adopts it for analyzing the construction of gay men and lesbians as national

security risks by Canadian state security agencies between 1950-1970. Bannerji (1995) uncovers the ways in which colonial historiography – namely James Mill’s *The History of British India* – constructed an India “from the standpoint of European and colonial rule” (p. 51) and an ideological rationale for the British colonial administration in India. Campbell, Copeland and Tate (1999) use it to analyze the health care experiences of people with disabilities.

Institutional ethnography is a strongly empirical methodology and theoretical approach which avoids ungrounded abstraction, and points to the need for a reflexive relation between activity and material conditions. G. Smith (1995) argues that the inquirer must start from an “actual world, the social organization of which she is involved in investigating” (p. 22). A “standpoint” epistemology is central to this methodological approach. As Campbell and Manicom (1995) explain, it “is not [Dorothy] Smith’s claim, nor ours, that there is ‘a’ standpoint from which the world can best be viewed. Instead, the notion of ‘standpoint’ provides a methodological direction” (p. 8). The starting point for research is from the standpoint of persons engaged in particular processes, practices, activities and conditions. Institutional ethnography offers a way to uncover and understand the links between those particularities and the broader social relations of the society in which we live. Moreover, such analysis is conducted explicitly to facilitate transformative ends, and not simply to amass more academic scholarship for its own sake.

***Research on ‘anti-globalization’ organizations and movements***

The empirical, grounded approach to research taken by institutional ethnography is consistent with my belief that such analysis needs to be situated in social dynamics and concrete conditions and settings. Relatively little attention has been paid to the power dynamics among the diverse movements and organizations which are said to comprise the international ‘anti-globalization’ movement. Far from being a unified grand alliance, this is a terrain of struggle. As I discuss in Chapter 2, theorizing social movements, NGOs and ‘civil society’ at a level which is too abstracted from the very real differences, contradictions and particularities on the ground is alarmingly commonplace in academic literature. We must try to uncover and understand the antagonisms and conflicts which exist between and within NGOs and social movements, and to identify the ways in which these are organized, and in whose interests. Institutional ethnography offers a way of looking at the world which can account for differences from within the actualities of practices in ‘anti-globalization’ networks as they are lived and enacted. To do so requires that we transnationalize and democratize it, in order to explicate the social organization of an increasingly complex and transnational web of actors involved in struggles against neoliberalism and the forces that they confront. Institutional ethnography has thus far been overwhelmingly applied to localized institutions and settings, and geographically bounded spaces and places, such as hospitals or community organizations. Later in this chapter, I will return to discuss this concept in the section on transnationalizing institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography. As Ng (2006) points out, “economic globalization involves institutionalized activities at many sites and levels” (p. 186) and a globalized regime of ruling produces local conditions that are potential entry



points for institutional ethnographers or political activist ethnographers to analyze the system and generate research resources to challenge and change it.

### *Disjuncture as starting point and research tool*

Consistent with scholarship emerging from institutional ethnography (D. Smith, 1987; Kinsman, 1995; G. Smith, 2006), the starting point for my research is a point of disjuncture between my experiences as an activist, and the social organization and construction of ‘civil society’ and an ‘anti-globalization movement’. Indeed, there are multiple disjunctures. As I outline in Chapter 2, there is a disjuncture between my experience and much of the academic literature on social movements and “civil society” or the “transnational public sphere” (e.g. Barnet and Cavanagh, 1994; Guidry, Kennedy and Zald, 2000). This literature tends towards abstract generalizations of often diverse networks and coalitions of actors. It also categorizes movements with reference to a narrow set of variables which obscures the multifaceted nature of much social action. There is a disjuncture between my experience and claims by many NGO actors to be democratic and committed to ‘alternatives’. This is evident in my own confrontations with them over hierarchical, colonial and elitist practices (Choudry, 2003a and 2007), as well as academic literature on organizations, power and democracy discussed in Chapters 2 and 5 (Michels, 1978; Ostrogorski, 1964; Moody, 1997; Mumby, 1989). As I discuss in Chapter 5, NGO claims to respect different perspectives and commitments to social justice often obscure the ways in which NGO activities can exclude, silence, sideline, or marginalize some voices, while obfuscating the hegemonic practices of professionalized NGOs. Another disjuncture exists between the language and priorities of a

professionalized NGO stratum which privileges professionalized epistemologies of knowledge and particular forms of activity such as lobbying and policy analysis, and the dynamics and aspirations of many grassroots movements. In turn, a disjuncture exists between the everyday/everynight world of communities and peoples in struggle, and claims by professionalized NGOs to represent their interests even though they have no mandate to do so. Such disjunctures are often difficult to challenge in settings which are often assumed to be 'progressive', and somehow exempted from critical analysis. Like G. Smith (1995), I see these disjunctures and forms and moments of "political confrontation" (p. 26) as important signposts and resources for my inquiry.

*Institutional ethnography – linking the local to the extra-local*

Institutional ethnography seeks to map the terrain of our everyday world, and to uncover how our situations are coordinated extra-locally by social processes which organize the rule of dominant classes. For Campbell and Gregor (2002), “[a]nalytically, there are two sites of interest – the local setting where life is lived and experienced by actual people and the extra- or trans-local that is outside the boundaries of one’s everyday experience” (p. 29). For D. Smith (1987), “[c]apitalism creates a wholly new terrain of social relations external to the local terrain and the particularities of personally mediated economic and social relations” (p. 5). She further observes that “[s]kills and knowledge embedded in relations among particular persons have been displaced by externalized forms of formal organization or discourse mediated by texts” (p. 5). Institutional ethnography seeks to uncover and account for the forms of regulation, penetration and organizing of our everyday world by these social relations. According to Ng (1984), while standard ethnographic research analyzes particular local settings “as if it were a

self-contained unit of analysis, institutional ethnography seeks to locate the dynamics of a local setting in the complex institutional relations organizing the local dynamics” (p. 19). In Chapter 4, I outline the salient features of the terrain on which neoliberal globalization operates, and the ways in which contemporary capitalist relations operate through webs of social relations, connecting local and global contexts throughout the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

For institutional ethnography, a case offers a concrete entry point – a window - into a larger set of social and economic relations. Indeed, there may be multiple windows. In my everyday/everynight world, and drawing from the work of G. Smith (1995 and 2006) potential entry points include participation in meetings, conference calls, material posted to email lists, demonstrations, media statements, confrontation with state security practices, and with government departments in the course of official information requests, and campaign literature produced by NGOs and social movement actors.

DeVault and McCoy (2002) describe the process of inquiry in institutional ethnography as "rather like grabbing a ball of string, finding a thread, and then pulling it out" (p. 755). It is hard to plan out this kind of research fully in advance. My research grapples with complex layers of relationships and dynamics of NGO and activist networks and the difficulty of mapping this terrain in order to understand it from within, and how it is organized. Some relationships are formal, some relate to funding, some are personal or informal, some are ideological, some are all of the above. Some overlap and cross-connect in some areas, but seemingly have almost no relationship in others. Making sense of the dynamics and the way in which this everyday world is organized is indeed like unravelling a ball of string. Piecing together what is happening and why, and

mapping these relationships in a way which can uncover the extra-local forces which underpin them does not happen in a neat and tidy manner. Sometimes one only understands what happens long after an event, over lunchtime conversations, a chance meeting with another activist who shares a sense of unease or disjuncture, through close examination of NGO-authored documents, or through dialogue with similarly-located activist researchers.

### *Institutions, ruling and ideology in institutional ethnography*

D. Smith's (1987) concept of institutions offers a way of understanding the complex web of actors which characterizes the world(s) of 'anti-globalization' players, and in turn, the ways in which these are organized by often unseen extra-local forms of social organization. This framework views institutions not as a determinate form of social organization, "but rather the intersection and coordination of more than one relational mode of the ruling apparatus" (p. 160). They are

nodes or knots in the relations of the ruling apparatus to class, coordinating multiple strands of action into a functional complex. Integral to the coordinating process are ideologies systematically developed to provide categories and concepts expressing the relation of local courses of action to the institutional function providing a currency or currencies enabling interchange between different specialized parts of the complex and a common conceptual organization coordinating its diverse sites (p. 160).

I believe that the conceptualization of institutions as nodes and knots is helpful in focusing attention on the complex relations which underpin 'anti-globalization' discourse and networks, accounting for geographically distant but connected webs of relations. This

must also include attention to the context in which these networks have evolved, which I address in Chapter 4.

By “ruling”, Smith (1987) means “a complex of organized practices, including government, law, business and financial management, professional organization, and educational institutions as well as the discourses in texts that interpenetrate the multiple sites of power” (p. 3). Ruling often operates through texts and discourses that we take for granted, generating conceptual practices, and embedded in our actual practices and relations. These objectified forms of organization, courses of action and relations can be replicated in a variety of local settings in which they operate and which they regulate. Smith (1999) argues that “[p]roperties of formal organization, profession, or discourse are constituted that cannot be reduced to properties of individuals” (p. 81). Just as Ng (2006) and Kinsman (2006) argue that this concept can help explicate the social organization, ideology and practice of neoliberal globalization itself, I believe it is equally helpful to examine networks of opposition to this process.

Likewise, institutional ethnography understands ideology not as “the control of ideas in an abstract sense” (D. Smith, 1987, p. 57) but rather as embedded in actual practices. Kinsman, Buse and Steedman (2000) define ideology as “a form of social organization of knowledge that attends to the ruling and managing of people’s lives and that is not grounded in the social relations and practices that people engage in on their own” (p. 280). In considering the terrain of ‘anti-globalization’, we must ask whether and how our discourses, as Smith (1987) puts it, have “become organized by the relations of ruling, observing their characteristic procedures and contouring themselves to their fractures and breaks” (p. 220). How much of the agenda of those contesting neoliberalism

is being ordered, managed or defined by those setting the terms of ruling relations? What are the precise forms of the interpenetration of objectifying knowledge and ideology articulated to ruling and how are these embedded and activated in actual practices of 'anti-globalization' organizations and networks? How and where are ruling interests and ideologies embedded in NGO activities and texts? How does this impact on the parameters and forms of resistance and contestation of neoliberalism and frame the alternatives which are suggested? How are experiences of those affected by, and struggling against, social and economic injustice transformed and reworked in interests other than their own? What are the implications for whose voices are heard, and whose excluded, in such networks?

This methodology helps to understand, and distinguish between, organizations which urge reforming processes like APEC and institutions like the WTO, and those organizations and movements which reject both these institutions and the free-market model which underpins them as being socially organized. How do professionalized NGOs portray the conflicts inherent in economic globalization, and how do these accounts differ or contrast with those conflicts experienced by peoples' movements and other groups openly opposed to capitalism? To what extent and in whose interests do larger NGOs dictate the confines of the discourse of 'anti-globalization'? How in turn are their actions organized by the relations of ruling?

### *Texts, professionalization and social organization*

Institutional ethnography pays close attention to texts and how they organize and are embedded in social relations. According to Kinsman (1997), texts "organize

knowledge in particular directions and from particular standpoints, which often include the containment of social movements” (p. 216). People’s activities are coordinated and ordered across locations by a range of documents and textually-organized practices which are central to ruling. But these texts are often invisible and taken for granted. They are activated by people who use them, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously.

Thus far, in its application to issues of neoliberal globalization, institutional ethnography has tended to focus on how this works with government policy and documents. Ng (2006) and Kinsman (2006) discuss how free trade agreements organize knowledge and power at global regional and local levels. Ng notes that neoliberal globalization “involves institutionalized activities at many sites and levels...legal activities that are coordinated and effected through documentary processes inscribed in laws, trade agreements, policies, reports, records” (p. 186) as well as undocumented activities. There has been far less analysis of the texts generated by NGOs, activist groups and social movements contesting globalization. Just as Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) charge that NGOs frequently act as intellectual policemen, filtering out topics and views based on class analysis and a struggle perspective, in a similar vein, (Choudry, 2001b and 2007, and Chapter 5), I ask whether questions of self-determination and Indigenous Peoples are deliberately marginalized, redefined or rendered invisible by dominant strands of ‘anti-globalization’ NGO practices. We should also pay attention to different ways in which texts are activated and read by readers who are located in different social contexts. How is it, for example, that one NGO document on free trade can be interpreted alternatively as an elitist nationalist position, as representing aspirations of Third World

peoples, as inaccessible and exclusionary, as radical, and as reformist by different readings?

Campbell (2006) Kinsman (1997) and G. Smith (1995) note the ways in which the needs of people with disabilities (Campbell, 2002), or people living with HIV/AIDS (G. Smith, 1995; Kinsman, 1997) can be subordinated to those of officialdom, and ruling actions embedded through specific administrative and routine organizational practices. For example, in Campbell's analysis of conflicting perspectives on service delivery to people with disabilities, she observes that "the concerns of people with disabilities routinely get subordinated to an official version of their needs and the agency's work, without any intention by agency personnel to discriminate or dismiss what their clients say" (pp. 91-92). These ruling practices are often constituted in texts, which override, reorganize and discount the experiential knowledge of people for whom such agencies or government policies supposedly serve. As the above case studies illustrate, institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography, by examining actual practices, can go beyond an analysis that stops at what G. Smith (2006) calls "the standard shibboleths of political theorizing" (pp. 51-52) and "speculative accounts" (p. 52). They attend not merely to what is stated in organizational accounts and official statements or policies, but orient us towards asking whether and how NGOs and activists are implicated in ruling relations through their everyday, and often routine practices. This may require exploring the ways in which many NGOs are regulated through state legislation, or through funding relationships or conditions where NGOs provide services for the state as subcontractors or facilitate NGO conferences – which also allows governments to cynically project an image of a vibrant 'civil society' (as I discuss in Chapter 5).



This research also requires us to attend to relationships between NGOs, especially given the significant funding nexus which now exists between some international/transnational NGOs, and organizations and networks in the Third World. It will require analysis of the political economy of NGOs and activist groups with regard to funding sources and the ways in which these organize social relations and organizational practices. In doing so it will need to consider how such funding sources articulate with ruling interests. It will necessitate attending to the ways in which forms of engagement, such as accreditation and consultative status, with international institutions like the United Nations, World Bank and the WTO, organize NGO activities and impact on the practices and processes of individual organizations and broader networks and coalitions. Attention must be paid to ways in which NGOs and movements articulate to other political ideologies and tendencies, such as affiliations to different schools of Marxist thought and political parties.

Another related concern for institutional ethnography which D. Smith (1987), Ng (1984), Kinsman (1997) and Campbell and Gregor (2002) identify is the process of professionalization. For D. Smith (1987), “[p]rofessionalization uses knowledge to restructure “collective noncapitalist forms of organization” into hierarchical strata, detaching them from the movements they originate in and connecting them to the relations of ruling” (pp. 216-217). Kinsman (1997) explores how dominant (in this case, Canadian federal government) discourses define HIV/AIDS as a medical problem and thus privilege “the power and knowledge of the medical profession and its ‘expert’ status” (p. 228). As discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, not only should we examine professionalization as it applies to government policies and the workings of international

financial and economic institutions like the WTO and the World Bank, and processes such as APEC. We must also uncover the ways in which certain people and classes of people – for example, academics, trade lawyers, and economists working within, or consulting for NGOs – are constructed as ‘experts’ by NGOs and others engaged in ‘anti-globalization’ work. By an exploration of actual NGO and activist practices, we must ask how, why and by whom certain kinds of knowing are organized in these networks – and for what purpose. As Kinsman (1997) notes, professional relations are “power/knowledge relations of exclusion” (p. 228) and are tied to the social organization of class, gender and race. Some epistemologies of knowledge are privileged over others, as highlighted in Chapter 2.

Campbell and Gregor (2002) argue that professional discourse contributes “a language and authorized practices for conducting the work of an institution [and] provides a framing of the way work is thought about and undertaken” (p. 70). Applying this to my analysis of anti-APEC activism, I will explore the implications of this insight for those who are marginalized and excluded by forms of professionalization existing in NGO and social movement networks, and examine this as a site of resistance.

### *Political activist ethnography*

A tension exists between those who view institutional ethnography as a specialized academic inquiry conducted by sociologists, and those who offer it as a tool to be taken up by activists as a resource outside of academia. Although arguing that the end product of an inquiry must be “ordinarily accessible and usable, just as a map is” (p. 95), D. Smith (1987) claims a special place for academics in institutional ethnography.

She asserts that “[w]e can only see so much without specialized investigation, and the latter should be the sociologist’s special business” (p. 161). She sees distinct categories among those implicated in the research between “we who are doing the technical work of research and explication”, and those “for whom we write” (p. 224). Ng (1984) apparently concurs with this separation, conceptualizing a role of an expert analyst whose “responsibility is to make visible the structural constraints within which groups have to operate” (p. 99).

For a methodological approach which claims to challenge ruling relations, the position taken by D. Smith and Ng seems somewhat contradictory, and in danger of overwriting the very perspectives, interests and knowledge of those who are excluded and dominated by the practices that institutional ethnography seeks to uncover.

Just how truly critical can institutional ethnography be if it adopts the ruling relations of social organization and hierarchy and if its critique is framed by, and accessible only to other academics? I believe that we must question the power relations that exist while writing research which adopts the approach of institutional ethnography. D. Smith’s (1987) privileging of academic ‘expertise’ is particularly troubling, given her concerns about the containment and institutionalization of the methods of institutional ethnography

if they are not articulated to relations creating linkages outside and beyond the ruling apparatus, giving voice to women’s experience, opening up to women’s gaze the forms and relations organizing women’s lives and enlarging women’s powers and capacities to organize in struggle against the oppression of women (p. 225).

However, an emerging strand of institutional ethnography goes some way to address this concern. Kinsman (2006) and Campbell and Gregor (2002) explicitly argue

that institutional ethnography should not remain the domain of university academics and conceive of it as a tool for use by activists. In their political activist ethnography, Kinsman and G. Smith both view it as a methodological approach for insider analysis. For my research, these are central considerations. Kinsman (1995 and 2006) and Campbell (2006) contend that such analysis can be used to determine more effective directions for activism. Campbell argues that “institutional ethnography can help specify the practices of ruling that are operative in any particular struggle...activism can be strengthened by specific knowledge of how ruling interests are substituted for the interests of the activists’ constituency” (p. 95).

*Connecting political activist ethnography with existing activist research practice*

Consistent with the concerns that I raise (Chapter 1) about learning in social action and movement-relevant theory (Chapter 2), institutional ethnography recognizes people’s knowledge and everyday ways of knowing. As Kinsman (2006) puts it, “[p]olitical activist ethnography can be very useful in extending the capacities of activist researchers and in clarifying that these activists in movements are already doing research. They are already intellectuals when they are active in social movements” (pp. 154-155). Kinsman argues that researching about the social forces that movements confront is always going on, and that political activist ethnography and institutional ethnography are “able to be continually open-ended and remade as new voices and new movements come forward to join in struggles for social transformation” (p. 155).

I concur with Kinsman (2006) in challenging the “standard binary oppositions of theory versus practice and researcher versus activist constructed through academic disciplines, professionalization and institutionalization” (p. 134). G. Smith (2006)

suggests that for activist researchers, there is a wealth of research material and signposts derived from moments of confrontation to explore the way that power in our world is socially organized. He contends that being interrogated by insiders to a ruling regime, like a crown attorney for example, brings a researcher into direct contact with the conceptual relevancies and organizing principles of such regimes. As I note in Chapters 1 and 5, in my own anti-APEC work, confrontations with the state have been a very rich entry point from which to explore the way that governments, domestic and transnational capital, and other extra-local forces socially organize power. So too have been confrontations within anti-APEC milieus, at NGO conferences or in the course of campaign work in relation to framing, strategy and tactics. In Chapter 5, I will further illustrate the use of such confrontation as a resource for research and action in reference to my discussion of the 1997 and 1999 APEC NGO conferences.

As Kinsman (2006) notes, research and theorizing

is an everyday/everynight part of the life of social movements whether explicitly recognized or not. Activists are thinking, talking about, researching and theorizing about what is going on, what they are going to do next and how to analyze the situations they face, whether in relation to attending a demonstration, a meeting, a confrontation with institutional forces or planning the next action or campaign (p. 134).

The methodological approach underpinning much of my own past and current activist research and practice strongly resembles political activist ethnography as outlined by Kinsman and others. For example, my research on the NGOs Transparency International (Choudry, 2002b) and Conservation International (Choudry, 2003b) involved an exploration similar to that of mapping a terrain through institutional ethnography. It included an examination of key texts, an unravelling and critical analysis of relationships between the NGOs in question and extra-local forms of institutions like the World Bank,

the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and the practices of the corporations which provide support for each NGO, both of which operate in multiple locations. These research projects were written from a standpoint of an activist/researcher standing outside of ruling relations, in clear opposition to neoliberalism and global capital. Similarly, my work in the Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group's 1998/99 campaign (see Chapter 5, Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group, 1999b and Kelsey, 1999), sought to critically examine and confront the New Zealand Government's strategy on engagement with NGOs about APEC. It drew on official APEC documents (APEC, 1997, 1998a, 1998b), and others which I obtained under the New Zealand Official Information Act (New Zealand Government, 1998; Auckland City Council, 1998) to expose how purported consultation processes and engagement with NGOs were framed and defined by and in the interests of ruling. This approach strongly parallels Kinsman's (1997) analysis of partnership and consultation in the context of HIV/AIDS treatment and Canadian state policies.

G. Smith and Kinsman illustrate how, as the latter (2006) puts it, political activist ethnography "requires challenging the 'common-sense' theorizing that can often be ideological in character – uprooted from actual social practices and organization - put forward in movement circles" (p. 135). G. Smith (1995) writes of a "move away from idealist theorizing and speculation to investigating empirically the everyday world" (p. 23). Idealist theorizing in 'anti-globalization' circles can often take the form of assuming or constructing the diverse range of players in social movements and NGOs as all sharing the same ideals and aspirations. In this practice, certain voices and organizations are privileged over others. Similarly, apparent moves made by governments, international

financial and economic institutions towards partnership and consultation with ‘civil society’ must be analyzed by empirical investigation of these institutions’ actual practices, paying close attention to the forms of social organization embedded in texts and discourses which they produce. Concretely this means an analysis that begins with what actually happens and which goes beyond idealist theorizing of many NGOs. Such NGO theorizing, for example, assumes that ‘civil society’ consultation undertaken by governments is a manifestation of a genuinely responsive government, or embodies democratic values, as opposed to seeing it as a way of managing dissent while portraying an outward image of participatory democracy, as illustrated by examples in Chapter 5.

This can account for both Canadian and New Zealand government approaches to NGO dialogues on APEC (which I also discuss in Chapter 5), where documents obtained by activists through access to information requests or in the course of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Public Complaints Commission into the security operations at the 1997 Vancouver APEC summit (Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 1997; DFAIT, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c and 1997d) showed the ways in which these processes were conceived and executed. Some NGOs and individuals approached these consultations in the belief that they were meaningful in terms of influencing government policy. However, as I will discuss in Chapter 5, the official texts, when examined from a standpoint of anti-APEC activism which confronts both state power and global capital highlight the ways in which these are clearly organized by ruling relations. Further examination is required to uncover the ways in which dominant NGO forms of knowledge are socially organized, and how this clashes with knowledge that is produced from the standpoint of struggle. Arguably the interests underpinning the production of

NGO texts and practices tend to be mystified far more than those which lie behind official texts and forms of knowledge. They may purport to reflect the aspirations and needs of 'the people'. Yet they may be organized by extra-local ruling regimes, and often reproduce similar universal objectified/objectifying claims, removed from everyday realities of people's lives.

Campbell (2006) sees institutional ethnography as a useful tool for analyzing debates within a movement about different perspectives and "who has or can have the correct line on struggle" (p. 96). It

forces analytic attention back to the social organization of what is happening. A claim to knowing based on the knower being in the right category....or using the right theoretical conception...can fail if the research itself lacks a secure grounding in the everyday world (p. 96).

Kinsman (2006) argues that the 'global justice' movement needs more focused institutional ethnography and political activist ethnography work on the social organization of unions, NGOs and other organizations. He sees this as being important to overcome divisions exacerbated by the tendency of media to frame "good" and "bad" protesters (p. 150). This is a valid concern, but my own trajectory is to raise questions as to whether 'we' in 'the movement' are in fact all on the same side (when there may be multiple positions), and to account for the differences from within the actualities of practices within 'anti-globalization' NGO and activist networks as they are lived and enacted. This requires a focus beyond what organizations claim to be doing and an examination of actual practices.

Kinsman's work also appeals to me because of the careful attention he pays to history. For example, in his work on the construction of lesbian and gay Canadians by state security agencies in the 1950s and 1960s, Kinsman (2000) uses institutional



ethnography to uncover the historical roots of present day oppression and struggles against it, and explore the ways in which texts such as official documents have organized this. As outlined in Chapter 2, histories from earlier social movements, as well as critical approaches from social history and other historiographical traditions can be a rich conceptual source for analyzing contemporary struggles and informing strategy. As Sarkar (1983b and 1998) and Guha (1983) note, attention also needs to be paid to how such histories are written, and by whom. Given the very different histories of the many actors seen to comprise 'anti-globalization' movements, a geohistorical perspective is important if we are to adequately understand the ways in which their practices are socially organized, and the ways in which neoliberalism is implemented and experienced in different settings.

***Towards transnationalizing institutional ethnography and political activist ethnography***

In the case of research for 'anti-globalization' movement networks, Kinsman (2006) points to the need to extend this beyond research into the social organization of sites that are bounded by the nation-state. We need to extend the methods and methodology to examine the social organization of institutions which exist in both local and international spaces at the same time. While not overlooking local and national forms of social organization, a transnational institutional ethnography which begins in the everyday world of 'anti-globalization' work must theorize and examine an international web of ruling relations and international modes of social organization. This is likely to include attention to international and regional financial and economic institutions,

agreements and processes, inter-NGO and social movement relationships, transnational corporations, domestic business sectors, and corporate lobby groups, the United Nations system, and official development assistance programs of many governments.

Namaste (2006) raises questions about another limitation of institutional ethnography as it has been developed thus far and which is relevant to the nature of my research topic. She observes:

Studies in the field of institutional ethnography frequently limit themselves to one particular institution.... Such an approach has a great deal of insight to offer, particularly with respect to the kind of detail it can provide in understanding how institutions operate. Yet analysis that restricts itself to one institution can be limited to the extent that it does not understand the links, or the lack of connection, among different institutions, as well as the attending consequences for the institutional ordering of experience (p. 167-8).

Namaste highlights the way in which class relations and status are reproduced precisely through the lack of coordination among different institutions. Her insight is directly relevant to the world of 'anti-globalization' activism when we consider how, whether and where communities on the frontlines of struggle against neoliberalism relate, or do not relate, to NGOs and other organizations and institutions which claim to advocate on their behalf, to provide resources and to set priorities for their campaigns and policies. What, then, are the actual implications for the way that the everyday world of people in those struggles are socially constructed? The transnational nature of my research adds a further layer of complexity to understanding the processes of social construction and the marginalization of communities and struggles which exist in the 'gaps' between institutions as Namaste has theorized in the Québec context.

Burawoy's "global ethnography" (2000) calls for a multi-sited yet grounded inquiry and is helpful in theorizing the challenge to transnationalize institutional

ethnography. Writing of case studies which involve analysis of connections between sites in different countries, Burawoy (2000) notes that this “proved to be much more problematic than we had anticipated, mainly because from any one site connections fan out in multiple directions, so that the relations between any two sites are usually thin” (p. 30). Grappling with the complexities of multi-sited yet grounded research focusing on international networks raises new challenges about doing justice to explicating the multiplicity of the social relations that exist among ‘anti-globalization’ actors. The extended case method which Burawoy (1991) employs shares some common ground with institutional ethnography. It “examines how the social situation is shaped by external forces”(1991, p. 6). However, as noted by Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson and Tilleczek (2006), while Burawoy’s methodology does develop analysis through the participation of the researchers and dialogue among them, and “observes settings over extended periods of space and time and views them as part of broader social processes”, “global ethnography” remains “a form of knowledge that still takes up the position of observer” (p. 14) in relation to the struggles that it analyzes. In this way, the knowledge that Burawoy’s approach produces is quite different from that produced from the standpoints of movement activists engaged in a social struggle.

Some of the chapters in the edited collection, *Sociology for Changing the World: Social Movements/Social Research* (Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson and Tilleczek, 2006) point towards a kind of global institutional ethnography or political activist ethnography, but do not develop this theoretically or methodologically. As I discussed earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 1, there is an already existing body of research by engaged activist/researchers located mainly outside of the academy who begin their research from

a standpoint within struggles for social justice. Dialogue among engaged activist researchers occurs both within formal coalitions and campaigns, and also in informal webs or networks of various kinds. Such research is sometimes driven and informed by immediate confrontation with ruling relations (for example, a struggle against a specific corporation, a proposed policy or legislative change, or an upcoming APEC meeting) or seeks to explicate and expose underlying ruling practices which socially organize institutions or actions on a longer-term or historic basis. A distinguishing feature of the practice of a transnationalized institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography is that those conducting the research are themselves doing so from the everyday/everynight standpoint of engagement in a particular struggle or struggles, rather than as outside observers or researchers. This does not necessitate that such standpoints be identical – nor is this likely to be possible. Indeed, such research is enriched by and builds upon multiple standpoints and entry points into the explication and challenge of ruling regimes and social relations. For example, research work on APEC or transnational corporations conducted among activist networks in different locations can approach these institutions and processes through specifically local/national entry points (government trade ministries, academic or business thinktanks dedicated to economic and trade liberalization, or local offices of TNCs) and combine their insights through dialogue and collaboration with other activist researchers similarly located, yet in different settings.

Through combining such analysis, a clearer picture of the ways in which these institutions or processes are socially organized can emerge in ways that are useful both in terms of a ‘transnational’ perspective, but also for local/national struggles. For example, it may be that certain aspects of the ways in which ruling regimes work through APEC or

TNC operations take a specific form, or are more developed or apparent in country A, perhaps because of a particular local context or focus by actors involved. As I further discuss in Chapter 5, a concrete example of this is the way(s) in which governments which chaired APEC resorted to communications strategies to 'sell' APEC to the public. As I discuss there, for Aotearoa/New Zealand anti-APEC organizers it was instructive to see how Canada, in particular its Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the lead state agency in APEC, had sought to manage the forum's image for a domestic audience and tried to marginalize more critical voices of dissent. This was analyzed through an examination of both publicly available texts and statements, and those official documents that were made available and shared by complainants in the previously-mentioned RCMP Public Complaints Commission (Klein, 1998; Pue, 1998) conducted after the Vancouver 1997 APEC Summit. The activist research undertaken by a number of key complainants (Manning, 1999) in this Canadian process closely resembled political activist ethnography in the way that it has been theorized by Frampton, Kinsman, Thompson, Tilleczek (2006), Kinsman (2006), Campbell (2006) and G. Smith (2006). It arose from and was directed by a position of clear confrontation with the state and sought to map a terrain of how the various aspects of the APEC meetings in Vancouver were put together. It examined the security operations, the rationale for the *realpolitik* which Ottawa engaged in regard to the sensitivities of other government delegations in attendance at Vancouver (notably Indonesia and China), and in terms of how the state worked with certain 'civil society' organizations to monitor the activities of those engaged in (NGO) Peoples' Summits (on APEC) and other activities, and so on. The activists conducting this research organized, and were located, for the most part,

outside of the realm of professionalized NGOs which operated from hegemonic positions within the relations of ruling in the sense that the latter sustained largely amicable relations (notwithstanding tensions and differences) with state institutions through lobbying, dialogue, state funding and other forms of support.

It is important to distinguish the work and standpoint of those activists who sought to bring to light the political rationale behind the APEC security operations grounded in a position more highly critical of the Canadian state than that of highly bureaucratized, professionalized NGO research. As I illustrate in Chapter 5, the latter tends to be conducted with little material engagement in social struggles. It is often dependent on and responsive to the state either through funding or some forms of implication in dialogues and networks that are largely shaped by and influenced in the interests of the state. It also tends to conduct policy analysis and advocacy from positions that draw upon more standard, 'objective' forms of knowledge removed from actual practice. Arguably this too produces a form of managerial knowledge which applies 'objective' or abstracted concepts that can be used to regulate NGOs, movements and activism, rather than to confront and change social injustice.

In particular, the ideologies and practices of 'development' and participatory democracy which are unquestioningly advanced by many NGOs, including those ostensibly critical of neoliberalism must be examined to see how they are socially organized by relations of ruling, and how such stances often obscure questions of power relations and political economy, for example. A transnationalized institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography is a powerful research methodology to examine the international coordination of NGOs and campaigns using textual practices,

allowing us to go beyond what NGOs say that they are doing, to ask how and for whom this knowledge is produced, and whether it amplifies or overwrites knowledge(s) produced from the standpoint of grounded everyday social struggle.

These multiple standpoints in different locations can be used to work up a detailed and textured analysis of an institution such as a transnational corporation or a trade and investment liberalization arrangement such as APEC which impacts multiple locations. Starting a transnational institutional ethnography in the shared or combined standpoints of activists located in a number of sites (notwithstanding differences), through dialogue and sharing of documents and analysis can lead to a deeper understanding of the problem being confronted. Such a collaborative approach draws upon some different experiences of confrontation in multiple sites as research resources, for example, and tests analysis by comparison with that of similarly located activist researchers. As Ng (2006) observes, institutional ethnography is collaborative and “requires that people share information on what they know on the basis of their locations within institutional modes in order to gain an overview of how the system works as a whole and how to challenge and transform it” (p. 187). Such an inquiry can serve to explicate how power is organized at multiple points of struggle, as well as shedding light on the particular forms of ruling relations that organize, for example, an APEC meeting at a particular date and city.

In this work, assumptions and claims of ‘civil society’ groups to operate outside of ruling relations need to be critically examined. Drawing from the theoretical traditions that are discussed in Chapter 2, one must question the nature of organizations’ standpoints, using a political economy analysis, for example (which might attend to questions of funding and other forms of material support from state or private sector,

which embed their activities in ruling relations), or geohistory (which might account for the historical development of a particular movement or organization in a particular location and time). A collaborative transnationalized political activist ethnography could also draw upon a wider pool of grounded knowledge which attends to such questions as a research resource in examining power relations among NGOs and social movements.

A transnationalized political activist ethnography cannot be conflated with all or any NGO research that addresses global justice issues, because these may not necessarily be grounded in actual practices, people, and conditions. They may instead analyze in a top-down way, albeit one which sometimes acknowledges, or draws upon instances of local struggles. Epistemologically, an Oxfam report (2002) on free trade, produced by professional policy analysts located at a great distance from the actual world about which they write, may have far more in common with an official document from a government ministry or WTO Secretariat than activist research that maps concrete conditions and explicates ruling relations from a standpoint of confrontation and struggle. The latter aims to make activism more effective, and views confrontation as a research resource, rather than producing knowledge conforming to parameters set by ruling institutions which would limit advocacy and social action to polite forms of lobbying, and limited calls for reform.

To democratize and transnationalize institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography necessitates recognition and validation of diverse forms of activist research which start from a standpoint of everyday engagement in social action in concrete settings, as well as further examination and explication of existing activist research practices. Part of producing research for effective activism must be to make already-



existing activist research practices more explicit. In doing so, we must recognize the differences and tensions that exist in activist standpoints, and in turn the texts and research produced, by careful attention to how and whether the inquiry starts from a standpoint which confronts ruling relations in some way. It must also be written in language that is accessible, and eschew the use of unnecessary technical terminology. Inevitably, given the highly politicized nature of my (and other political activist ethnography) research, a range of political and other sensitivities may arise. I now turn to address these concerns, and to conclude this chapter, I will briefly outline the methods used in my research.

### *Identifying and addressing 'insider' research concerns*

My research topic is “sensitive research” in the sense that Sieber and Stanley (1988) define it: “studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research” (p. 3). Lee and Renzetti (1993) note that the sensitivity surrounding research relates largely to the relationship between the research topic and social context. Research can be problematic “when it impinges on political alignments, if ‘political’ is taken in its widest sense to refer to the vested interests of powerful persons or institutions, or the exercise of coercion and domination” (p. 4). They also warn that research can generate threats to researchers. As an insider researcher in relation to my research focus, I also maintain longstanding political and personal relationships with many organizations and movements involved in the networks that are analyzed in this study, and besides satisfying academic requirements, wish to conduct this research in a way that maintains

my integrity as a critically engaged activist researcher. Questions about the relationships between funding and positions or platforms adopted by organizations and movements, intra-and inter-organizational conflicts and tensions, and the specific political and social contexts in which the organizations that I discuss are all factors that make this research quite sensitive.

The publication of in-depth research on social activism has a potential to contribute towards increased threats to these networks of increased surveillance in a climate conducive to the criminalization of dissent<sup>17</sup>. Research could be used to undermine solidarity and relationships between different organizations and movements, and funders. Yet I suggest that fear of critical research being used against social movements is not a sufficient reason to turn away from such a project. There has to be space for discussions and reflections about our practice, and I hope to make a contribution to these through my Ph.D. research.

One major challenge for my research has been to maintain reflexivity and accountability to those in my everyday/everynight world of activism. As I note in Chapter 1, my Ph.D. research has had a long gestation period, conceived as it was over a decade ago outside of academia, as a collaborative inquiry grounded in the everyday world of activism. Now it has relocated with me to become an academic pursuit in a Canadian university. I currently have access and trust and a network of relationships which have taken many years to build. However, what happens now that I have also become a Ph.D. candidate conducting research in a university in Canada, still active – long distance – in these networks, yet also conducting research in and on them? Notwithstanding the fact

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Pearlston (2000) and Canadian Security Intelligence Service (2000).

that much of this analysis is textually-based, new ethical issues and political considerations may arise.

Dialogue and reflexivity will be important to guide me through this. As L.T. Smith (1999) argues, reflexivity is “the critical issue with insider methodology...At a general level insider researchers have to have ways of thinking critically about their processes, their relationships and the quality and richness of their data and analysis” (p. 37). She also reminds us that “insiders have to live with the consequences of their processes on a day-to-day basis for ever more”...and need to develop “particular sorts of research-based support systems and relationships with their communities” (p. 37). As someone conducting “insider research”, I am concerned with maintaining reflexivity and accountability to those in my everyday/everynight world of activism. G. Smith’s (1995 and 2006) insights that the course of political confrontation, ongoing analysis of data, starting with the local experiences of people determined the relevancies and direction of his research are important in achieving this reflexivity.

In acknowledging the shift from its genesis as activist research project to academic inquiry, I need to be conscious of the implications for ideas, knowledges, structuring of arguments, relations between theory and practice, relationships with others in the field, the use of documents and other texts which predate the academic work, and how I account for this in my Ph.D. research. This inquiry is an opportunity to legitimate and explicate an emerging practice, and a political and intellectual interchange between movement, analysis, and action on the one hand, and academic scholarship, on the other.

### *Methods*

The methods for my research comprise two main pillars. The first of these is an analysis of documents, discussions, and practice from within anti-APEC networks in the Asia-Pacific in the mid-late 1990s, including campaign materials and conference proceedings from NGO conferences on APEC from 1995-1999, using methodological approaches to textual analysis from institutional ethnography, historical perspectives derived from social history and subaltern studies, and organizational analysis as discussed in Chapter 2. This material was collected in the course of my involvement in anti-APEC organizing. Secondly, building upon my own location and standpoint, and interwoven into the above analysis, I critically reflect upon and examine my own involvement in 'anti-globalization' activism and analysis. This includes critical reference and reflection on campaign materials and articles which I authored individually or collaborated on in the course of anti-APEC organizing, and analysis of experience drawn from my participation in 'anti-globalization' conferences, campaigns and other activities, during and since that period.

### *Conclusion*

The paucity of empirical analysis on the power relations that exist in 'anti-globalization' networks of NGOs and movements is striking. Political activist ethnography, emerging from institutional ethnography, resonates strongly with the methodologies and commitment to social change of non-academic research which is undertaken in my everyday world as an activist/researcher. The theory, methodology, and methods of institutional ethnography hold promise for an inquiry which starts from,

and is situated in my everyday world of activism. There is potential for the further development of political activist ethnography to help bridge the activist/academic divide. But, more importantly, there is scope for it to be appropriated and democratized outside of academic institutions as a tool to understand how our everyday world is socially constructed and ruled by forces outside our location, and an analytical tool which can inform and effectively focus our struggles. By employing both the theoretical traditions that I review and discuss in Chapter 2, and the methodological approach that I develop here, I aim to deepen an analysis of the reasons for, and implications of particular stances taken by NGO and social movement actors contesting neoliberalism in the Asia-Pacific. In turn, I contend that this methodological and theoretical approach might contribute towards research to explicate and support contemporary struggles for social and ecological justice.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Contextualizing APEC and its opponents: A swirl of geopolitics, economics and contestation**

Colonialism and imperialism have not paid their score when they withdraw their flags and their police forces from our territories. For centuries the capitalists have behaved in the under-developed world like nothing more than war criminals (Fanon, 1963, pp. 79-80).

In the 1990s, societies around the world were told that there was no credible alternative to global economic deregulation and liberalization. Indeed, some advocates of neoliberalism (e.g. Moore, 1997) suggested that the processes which we now term 'globalization' were somehow organic, evolutionary and natural<sup>18</sup>. However, like colonialism, contemporary forms of 'globalization' must be understood with reference to historical processes and the economic and political actors which have driven economic restructuring at national and international levels.

In this chapter I will outline: 1) the general features of the process known as 'globalization' in the context of recent capitalist crises and the trends in restructuring in global capitalist relations in relation to my thesis research; 2) Within this, I will situate the creation and progress of APEC in relation to global, regional, and national economic and geopolitical trends in the region prior to and since its birth in 1989 until the end of the peak years of anti-APEC mobilization a decade later; 3) Building upon my discussion of the rise of NGOs as major players in national and international arenas in Chapter 2, I will also outline some key dynamics in social movement/NGO network activities which informed and fed into campaigns against APEC in the period of most active contestation of APEC (1993-1999).

In doing so, I draw from Marxist political economy traditions. I also draw from a body of literature which conceptualizes and historicizes this recent and ongoing restructuring of capitalist relations and links political economy to an understanding that views these phenomena as continuations of colonialism as I discuss in Chapter 1. While experiences of colonialism and capitalist development (and crises) throughout Asia and the Pacific are as diverse as the lands and peoples of the region, there are also commonalities. A critical historical approach to mapping the political economy of the region, and the spread of 'free trade' and neoliberal capitalism throughout the countries that have joined APEC, is helpful to account for different forms and phases of resistance to APEC and other regional manifestations of neoliberalism. A detailed mapping of the geohistory of the impacts of neoliberalism and the nature of resistance movements in every APEC member country is beyond the scope of this research, but I will highlight general trends and themes and cite some specific examples. In accounting for the context, I draw from scholarly literature, NGO and activist analyses, including my own anti-APEC activist research and practice during, and since the period in question.

### *I. Restructuring and crises of capitalism*

Since World War Two, the "development" project through aid, trade and other means has had both economic and geopolitical goals (Hancock, 1989; Chossudovsky, 1997; Biel, 2000; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; D'Souza, 2006). During the Cold War, both major blocs used economic and technical assistance to further their own economic and political interests in the Third World. This was very true for the Asia-Pacific region, where US funding and investment poured into countries such as South Korea, Taiwan,

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<sup>18</sup> Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan approvingly stated that "It has been said that arguing against globalization

the Philippines, and Japan and other countries alongside US military interventions – direct and indirect – in the region in its battle to defeat communism (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Stubbs, 1998; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; McNally, 2002). Since the late 1980s, when capitalism supposedly triumphed over communism, societies across the world have been told of the apparent inevitability and inexorability of economic liberalization and free trade, with the absence of any visible alternative after the seeming demise of viable alternatives to market capitalism epitomized by the collapse of the Soviet Union and China's gradual integration into the global economy. Yet tensions between major powers over trade, resulting in political and economic hegemony, have remained. Countries in the South had their economies restructured in the interests of domestic and international economic and political elites through structural adjustment programs (SAPs) imposed by international financial institutions and donor governments. Meanwhile, many Northern countries underwent state restructuring, moving away from a Keynesian economy to a more neoliberal model. In the USA, this was known as Reaganomics. In the UK, this process was largely heralded by Thatcherism, and in post-1984 Aotearoa/New Zealand, it was dubbed "Rogernomics"<sup>19</sup>. Invariably this model included cuts to government spending, deregulation of the economy (including the labour market, with attacks on trade union rights), downward pressure on wages and conditions, and tax cuts for the wealthy and the corporate sector (Kelsey, 1995, 1999; McNally, 2002). For Chile and several other countries throughout the APEC region, structural adjustment was also implemented under military dictatorship or authoritarian rule, which saw progressive movements brutally crushed with the backing of the West (Collins and

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is like arguing against the laws of gravity." (UN, 2002).



Lear, 1995; Chossudovsky, 1997; Gedicks, 2001; McNally, 2002; Munck, 2002; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001 and 2003).

The package of economic policies advanced by a number of international financial institutions, Northern governments (especially through official development assistance and foreign aid programs), and various trade (and investment) initiatives such as the GATT/WTO and APEC, under the name 'free trade' have implications that extend far wider than merely trade in goods. Moreover, notwithstanding claims that we live in an era of free trade, many governments, particularly in Europe and North America, have maintained existing protections and supports for domestic industry and agricultural production (at least, for large scale operators) even as they demand that their trading partners remove tariff and non-tariff barriers, along with any forms of domestic support or subsidies, where they exist, in the name of the free market (Ingco, 1995; Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000; Pritchard, 2000; McNally, 2002; Boron, 2005). This has been particularly devastating for Third World countries, which have liberalized their agricultural sectors only to be flooded with subsidized farm imports from the US and the European Union (EU). Meanwhile, their exports are denied the promised tariff-free access into Northern markets. This has the dual effect of both undermining local food production and increasing dependency on imports (McNally, 2002; DeSantis, 2004; Desmarais, 2007; Patel, 2007).

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<sup>19</sup> Aotearoa/New Zealand's free market reforms were named after one of their major architects, Roger Douglas, Finance Minister, 1984-1988.

### *Features of managing new capitalist crises*

As D'Souza (2006) argues, capitalism is characterized by “constant economic expansion, relentless accumulation of capital, [and] unceasing scientific, technological and organizational innovations for extended reproduction and survival of capitalist society” (p. 27). Global and national economies have experienced a cycle of capitalist crises in recent decades. Broadly speaking, these have arisen from overaccumulation of capital in which markets had become saturated and profitability on investments had slumped. From the early 1980s, Northern economies were beset with crises of overproduction and excess capacity in manufacturing. This also led to a downturn in purchasing power and consumption capacity - and recession (K. Singh, 2000; Harvey, 2003, Petras and Veltmeyer 2001 and 2003). Petras and Veltmeyer (2003) enumerate a number of attempts in the 1990s to manage these capitalist crises. They include:

(1) a restructuring of world production, creating a global production system and a new international division of labour; (2) new computer – or information-based technologies designed to revolutionize the structure of production – productive transformation; (3) a new mode of capitalist accumulation and regulatory regime – post-Fordism; and (4) a program of policy reforms and structural adjustments, to facilitate a process of globalization and the renovation of the world order – a new economic order in which capital and commodities could move freely on a global scale (pp. 2-3).

These strategies laid the groundwork for several key developments in the global (and Asia-Pacific) economy of the period in question for my research. These are important factors for understanding the broader context in which APEC came into being, but also, in terms of contextualizing the concerns of opposition movements which arose against neoliberal policies and economic agreements in the 1990s. I now turn to discuss these factors in further detail.

### ***Financialization***

Perhaps the most significant development in the global economy of the past few decades has been its financialization and the increasing role of finance capital (Chossudovsky, 1997; Bello, Bullard and Malhotra, 2000; K. Singh, 2000 and 2005; McNally, 2002; Boron, 2005). Even as recently as the early 1970s, most governments imposed some form of regulatory restriction on the movements of capital. Huge amounts of investable capital seeking better returns than were available in the industrialized North were built up during the 1970s, arising both from surplus dollars that came through US investments abroad to finance the Vietnam war, and the recycling of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) dollars following oil price rises in the early 1970s. These led to pressures from commercial banks for worldwide financial deregulation and liberalization, as well as an imperative directed through international financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to recycle these funds by loaning to the Third World (Bello, Malhotra and Bullard, 2000; K. Singh, 2000). This process was facilitated and accelerated by rapid advances in information and banking technology. Over the years, private capital and foreign direct investment have dramatically overtaken flows of aid from governments. With the crisis of profitability in the productive sectors, capital sought quicker opportunities for profit in financial markets, rather than investment in production (K. Singh, 2000).

The deregulation and liberalization of financial markets have led to new forms of instability and crisis, as short-term speculative capital seeks to maximize profits by rapidly moving in and out of national borders. With this deregulation, national, institutional and regulatory boundaries in the financial services sector have become

extremely blurred or erased entirely, exposing countries to volatility and risk often completely unrelated to factors traditionally understood to be domestic or national (Bello, Bullard and Malhotra, 2000; K. Singh, 2000; McNally, 2002; Boron, 2005). The effects of a regime of open capital accounts, rapid financial liberalization, and increasing flows of speculative capital have undermined and sometimes supplanted investment in productive sectors of economies. Among APEC member countries, the 1994-1995 Mexico peso crisis, and the regional economic crisis in South East Asia, which devastated the economies of several APEC countries throughout 1997 and 1998, made evident the dangers of the integration of financial markets, and the destructive effects of removing regulations on financial transactions (Martin and Schumann, 1997; Bello, Bullard and Malhotra, 2000; K. Singh, 2000; McNally, 2002). Arguably, they also drew attention to the fact that countries which maintained at least some mild forms of capital controls, such as Chile and Malaysia, escaped the worst of the 'contagion' that traveled rapidly through regional markets after Mexico's and Thailand's financial meltdowns (Kelsey, 1999; Bello, Bullard and Malhotra, 2000; K. Singh, 2000; Bhagwati and Tarullo, 2003).

***Consolidation, concentration and spread of transnational corporate power***

During the past few decades, transnational corporations have emerged as major actors in both global and national economies. Their political and economic power is often viewed as more significant than that exercised by governments (Anderson and Cavanaugh, 1996; Greer and Singh, 1996; Martin and Schumann, 1997; Karliner, 1997; Tujan and Guzman, 1998; Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000; Gedicks, 2001; Lubbers, 2002; McNally 2002; Choudry, 2003c). TNCs have been both drivers, and beneficiaries of the

kinds of economic reforms undertaken to manage capitalist crisis which Petras and Veltmeyer (2003) outline. By 1995, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UN, 1995) noted that a number of the world's largest corporations had total revenues larger than the gross domestic product of countries in which they operated. It also noted that two-thirds of all global trade in goods and services took place between the subsidiaries of transnational corporations. Another report (Anderson and Cavanaugh, 1996) illustrated that by 1995, fifty-one of the world's largest one hundred economies were corporations, not countries<sup>20</sup>. While most corporations have been located in the North, a significant number of corporations from the South are emerging as global and regional players (Goldstein, 2007). The concentration, consolidation and expansion of corporate interests and power was advanced through a swathe of mergers and acquisitions, diversification, takeovers, alliances, and changes in production, transportation and information technology (Karliner, 1997; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001 and 2003; McNally, 2002; Boron, 2005).

Many corporations expanded globally as they outstripped domestic markets and sought more profitable returns on investment than markets that were already saturated. Many (e.g. agribusiness firms in the North) also sought to get rid of surpluses that had often been built up through strong state support in the form of subsidies (Hancock, 1989; Paul and Steinbrecher, 2003; Patel, 2007). This often resulted in dumping in Third World markets which had been forced open through deregulation and liberalization programs, leading to disastrous consequences for local farmers who could not compete with artificially cheap food imports (McNally, 2002; DeSantis, 2004; Patel, 2007). As floods

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<sup>20</sup> Calculated by comparing corporate sales with countries' gross domestic product (GDP).

of subsidized corn, beans, rice and other staples in which Mexico had been virtually self-sufficient entered from the US under free trade, the country became dependent on food imports, while prices paid to farmers plummeted (Desmarais, 2007; Patel, 2007). Within NAFTA's first decade, an estimated 1.8 million *campesinos*<sup>21</sup> had lost their livelihoods, with 600 leaving the land every day (DeSantis, 2004). Research commissioned by the Mexican government found that between 1992 and 2002, the size of the population employed in agricultural activities reduced markedly. The number of agricultural households diminished from 2.3 million in 1992 to 575,000 in 2002 (Romero and Puyana, 2005). Increased rural poverty levels, the scrapping of basic food subsidies and landlessness added further impetus to rural migration to the cities and overseas, often illegally (Desmarais, 2007; Patel, 2007). In the Philippines, agricultural trade liberalization under the country's WTO commitments proved disastrous for peasant farmers, who suffered similar consequences (McNally, 2002; del Rosario-Malona, 2004).

As TNCs expanded their reach globally, they lobbied aggressively for further deregulation. They also pushed to bring "new issues" into various international trade and economic arenas, aligning themselves with, and protected by states when it suited them and demanding to be free from regulations when they wished (Boron, 2005). They constantly 'forum-shopped' - searched for the best deal - seeking to minimize their risks and maximize their profits, regardless of social and environmental consequences. In this process, they both contributed to, and took advantage of, an international division of labour which located more and more production in the Third World where vast pools of

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<sup>21</sup> Peasant farmers

cheaper labour could be found. Meanwhile, they also benefitted as the nature of work in the North was forced towards more precarious, casualized and deunionized forms (Chossudovsky, 1997; Moody, 1997; Munck, 2002; McNally, 2002; Mathew, 2005; Ng, 2006). TNCs were major beneficiaries of the development industry, both demanding, and constructing a wide range of infrastructure projects largely designed to support export sectors (Hancock, 1989; Valencia, 1994; Karliner, 1997).

Coupled with an increasingly deregulated global finance regime, corporate players added to the volatility of domestic economies, with cycles of takeovers, plant closures and relocations, and fewer restrictions on the repatriation of profits (Martin and Schumann, 1997; Kelsey, 1999; McNally, 2002; Boron, 2005). In spite of claims (Moore, 2003; World Trade Organization, undated) that deregulation and liberalization has spurred competition, innovation and choice, these moves have reinforced monopoly capitalism. By the mid-1990s relatively small numbers of corporations dominated areas of production and service supply, often through global chains of subcontracting (Karliner, 1997; McNally, 2002, Paul and Steinbrecher, 2003; Pangsapa, 2007; Patel, 2007). Through such arrangements, companies sought the lowest labour costs and least stringent environmental regulations as well as total liberty to move capital in any form across borders. In the Asia-Pacific, as well as a high degree of US corporate penetration, TNCs from Japan, and emerging economic powers such as Korea and Taiwan consolidated their production base and reach in the region's markets (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Karliner, 1997, Stubbs, 1998; Biel, 2000, Goldstein, 2007).

### ***Structural adjustment programs***

Many of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region were undergoing severe economic reforms dictated through lending conditionalities imposed by international financial institutions such as the IMF/World Bank<sup>22</sup> and the ADB, as well as bilateral development assistance from donor governments which came with similar conditions. Following the debt crisis of the early 1980s, whenever international financial institutions lent money to Third World governments, they insisted that countries commit to free market economic reforms (Hancock, 1989; Chossudovsky, 1997; Karliner, 1997; Kelsey, 1999; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; McNally, 2002). The burden of spiralling debt repayments fell on the poor, as price controls on essential commodities were lifted, and cuts to social spending laid waste to education, health and other social services, as well as to the livelihoods and jobs for public sector workers (Martin and Schumann, 1997; Chossudovsky, 1997; McNally, 2002). As public services such as water and energy were privatized, often to be bought up by TNCs, they became unaffordable, inaccessible and unaccountable to those who relied on them (Chossudovsky, 1997; McNally, 2002; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003).

The IMF and World Bank also actively advanced financial liberalization within their structural adjustment programs. As local currencies were devalued, exports became cheaper, but the imports on which countries were made to become more dependent

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<sup>22</sup> The International Monetary Fund was established to “promote international monetary cooperation, exchange stability, and orderly exchange arrangements; to foster economic growth and high levels of employment; and to provide temporary financial assistance to countries to help ease balance of payments adjustment” (IMF website, <http://www.imf.org>). The World Bank states that its mission “evolved from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) as facilitator of post-war reconstruction and development to the present day mandate of worldwide poverty alleviation” Both institutions were set up at a United Nations Monetary and Financial conference at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in July 1944. This conference also planned an International Trade Organization, which three years later, was realized as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) – the precursor to the World Trade Organization. Together, the IMF, World Bank and WTO are sometimes referred to as the “Bretton Woods institutions”.



through economic liberalization became more expensive (Hancock, 1989; Chossudovsky, 1997; McNally, 2002; Patel, 2007). As agriculture and manufacturing production were increasingly oriented towards export, many countries found themselves relegated to little more than links in a subcontracting chain dominated by a handful of corporations, whether for the production of raw materials, garments, or luxury food items (Tujan and Guzman, 1998; Biel, 2000; McNally, 2002; Pangsapa, 2007; Patel, 2007). New dependencies on food imports, often from highly subsidized corporate agriculture in North America or Europe were created, adding to pressures displacing farmers, and eroding subsistence agriculture on which many millions depended (Federici, 2001; DeSantis, 2004; McNally, 2002; Desmarais, 2007; Patel, 2007).

People's movements and NGOs in many of the affected countries (as well as some Northern NGOs) mobilized against the imposition of neoliberal policies or undertook advocacy of different forms in relation to them. This included milder forms of lobbying, research and advocacy that sought slight reforms or greater participation by 'civil society', but, as I discuss in Chapter 5, these actors often did not question the capitalist fundamentals of the economic policies being promoted. Mobilizations also included more confrontational political action based on a rejection of the policies and the institutions – state and banks – that promoted them. Many critics (Hancock, 1989; Chossudovsky, 1997; Martin and Schumann, 1997; Kelsey, 1999; Bello, Bullard and Malhotra, 2000; K. Singh, 2000; McNally, 2002) pointed out that the crippling and escalating debt levels precluded governments from being able to follow a path of independent social and economic development.

### ***Trade and investment liberalization***

The economic, social and political regimes which externally-imposed structural adjustment programs or domestic neoliberal reforms had brought about were locked in and advanced by trade and investment liberalization. Significantly, the Uruguay Round of negotiations of the GATT (1987-1994) was the first time that a number of key areas previously defined as domestic policy issues were brought into the international trade arena (Raghavan, 1990; Das, 1998; Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000; Patel, 2007). These moves had major implications for the lives of millions of people throughout the region, advancing new and legally enforceable forms of property rights over people's rights. The push by TNCs and Northern governments for the inclusion of new agreements on intellectual property rights, agriculture, trade in services, and trade-related investment measures followed years of 'forum-shopping' in order to advance their interests at the international level. For example, failed attempts to achieve a binding international intellectual property rights agreement at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) had been blocked by Third World governments in the 1980s. Strongly influenced by TNCs, Northern governments pushed it into the GATT agenda (Kelsey, 1999; GRAIN, 2003) where it was to become the agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs). A concurrent attempt to conclude a binding multilateral agreement on investment (MAI) among OECD countries stalled in 1998, after serious disagreements among the member nations, and external pressure from social movements, NGOs and trade unions. Subsequent failed attempts to bring wider coverage of investment into GATT/WTO talks was also blocked by Third World governments who held that such a deal would bring benefits only to Northern companies and investors. These were the latest of efforts dating back to the 1960s to create a binding international

instrument that guaranteed investor rights (Kelsey, 1999; K. Singh, 2000; Gedicks, 2001). For decades, the US had insisted that agriculture be kept out of global trade talks – until its major corporate agriculture players, many of which had been built precisely on the forms of state support that Washington now insisted that other countries should not use, built up huge surpluses that it needed to get rid of, through opening new markets and expanding new forms of control over the global food chain (Paul and Steinbrecher, 2003; Patel, 2007).

As I contend later in this chapter, this expansive approach to ‘free trade’ was increasingly mirrored in APEC, and even exceeded, in that APEC tackled a number of areas that were not part of the WTO’s agreements (Tujan, 1996; Kelsey 1999; Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group, 1999). One of the most important features of free trade and investment agreements was the way in which they could lock in domestic economic reforms and structural adjustment regimes, with legally enforceable mechanisms to persuade governments not to change course (Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000; K. Singh, 2000 and 2005). Yet the new modes of international production, rather than trade, were the key drivers of globalization. Commitments to trade and investment liberalization for the world’s most powerful economies such as the US were questionable, even as they dictated that this was the only model for the rest of the world to follow (Pritchard, 2000; McNally, 2002; Patel, 2007).

### ***Globalism versus regionalism***

There were many tensions among governments and the private sector regarding the desirability of global economic liberalization versus various regional trade and economic groupings (Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000). Some free trade advocates and

economists, including former WTO director-generals Ruggiero (2003) and Moore (1997, and 2003) gave dire warnings of a scenario of a “world split into defensive, even hostile, regional blocs” (Ruggiero, p. 28) leading to potential conflict should governments pursue regional, instead of multilateral trade agreements. Others, such as Bergsten (1996) argued that regional trade arrangements spurred “competitive liberalization” that reinforced multilateral liberalization at the WTO. Tensions over the relative priority that governments accorded regional or global free trade negotiations reflected the interests of capital and calculations about which kinds of deals would benefit them the most, as well as geopolitical concerns. TNCs in Europe were concerned about the potential of receiving less preferential treatment in parts of the world where US corporations and state interests had established major footholds (Biel, 2000). US TNCs were concerned about the level of Japanese TNC domination in emerging markets in Southeast Asia (Tujan, 1996; Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Biel, 2000). Within the Asia-Pacific, a number of regional economic integration initiatives, especially in Southeast Asia, (such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)) sought both to advance industrialized development in the region among their members and yet at the same time, were so deeply enmeshed in capitalist relations with states, corporations and finance capital from outside the regions that they were also bound into global economic dynamics (Biel, 2000). Alongside the stated push towards a global set of trade and investment rules that all countries must abide by, powerful nations like the US continued to use unilateral trade and economic measures against countries which they deemed to threaten the interests of their corporations (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Kelsey, 1999; McNally, 2002).

With the spread of neoliberalism came major industrialization at any cost – in terms of factories, industrial production models, and agriculture, mainly oriented towards export. Coupled with this process there was often *deindustrialization* as production was located and relocated in line with maximum profitability imperatives and the rules of comparative advantage under free trade (Biel, 2000; McNally, 2002; Patel, 2007). Alongside this industrialization/deindustrialization came major infrastructure schemes to provide energy and transportation for industry, and to accelerate the rate of extraction and export of raw materials, such as timber and minerals. These often had severe social and ecological impacts and led to conflict with local communities and workers (Karliner, 1997; Tujan and Guzman, 1998; Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000; Evans, Goodman and Lansbury, 2001; Gedicks, 2001; McNally, 2002; Rengam, 2003). One example of such an infrastructure project is the San Roque Dam in the Philippines, funded by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and built by a consortium of companies led by Japanese corporation Marubeni, displacing thousands of indigenous Ibaloi people and destroying the livelihoods of many more (Tujan, 2005). As I discuss in Chapter 1, this model of development also reinforced features, such as the imposition and expansion of an array of private property rights, a process that had begun in many societies under colonization (Kelsey, 1999; McNally, 2002; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003; D’Souza, 2006; Choudry, 2007).

In conclusion, Boron (2005) notes that imperialism’s fundamental features as described in the early twentieth century are unchanged but intensified:

The acceleration of globalization that took place in the final quarter of the last century, instead of weakening or dissolving the imperialist structures of the world economy, magnified the structural asymmetries that define

the insertion of the different countries in it. While a handful of developed capitalist nations increased their capacity to control, at least partially, the productive processes at a global level, the financialization of the international economy and the growing circulation of goods and services, the great majority of countries witnessed the growth of their external dependency and the widening of the gap that separated them from the centre. Globalization, in short, consolidated the imperialist domination and deepened the submission of peripheral capitalisms, which became more and more incapable of controlling their domestic economic processes even minimally (pp. 3-4).

As Boron indicates, and as I have argued in this chapter, global restructuring led to new forms of colonial relationships as nominally independent countries in the South were made dependent on exports, desperately trying to earn foreign exchange, while their local economies were undermined, and non-market forms of social relations – such as subsistence economies and traditional or customary land tenure systems which sustain millions of people – were targeted for elimination and incorporation into a global market (Faraclas, 2001; Federici, 2001; McNally, 2002; Desmarais, 2007; Patel, 2007). Rising interest rates on loans and falling world prices for exports cemented this colonial relationship. Many critics charged that TNCs and Northern governments worked together to recolonize the Third World. Workers, Indigenous Peoples' and small farmers' rights were under renewed and intensified attack throughout the Asia-Pacific and worldwide. Meanwhile, women were often expected to pick up the pieces as social services were dismantled, and were further marginalized as low-paid or unpaid agricultural or factory workers in a global supply chain (Dalla Costa, 1995; Biel, 2000; Federici, 2001; Mohanty, 2003; Pangsapa, 2007). In turn, women, Indigenous Peoples, small farmers and Third World workers were also on the frontlines of struggle against neoliberalism (Moody, 1997; L. Smith, 1999; Federici, 2001; McNally, 2002; Munck, 2002; Mohanty, 2003; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003 and 2005; Burgmann and Ure, 2004; Choudry, 2007;

Desmarais, 2007; Lindio-McGovern, 2007; Pangsapa, 2007, Patel, 2007). I will return to the question of movements against neoliberalism in the Asia-Pacific later in this chapter. I turn now to discuss the formation and features of APEC that became a target of this opposition, building from my broader discussion of neoliberal globalization.

## *II. The rise (and decline) of APEC*

### *Context for the birth of APEC*

The 1990s were marked by much attention to the economic rise of Southeast Asia and the rapid economic growth of the so-called “tiger economies” or “newly industrialized countries” (NICs) of East/Southeast Asia (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Martin and Schumann, 1997; Bello, Bullard and Malhotra, 2000; Biel, 2000; McNally, 2002). There was much hype and interest about the Asia-Pacific as the growth engine of the global economy. This resource-rich region comprises over one-third of the world’s population, around 60% of global gross domestic product, with growing markets (US Trade Representative, 2004). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, as APEC came into being, the EU and the USA were concerned that the Asia-Pacific region might integrate in some way that would negatively impact their geopolitical/economic interests (Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000). The USA saw a need to keep its hand in the region as a counterweight to the EU, the powerful role of Japanese capital, and Tokyo’s political reach (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Tujan, 1996; Kelsey, 1999; McNally, 2002). Japan acted as an imperialist power in the region through its private sector’s complex chains of production and its government’s aid and trade policies, and was wary of US moves in the region

(Tujan, 1996; Karliner, 1997; Biel, 2000). The EU was also concerned about potential rivalry from Asia and access to growing markets and resources. ASEAN seemed to be an emerging bloc in a fast-growing economic region, yet the style of regional integration in Asia was far less formal and institutionalized, and more outward-looking than either the EU model or North America under NAFTA (Higgott, 1998; Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000).

APEC began in 1989 as the Cold War ended and as seven years of the GATT Uruguay Round negotiations, which eventually established the WTO in its Final Act of 1994, often seemed to teeter on the brink of collapse. Among other disputes, EU and US trade negotiators appeared at loggerheads over the rules for treatment of their respective systems of agricultural subsidies under GATT. The USA, Canada, Mexico were engaged in negotiating NAFTA, a regional free trade and investment agreement, partly as a back up position should multilateral talks fail. NAFTA took effect on 1 January 1994 in a climate of great uncertainty regarding the contours and connections of the post-Cold War global economic order. The countries belonging to APEC were far from homogeneous in their histories, politics and economies. APEC began with 12 members in 1989 but grew to 21 during the 1990s. APEC's version of the "Asia-Pacific" included six ASEAN nations: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, (Vietnam joined APEC in 1998); five east Asian economies – China, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, three Australasian/Pacific countries – Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, and from the Americas, Canada, Chile, Mexico, and the USA (Peru and Russia became members in 1998). The dominant notion of the Asia-Pacific region itself (for the purposes of APEC) was an artificial construct. The USA and Canada had no obvious non-economic links to Asia and the Pacific, and the Pacific Island nations were largely



ignored (Muzaffar, 1993; Higgott, 1998; Kelsey, 1999). Muzaffar (1993) argued that APEC effectively allowed the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to hitch a ride with dynamic Asian economies.

There are contested recent histories of the region associated with the hype around the formation of APEC. Advocates of free market economics, including the World Bank, claimed parts of the region – particularly the NICs - as a free market success story – at least, until the economic crisis of 1997-1998 (World Bank, 1993; Wade, 1996; Kelsey, 1999; Bello, Bullard and Malhotra, 2000; K. Singh, 2000). Although some significant aspects of their economies were liberalized to varying degrees, contrary to many claims, states in this region were often active players in the economy. To varying degrees, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Singapore all employed different versions of state-assisted capitalism and mixed pragmatic approaches to managing their economy and trade policy which did not faithfully follow the dictates of liberalization (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Martin and Schumann, 1997; Biel, 2000).

***“Four adjectives in search of a noun”***

In its formative years, APEC was fairly low-key and supposedly a forum that was open to the different kinds of development models that prevailed amongst its members (Tujan, 1996; Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Kelsey, 1999). Former Australian foreign affairs minister Gareth Evans (1995) once described APEC as “four adjectives in search of a noun”, emphasizing its looseness and structurelessness. The APEC acronym lacked a word like “organization”, “agreement” or “council”. APEC became more clearly aligned with neoliberal economics after stronger US influence came to bear. As it was also steered by several pro-big business thinktanks which fed into its process, APEC

advanced a vision of open trade and investment across the Asia-Pacific region by 2010 for “developed member economies” and 2020 for “developing economies” (APEC, 1994; Higgott, 1998). As mentioned earlier, APEC was also an arena of struggle for dominance over East Asia, particularly as Washington tried to use it to counter Japan’s economic dominance over the region (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Tujan, 1996; Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000). There were also concerns that ASEAN countries (especially the NICs) might want to use it as a way to build trade and investment cooperation among themselves and immediate neighbours in ways which might exclude the USA. Washington also wanted to use APEC to force open the economies of Japan, China and South Korea for investment and exports (Tujan, 1996; Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000).

APEC had three stated goals. These were: 1) trade and investment liberalization; 2) trade and investment facilitation; and 3) economic and technical cooperation (APEC, 1994 and 1997). However, the forum became a contest over contrasting approaches to capitalist organization among its member governments, yet increasingly weighted towards the first goal. Tensions simmered between those governments seeking binding rules-based free trade and investment through APEC (USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) and those which wanted voluntary economic cooperation with an openness towards different economic models (Tujan, 1996; Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Higgott, 1998; Kelsey, 1999).

The private sector enjoyed a key role in shaping APEC’s direction. Significant players included the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) which brought together business, academics and officials acting in their ‘private capacity’ and the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) which organized a number of forums to bring

executives, ministers and officials together alongside APEC meetings and prepared various reports to feed into official APEC processes. While the private sector enjoyed a great deal of access and influence, APEC deliberations were shrouded in secrecy and excluded everyone else except for minor involvement of some trade unions affiliated to the Asia Pacific Labour Network (APLN - a regional coordination of the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICFTU), now known as International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)) in the lower rungs of its human resources development working groups (Kelsey, 1999). As Joan Spero (1995), then US Undersecretary of State for Economic, Business and Cultural Affairs, put it in a statement to a US Congress Committee, "APEC is not for governments. It is for business. Through APEC, we aim to get governments out of the way, opening the way for business to do business."

A different member chairs APEC each year, and it functions through a cycle of meetings, with many, but not all, being held in the host country for that year. The first APEC Ministerial Meeting was held in 1989 in Canberra, Australia; then in 1990, Singapore; 1991, Seoul, South Korea; and 1992, Bangkok, Thailand. The first APEC Economic Leaders Summit – involving the respective Heads of State of each APEC member country - took place alongside APEC Ministerial and officials' meetings in 1993 at Seattle, USA, followed in 1994 by Bogor, Indonesia; 1995, Osaka, Japan; 1996, Manila/Subic, Philippines; 1997, Vancouver, Canada; 1998, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and 1999, Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand.

### ***Tensions as APEC steered in a neoliberal direction***

The APEC process appeared to gain momentum and to be steered in a clearly neoliberal direction after the USA chaired in 1993. Significantly, when it chaired the

APEC process in 1993, the US had urged, and for the first time established and hosted, an APEC Economic Leaders Meeting in Seattle which seemed to herald the direction of APEC as a free trade and investment bloc. In 1993, an APEC Eminent Persons Group report clearly expressed a market-driven direction of APEC (APEC, 1993). As stated earlier, the 1994 APEC Bogor declaration set “non-binding investment principles” with a voluntary deadline of 2010 - for “developed” member economies - and 2020 (for “developing” member economies) to achieve free trade and investment in the region (APEC, 1994). Yet tensions remained about how, whether, and in what way APEC should be institutionalized.

As a voluntary, non-binding process, APEC was a considerably more amorphous entity than the WTO with its institutionalized framework and legal personality in international law (Higgott, 1998; Kelsey, 1999). Levels of commitment to the neoliberal model pushed within APEC by the USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand varied. Australia had seen APEC as a way to guard its regional interests against the EU and the USA but in practice often sided with Washington (as did Canada and New Zealand) in pushing the APEC process to concrete neoliberal goals and timetables (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Kelsey, 1999). While Malaysia’s Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed was often painted as the forum’s resident maverick naysayer by US, Australian, New Zealand and Canadian ministers, officials and media commentators, critical of the Anglo-American governments and their geopolitical and economic agendas (Kelsey, 1999), Japan, Taiwan, and Korea were also more quietly resistant to the attempts of the Anglo-American bloc to use APEC as a vehicle solely to lay the ground for more

expansive – and binding - liberalization and deregulation commitments (Tujan, 1996; Higgott, 1998; Kelsey, 1999).

APEC had no formal institutional structure – it was more of a network than an institution. At face value, APEC commitments were often ambitious and went further than those made at the WTO, not least in the area of investment (APEC, 1994). But the bland language of the APEC official communiqués and declarations often papered over the real divisions in relation to the different understandings of the forum and the status and weight that APEC deadlines and resolutions actually had. Beneath a thin veneer of consensus, one could see rivalry and mutual distrust between, for example, Japan and the USA over their respective styles of capitalist expansion through the region, as well as battles for access and control over energy resources (and the extent to which governments wanted APEC to focus on this area) (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Kelsey, 1999). Into this situation, China, not yet a member of the WTO, was emerging as a major economic power and competitor for production and investment. It became clear quite quickly that APEC lacked adequate institutional infrastructure to implement anything, let alone achieve a regional free trade and investment bloc (Higgott, 1998; Kelsey, 1999). It was deeply divided and the “Asia-Pacific” region lacked any real geographical cohesiveness in the same sense as Europe. APEC’s “open regionalism” (Bergsten, 1996; Higgott, 1998) for the most part meant that it might play a role in ratcheting up commitments made in other arenas such as the WTO, rather than move towards a concrete and comprehensive EU or NAFTA-style agreement for the Asia-Pacific (Bergsten, 1996).

APEC described itself as a community of economies, not countries. This allowed it to skirt around the delicate political sensitivities of the membership of the ‘three Chinas’ – China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong in the same forum. Heads of state were referred to as leaders of APEC economies, not prime ministers or presidents of nations. But this framing also helped to justify APEC’s exclusion of what were deemed to be non-economic issues like the environment, poverty, indigenous sovereignty and human rights, unless these could be rendered in narrow ‘trade-related’ terms. APEC operated through a multi-level series of leaders and ministerial meetings scripted by officials, and coordinated by a small Singapore-based secretariat. Standing committees and lower level working groups of academics, officials and private sector representatives produced reports and recommendations, conducted studies and sought to influence policy across the region. After the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, the Anglo-American countries within APEC saw the forum’s role being to ‘ratchet up’ the GATT/WTO process by tearing down remaining protections, forcing other countries to deregulate and liberalize further and faster, and to fill perceived ‘gaps’ in the GATT agreements. This included addressing both macro-economic policy and the micro-details of domestic economic reforms (Tujan, 1996; Kelsey, 1999).

***Key features of concern for movements opposed to APEC***

APEC’s internal instabilities were mirrored on the outside by external challenges posed by a growing range of political, economic, and opposition movements which targeted APEC in some form (Kelsey, 1999). In many ways, APEC, and the networks of opposition that grew throughout the region contesting the nature of its operation and the economic model which it promoted, prefigured and overlapped with the more recent

mobilizations against the WTO, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and bilateral free trade and investment agreements (FTAs). I will return to consider this question in Chapter 6.

While APEC was never a binding, legally enforceable agreement in the same way as NAFTA or WTO agreements were, its ambitious agenda, covering areas which GATT/WTO had not yet encompassed, caused great concern among its critics. For NGOs, trade unions and social movements in the region and beyond, after 1993, APEC Summits, held each year in a different country in the region – proved to be a visible, moving target, prior to the momentum surrounding the biennial WTO Ministerial meetings. At least in intent, APEC symbolized the expansion of the neoliberal agenda beyond the WTO, particularly with its investment liberalization focus and initiatives for earlier voluntary sectoral liberalization in areas such as forestry and fisheries (Choudry and Cookson, 1996; Kelsey, 1999).

APEC meetings were used by host governments for domestic political and economic purposes, as well as the interests of transnational capital whose representatives hovered nearby, at meetings such as the ABAC-organized APEC Business Forums. This in turn influenced the contours of resistance from movements and organizations with both local and/or international focus. Wherever APEC's annual showpiece, the Economic Leaders' Summit took place, it was accompanied by security crackdowns and human rights violations (Pue, 1998, Kelsey, 1999; Pearlston, 2000). With the international media gaze upon them, and as thousands of government officials and private sector leaders descended on the host city, the government that chaired each year's APEC Summits sought to present a positive, sanitized image of economic progress and political stability

to an international audience. In these yearly events, cocooned in luxury, ministers and heads of state signed onto pre-scripted declarations urging speedier and more comprehensive liberalization. Since it was neither a trade bloc nor a formal agreement, but a voluntary, non-binding process, relying largely on peer pressure, APEC commitments, critics pointed out, were subject to even less Parliamentary scrutiny, or public debate than binding trade treaties like the GATT (Kelsey, 1999).

APEC included countries that were subject to some of the harshest structural adjustment programs and debt crises (e.g., Indonesia and the Philippines), NICs (Taiwan, Thailand, and South Korea), imperial powers like the USA and Japan, and “developed” countries which were undergoing sweeping domestic economic reforms like Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Canada. Papua New Guinea was the lone Pacific Island nation, and was experiencing similar structural adjustment policies to many other Third World countries (Faraclas, 2001; McNally, 2002). In turn, in many cases, the imposition of neoliberal policies had been met with resistance from different sectors, as well as criticism of the questionable mandates of both authoritarian regimes and supposedly social democratic governments to negotiate positions on behalf of a country’s peoples at such international forums. There were concerns both in terms of these governments’ seemingly unswerving blind faith that free market economics would deliver development that would benefit all, and outrage at specific impacts of neoliberal reforms on sectors such as agriculture. I will return to consider the nature and context of anti-APEC NGOs and movements in more detail in the next section of this chapter, before a deeper analysis of power and knowledge within these networks in Chapter 5.



### *Selling the APEC message*

A number of official statements emerged from within APEC regarding ‘civil society’ engagement, partly in response to criticisms levelled at the forum and member governments about its exclusionary, secretive decision-making processes. But these statements are clearly written from the standpoint of ruling relations, serving elite interests and aiming to defuse and divide critics. Such communications strategies were often undertaken by the governments chairing the process at the time, as I will discuss in chapter 5. Most of these statements were framed around the concept of building broader public support for liberalization. There was never any admission that there could be alternative economic models. The 1997 APEC Economic Leaders Declaration stated, for example:

To underpin our efforts, support among the people of the region for continuing trade and investment liberalization is essential. We welcome the decision by Ministers to develop an APEC-wide work program to assess the full impacts of trade liberalization, including its positive effects on growth and employment, and to assist members [in] managing associated adjustments (APEC, 1997).

In May 1998, the APEC Secretariat called for proposals from consultants to follow through on this, to advance “community understanding of the benefits of trade and investment liberalization, while acknowledging the associated adjustment costs...By raising understanding and support for liberalization, this project directly contributes to APEC’s core trade and investment liberalization objectives” (APEC, 1998a). Later that year, the Kuala Lumpur APEC Summit announced that “ministers tasked officials to develop effective strategies to build community understanding for liberalization” (APEC, 1998b).

A 1998 New Zealand government strategy paper records the approval of a public relations strategy to promote “a broad-based and balanced understanding within APEC communities of the rationale for APEC’s trade and investment goals” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), 1998, p. 1). The New Zealand Government communications strategy and branding exercise wanted to quickly establish “an overall brand image in the market place” but “will not focus on the complex substance of the APEC process such as trade liberalization or facilitation.” (New Zealand Government, 1998, p. 3). Public relations advice given to the Auckland City Council to promote APEC to the public urged: “don’t provide information in a proactive way until close to the event...the message should state that APEC is good (and why)” (Auckland City Council, 1998, p. 2).

Such public relations strategies were partly a response to the growing discontent and opposition movements against APEC and other manifestations of neoliberalism in the Asia-Pacific. I turn now to briefly contextualize and describe the networks of opposition to APEC, before analyzing internal dynamics of these networks more deeply in Chapter 5.

### ***III. NGOs, movements and contestation of the APEC agenda***

In Chapter 2, I discuss the recent rise of NGOs and theorize some key aspects of this phenomenon. For the most part, movements and organizations that were active in the opposition networks to APEC in the Asia-Pacific did not define themselves as ‘anti-globalization’ or ‘global justice’. These labels, whether applied by external observers, or embraced by the actors themselves, came much later. Yet by the early 1990s, there was considerable mobilization and advocacy against the policies and impacts of the World

Bank, IMF and the ADB in the region arising from environmental and social justice concerns, spanning a spectrum of positions from mild criticism to rejection of both free market economic policies and the capitalist system which underpinned them.

Environmental NGOs and movements opposed large infrastructure development such as dams and demanded redress for their social and ecological consequences, while others raised human rights concerns about those affected. Formal coalitions like the NGO Working Group (now 'Forum') on ADB (NGO Forum on ADB, undated) and other looser networks like the People's Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Lau, Daniel and Fernando, 1996) brought together NGOs and some movements in relation to the rise of neoliberalism and the changing face of domination from external countries and capital in region. They encompassed both reformist and more critical positions. In a number of countries – especially Japan, South Korea and the Philippines - there were significant anti-US military bases movements, some of which espoused openly anti-imperialist politics, and some more liberal democratic values (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996; Enloe, 2000; McNally, 2002). More broadly, there were many peace and anti-nuclear movements, some of which engaged broader concerns of social and economic justice. Democracy movements ebbed and flowed in countries which had experienced (often US-backed) authoritarian/military rule such as the Philippines, Thailand, Korea, and Chile. Women's rights networks, some, though not all, formed around UN conferences on women, were also established in most countries of the region. It was often from such sectoral or issue-specific standpoints that organizations approached APEC. Organized labour was under sustained attack in many countries throughout the region, undermined and divided by the new international division of labour and corporate subcontracting

chains which broke down the stages of production and pitted worker against worker within, and among, countries in a race to the bottom for maximum profit. Union leadership had often become bureaucratized and co-opted by the state, although in many countries rank and file militancy challenged union elites, the state and capital (Moody, 1997; Greenfield, 1998; Stubbs, 1998; McNally, 2002, Munck, 2002). Internationally, there were networks of more critical trade union activists, often from smaller, independent trade unions. These networks included the Asia-Pacific Workers Solidarity Links (APWSL) and sectoral based workers/union networks, which took less compromising stands in relation to free market capitalism than the leadership of ICFTU-affiliated unions, and whose members participated in anti-APEC forums and mobilizations.

Until the late 1990s, there were relatively few NGOs whose primary focus was on free trade agreements. Aid and development agencies, usually headquartered in the North, started focusing on free trade initiatives usually in terms of their impact on development, underdevelopment and poverty alleviation. Environmentalists paid attention to these agreements and voiced concerns about free market approaches to environmental regulation. The legacy of the Cold War lingered on. Many of these organizations were openly anti-communist, and also received considerable financial and political backing from Western governments, foundations and Northern NGOs. In some countries, such as the Philippines, mass-based left movements and organizations remained strong (notwithstanding internal splits and the growth of an NGO sector, a tendency of which espoused liberal democratic and reformist politics and distanced itself from anti-imperialist movements). In other countries, mass people's movements had all

but been replaced by NGOs (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Santuario, 2001; Veltmeyer, 2007). While the specificities and dynamics of political space for organizing and mobilizing varied amongst countries, overall, there was a sense in which the emergence of NGOs in the 1990s was slowly but surely reshaping political space (Santuario, 2001; Solomon, 2001; D'Souza, 2006; Jones de Almeida, 2007; Burrowes, Cousins, Rojas, and Ude, 2007). Unlike most social movements, NGOs tended towards a compartmentalized, issue-based, project-driven orientation which did not necessarily have a movement focus, a mass base or the capacity for mobilization or organization. Tensions grew between larger NGOs on the one hand, and social movements and smaller people's organizations on the other (Faraclas, 2001; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Cockburn and St Clair, 2002; Davis, 2002; McNally, 2002; Desmarais, 2007). Similarly, the political economy of funding and support for 'civil society' by Northern governments channelled through NGOs led more critical voices to question for whom these organizations really acted.

Cycles of NGO conferences such as those focussing on APEC provided a *raison d'être* for many of these organizations, and yet many failed to recognize that the parameters for their activism related closely to the way in which neoliberal regimes constructed, used and manipulated 'civil society' as little more than a subcontracting partner, for example, through providing services or through constrained advocacy where, as Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) suggest, they acted as a buffer and safety valve to neutralize popular discontent and more radical movement-based activity. This advocacy typically manifested itself in NGO position papers, reports, press conferences and meetings of NGO representatives. As De Waal (1997) puts it,

[s]tatements of the goals of non-governmental organizations, in particular, are commonly taken at face value. It is as though the sociological study of

the church were undertaken by committed Christians only: criticism would be solely within the context of advancing the faith itself (p. 65).

As I illustrate in Chapter 5 with reference to a number of documents, many NGOs critical of APEC tended to assiduously avoid analysis or statements that identify capitalism as an underlying cause of injustice. Similarly, I will discuss how some activists in anti-APEC networks asked just how real a space was this 'civil society' which supposedly existed separately from the state, and just how *non-governmental* many of these organizations actually were given their funding and other close links to governments in many instances.

### *To engage or not to engage*

Regionally, there were many sites and faultlines of struggle against both APEC and the neoliberal development model that it embodied. In a broad sense some of these grew out of tensions around whether to seek to reform these agreements or not. This was sometimes expressed as the "engage or not to engage" debate, (Manila People's Forum on APEC, 1996; Kelsey, 1999), although those of us in what was seen as the non-engagement camp, which sought to delegitimize APEC, argued that the issue was on what terms and from what platform one engaged the policies and capitalist relations underlying APEC. A number of larger (and mainly, but not solely Northern-based) environmental NGOs took the position that urged the insertion of "green" clauses in international trade agreements to link trade liberalization with environmental standards, and (unsuccessfully) sought a seat at the table for their organizations in trade talks (e.g. National Wildlife Federation, 1995; WWF-International, 1999). Such a strategy did not challenge the free trade paradigm as a fundamentally environmentally destructive one, but assumed that by inserting a clause about environmental standards that some kind of balance that took the environment into consideration could be struck. It ignored the fact

that free trade arrangements such as the WTO and APEC would only engage in discussions on environmental issues if they were redefined in very narrow “trade-related” terms. It also failed to consider the likelihood of such standards ever being enforced by mechanisms within free trade arrangements which were fundamentally premised on deregulation and liberalization. Similarly some ICFTU trade unions (and their regional bodies such as the Asia-Pacific Labour Network) urged that trade agreements should contain “social” clauses which would link trade and labour standards (Elwell, 1995; Asia Pacific Labour Network, 1996).

In both cases, these concerns and positions fed into some attempts by some North American and European governments to introduce language to link trade, core labour standards and the environment into trade agreements (Elwell, 1995; Kelsey, 1999; Biel, 2000; Munck, 2002). These positions, whether advanced by government, union or NGO, were often vigorously opposed by movements and governments in the Third World. On the one hand, these positions were seen as a cynical form of protectionism by rich countries. On the other, many movements that took a more critical stance in relation to capitalism and imperialism saw them as face-saving cosmetic attempts to humanize a fundamentally flawed model of development, which was designed by and for the expansion of capital (Kelsey, 1999; McNally, 2002; Munck, 2002). They argued that instead such deals and the economic ideology underlying them should be rejected, rather than energy expended on trying to reform them (Kelsey, 1999; Greenfield, 2001; McNally, 2002; Munck, 2002).

In addition to positions which turned on ‘green’ and ‘social’ clauses, APEC had some other features that impacted the positions of those contesting the forum. As I will

discuss in further detail, some NGOs said that because APEC was less institutionalized, and spoke the language of consensus, that it could be influenced by lobbying. In the eyes of other activists, APEC's amorphous, non-institutionalized nature added to its lack of legitimacy, and they urged that APEC be delegitimized at every possible opportunity. Others active in the APEC NGO networks (as I will discuss in relation to those involved in organizing the Manila People's Forum on APEC 1996, for example), shifted their position and practice according to the context. Despite the fact that it seemed that there was little space within APEC's official networks of meetings and working groups for any other position than neoliberalism, some organizations still maintained a reformist position. Much NGO campaign literature on APEC drew particular attention to the anti-democratic nature of APEC, with heads of states defined as "leaders of economies" and government officials acting 'in their private capacity'. Some NGOs and activists tended to talk up the significance and threat of APEC, some strategically, some saw it as a tangible manifestation of neoliberalism that they were fighting on many fronts, because of its shifting cycle of meetings which offered multiple mobilization targets.

As I will discuss in further detail in Chapters 5 and 6, such tensions, differences and divisions ran through most of the APEC NGO and movement campaigns, and still continue to characterize differences in positions in relation to contemporary forms of opposition to trade and investment liberalization and neoliberal reforms.

### *A short history of APEC NGO meetings*

In Chapter 5, I focus in greater detail on both examples of practice and literature that emerged from networks of organizations contesting APEC, especially in the annual NGO meetings that took place close to the APEC Economic Leaders Summits, during the



period of most concerted activity directed towards APEC. However, I will briefly summarize the chronology and some features of the direction of NGO/activist initiatives against APEC meetings during the 1990s here. Local contexts of the annual APEC NGO meetings always shaped the debates and frameworks for discussion, yet so too did the framings adopted and promoted by the NGOs and other actors which came to dominate in these gatherings.

### ***Low-key beginnings – 1993-1994***

US environmental and other NGOs met in Seattle at the time of the 1993 APEC Summit, and a small number of NGOs from several countries within APEC met in Jakarta but had their press conference banned. A number of other networks, nationally and regionally, began to form with a focus on APEC.

Opposition to APEC was accelerated by events in 1993-1994 when the forum seemed to be steered quite strongly in the direction of free trade and investment as being the only economic model for the region. In many ways the Bogor Declaration (APEC, 1994) was the embodiment of the worst fears of people's movements regarding APEC, and more broadly, the pace and direction of neoliberal development and the control of transnational capital over the region. It was also a major point of division between those countries that adhered to a looser, consensus based, non-binding vision of APEC, and the Anglo-American governments that saw in the Declaration an explicit enunciation of APEC goals of free trade and investment and a timetable.

The People's Plan for the 21st Century (PP21) was one NGO/social movement initiative which gathered over 100,000 Japanese and other Asian activists in Minamata to

discuss regional mechanisms in 1989 (Nepalese Organizing Committee for the Kathmandu Convergence, 1996). Follow-up meetings took place in Thailand (1992) and India (1993). In 1994, the PP21, which included NGOs, trade unions, environmental, human rights, Indigenous Peoples' and women's organizations had started focusing more on APEC. A PP21 working group on APEC met in Bangkok that year, and drafted an alternative regional social charter to "ensure that urban and rural workers, subsistence consumers, small scale and informal sector producers are effectively protected against the onslaught of economic globalization" (PP21, 1994). PP21 advocated a people-centred approach to economic and social self-determination, but fell short of open criticism of capitalism. However, the PP21 process lost momentum in the mid-1990s, although many participating organizations remained active in anti-APEC networks.

### ***Osaka sets the stage for NGO summits on APEC***

The November 1995 Osaka NGO Forum on APEC was immediately preceded by a smaller, separate forum on "Trade and Worker's Human Rights in the APEC Region" organized by the Canadian organization, the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (ICHRDD - now known as Rights and Democracy), and the Asia-Pacific Workers Solidarity Links network (although some participants took part in both) (ICHRDD/APWSL, 1995). The NGO Forum on APEC was mainly organized by Japanese environmental and human rights NGOs with funding support from Australian and Canadian NGOs, and brought together around 120 people. What was striking about the two meetings were the differences in positions articulated in the final statements. Notwithstanding a range of views held within each meeting, and a range of different organizations, under the heavy influence of North American reformist organizations such

as ICHRDD and US labour and human rights NGOs International Labour Rights Fund and Human Rights Watch, the labour forum produced a statement that seemingly accepted many of APEC's claims, enunciated a clear belief in the power to reform APEC and to insert a human face into neoliberalism, by incorporating labour unions into the APEC process and urging that APEC governments ratify ILO conventions and so on (ICHRDD/APWSL, 1995). But the NGO forum was unequivocal in its rejection of APEC and its intention to delegitimize it (Kyoto Declaration, 1995). The NGO forum included far more participants from grassroots organizations and movements in Asia than the labour forum.

### ***1996-1998 – Three years of APEC People's Summits***

From 1996, three years of sustained large-scale People's Summits on APEC began in the Philippines, with rival anti-APEC conferences reflecting domestic schisms in leftwing people's movements and associated NGO networks and trade unions, and with many issue forums taking place in different cities throughout the country before culminating in the Manila People's Forum on APEC (MPFA) and the People's Conference Against Imperialist Globalization (PCAIG) conferences held in Manila and Subic respectively. The scale of these meetings seemed to grow year by year. The 1997 People's Summit on APEC in Vancouver, largely organized by Canadian NGOs, trade unions, and ICHRDD, with substantial support from both federal and British Columbia governments, included an expansive number of workshops and sub-forums. So did the following year's Asia-Pacific Peoples' Assembly (APPA) in Kuala Lumpur, which was organized and hosted by a number of Malaysian human rights, environmental, consumer, and women's organizations, but received significant funding from ICHRDD, Canadian

government and NGO sources, as well as Oxfam America and NOVIB<sup>23</sup> (Asia Pacific Peoples' Assembly, 1998, p. 2).

***1999 – Change of scale and focus for anti-APEC activism in Auckland***

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the fact that the groups most actively contesting APEC took a strong non-engagement position with government APEC initiatives can perhaps be best accounted for by these organizations' confrontational position in relation to domestic struggles against the extreme implementation of neoliberal policies since 1984 and colonization, for whom APEC was viewed as yet one more manifestation of these processes. Some of this mobilization and opposition related back to longstanding Maori demands for justice, and later opposition to the 1991 Employment Contracts Act, which had deregulated the labour market, mobilizations against welfare, health and education cuts, and the targeting of the 1995 ADB directors meeting and Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Auckland. Anti-APEC activism in New Zealand made explicit the connections between domestic and international neoliberal processes, although there were some differences with NGOs that saw APEC as purely a 'Third World development' and 'human rights' concern, with no critical position in relation to its potential or actual impacts in New Zealand. Meanwhile, to a greater or lesser degree, connections were drawn between APEC, the MAI, the WTO, NAFTA, domestic economic reforms, and structural adjustment programs. Those organizations which took more critical positions drew attention to the corporate interests involved with driving APEC, and attempts by APEC host governments to co-opt trade unions, NGOs and others in an attempt to legitimate its existence. Some, including the groups in which I was

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<sup>23</sup> Dutch affiliate of Oxfam International.

involved, worked to delegitimize APEC, together with the free trade, free investment orthodoxy which it promoted. We targeted its lower-profile meetings of officials and ministers throughout the year. We highlighted the way in which it often acted as a forum in which to try to build agreement on contentious WTO issues and a spawning ground for binding bilateral trade and investment agreements. Others, particularly single-issue NGOs, largely focused on the annual summits and in organizing NGO conferences timed alongside them, but focused little attention on APEC or neoliberal globalization for the rest of the time.

As I will illustrate in Chapter 5, New Zealand activists effectively put an end to these summits after much questioning about how critical and useful these large-scale summits were for building analysis and opposition to APEC.

### ***Conclusion: Growing focus on neoliberal globalization***

By the end of the 1990s, APEC had rapidly lost credibility with the private sector whom it was supposed to serve, failing to deliver any tangible results. APEC threatened to lapse into virtual paralysis after the economic crisis swept across Asia in 1997, wreaking devastation across APEC's showcase East Asian 'tiger' economies, and destroying millions of people's lives. APEC lacked substantive outcomes despite rhetoric and expenditure by host countries, although it was an influential platform for building support on issues in the WTO such as prior to the 1998 WTO Ministerial meeting in Singapore. Most APEC member governments failed to implement the APEC action plans (of further deregulation and liberalization) to which they had committed. Increasingly the forum was ridiculed as little more than a talkshop. Its credibility in a downward spiral, journalists soon dubbed APEC "Ageing Politicians Exchanging Cocktails" or "A Perfect

Excuse to Chat” (Financial Times, 1996; Stone, 2001). Others remained critical of the way it insulated itself from, and ignored political issues that could not be fitted in narrow ‘trade-related’ terms, such as the serious violence in East Timor which overshadowed the 1999 APEC Summit in Auckland.

As the 1990s progressed, NGO and activist positions began to be articulated more and more using the terminology of ‘globalization’, ‘neoliberal globalization’, and ‘corporate globalization’. On one level this is quite significant in that it articulated a focus on the impacts of this phenomenon. However – and in keeping with Meiksins Wood (1995 and 1998) and Petras and Veltmeyer’s (2001) reservations about the terminology - for many movements, particularly in the Third World, which had longer histories of struggle against imperialism, their combative stance against these newer vehicles of capitalism was often more than adequately encapsulated in the language of anti-imperialism, rather than the terminology of ‘corporate globalization’ and ‘people’s participation’ often favoured by Northern NGOs and those NGOs in the South that eschewed mobilization for systemic social change.

Mobilizations against APEC did not stop after 1999. But the choice of location for the annual summits in Brunei Darusalaam (2000), China (2001) made mobilizations of the sort that had been organized in previous years more difficult, both in terms of the scarcity of local organizations to coordinate NGO/activist mobilizations and summits, and the restrictive political space of the host countries. The approach taken by New Zealand activists who had been involved in these international anti-APEC networks had also halted the cycle of ever-larger NGO Summits around APEC when Auckland hosted the 1999 Summit. Moreover, after the mass mobilizations against the Seattle WTO

Ministerial in 1999, there was a rise in focus on WTO meetings among NGO/movement networks, and an accompanying sense of APEC's relative impotence as a vehicle to deliver trade and investment liberalization.

Nonetheless, there were significant mobilizations against APEC in Thailand (2003), Chile (2004) Korea (2005) and Australia (2007). These focused both on US imperialism linked to war and economic policy, and APEC's new post-9/11 role as a forum for discussing security issues (APEC, 2002), as well as its role as a launch pad for more substantive bilateral free trade and investment agreements. Many of the organizations involved in anti-APEC mobilizations were already, or became, engaged in anti-WTO mobilizations at national, regional and global levels. Many of the debates and tensions within movement networks that characterized what was to become known in the media as 'the anti-globalization' movement or the global justice movement, swirled through the different forms of anti-APEC activism. After exploring the dynamics in anti-APEC networks in the 1990s more fully in Chapter 5, I will return to discuss their implications for contemporary struggles in Chapter 6.

APEC, and the opposition forces that mobilized and campaigned around it, must be located in a geohistorical context of the ascendancy and crises of neoliberal capitalism. These trends – which encompassed global, regional and national levels - included the financialization of the global economy and the volatility associated with the deregulation of capital flows. APEC arose in an era of increased power and reach of transnational corporate power, and was both a product of, and arena serving the consolidation and expansion of TNCs into almost every aspect of society, facilitated by both structural adjustment programs of the World Bank, the IMF and the ADB, and other, domestic

neoliberal reforms. A growing web of binding free trade and investment agreements locked these policies in and advanced them. As APEC struggled to define itself, being a non-binding voluntary process, internal tensions were mirrored by diverse forms of growing discontent and opposition to the impacts of neoliberal globalization throughout the region, leading to a broad network of opposition to the forum.

In order to fully understand both APEC and the dynamics of NGOs and social movements that targeted it, I have argued that both political economy and geohistory are important concepts. While neoliberalism was being imposed throughout the world, I have noted a number of specific impacts in the Asia-Pacific region, such as the 1997/8 economic crisis, which highlighted the contradictions of restructured capitalist relations and claims about the desirability and inevitability of this free market development model. Similarly, we must pay attention to geohistorical factors which have shaped social movements and NGOs throughout the region, as well as the ways these actors are implicated in ruling relations. As noted in Chapter 2, the diversity of the movements and organizations in the anti-APEC networks that I focus upon defy neat categorizations and analysis by dominant strands of social movement theory.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: Whose beat did we dance to? Rupture and reform - troubling the terrain of anti-APEC activism**

Many of the NGO and activist initiatives contesting APEC, including the NGO Summits, aspects of which I discuss in this chapter, are rooted simultaneously in both local and global contexts. They responded to, were framed by, and are articulated to a range of local and regional forces. A key challenge for researchers is, as Kinsman (2006) puts it, that, “[o]ur mapping out of the social relations of struggle facing global justice organizing must include the differential tying in of ‘oppositional’ social forces to state and capitalist relations” (p. 149). As highlighted in Chapter 4, the mapping of this terrain must attend to both national and international state and capitalist relations implicated in neoliberal globalization.

My analysis of NGO and activist networks on APEC in the 1990s is organized in the form of vignettes, narrative, documentary analysis and discussion informed by traditions, issues, themes and tensions that emerge from the theoretical and methodological literature, and in reference to the geopolitical and geohistorical context outlined in Chapter 4. Specifically, I identify, explore and explicate several themes and tensions emerging from my everyday world of anti-APEC activism, which illustrate the problematic that I am examining. I approach this analysis from the standpoint of my own involvement in anti-APEC organizing, and in particular, participation in APEC NGO forums between 1995 and 1999. In exploring the power dynamics and politics of knowledge production in these networks, drawing upon D. Smith’s (1987) concept of ruling relations, I ask how are these networks put together: that is, how are they socially organized, and to what end?

This chapter is organized into four broad sections. Part I briefly reintroduces the concepts of disjuncture and standpoint as starting points for my analysis, building upon my discussion of the rise of NGOs in Chapter 2, and the context for growing opposition to APEC and neoliberalism in the Asia-Pacific in Chapter 4. It provides an overview of questions which deal with the 'NGOization' of social action. It further explicates the dynamics within NGO conferences held at the time of the APEC Leaders Summits in the mid-late 1990s. It discusses anti-APEC events in Manila in 1996, which illustrate some of the internal tensions within these networks. Part II examines the politics of representation and professionalization drawing upon insights from institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography, organizational and discourse analysis, and critical race theory. Part III builds on discussions in earlier chapters in addressing tensions and power dynamics of knowledge, power, the reification of NGO and academic experts, and the marginalization of grassroots voices in these 'alternative' networks. Finally, in part IV, through textual analysis and critical reflection from my own participation, I discuss and compare aspects of the 1997 NGO and activist actions in Vancouver on APEC and the 1999 mobilization in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the power and knowledge dynamics within this milieu, issues which will be revisited in relation to more recent and contemporary movements against neoliberal globalization in Chapter 6.

The main themes of this chapter, which are interwoven with crosscutting strands, examine the politics of representation and interpretation in these networks, and the framing (and contestation) of 'alternative' APEC campaigns and positions, professionalization and the political economy of NGOs and 'civil society'. I pay

particular attention to the context and framings of the 1997 Vancouver People's Summit on APEC and the 1999 Auckland 'alternative' APEC activities to explore a number of these issues in depth. This will critically interrogate state strategies on engaging 'civil society' in regard to APEC. Attention will be paid to the process and politics of construction of knowledge among NGO networks, representation, interpretation and translation in anti-APEC networks in this period, through an examination of emerging internal debates. Following concerns identified in social history and concepts of ruling relations and social organization in institutional ethnography, I also raise questions concerning how to focus on grassroots movements and "histories from below" that are excluded from mainstream NGO and union platforms.

In my analysis, I draw from NGO and activist publications from throughout the APEC region such as books, reports, leaflets, newsletters, websites, programs and declarations from NGO conferences from 1995-1999. This will necessarily include reflection of my own standpoint as a window through which to explore these activities. It will include official documents from several governments of APEC member economies regarding 'civil society' participation and dialogue proposals relating to APEC, how they articulate to NGO and activist practices around contestation of APEC and neoliberal globalization, and the role they play in the social organization of these actors.

### *I. Setting the scene: Disjuncture and tension*

*Standpoint and disjuncture: “We begin from where we are”<sup>24</sup>*

For G. Smith (1995), research begins “not in the objective domain of sociological theory, but with everyday events in people’s lives, and in their problems of knowledge – of being told one thing, but in fact knowing otherwise on the basis of personal experience” (p. 21). Such ‘ruptures of consciousness’ provide a starting point for G. Smith’s political activist ethnography research that explicated how a regime works by investigating “ideological practice extending beyond the scope of local settings” (p. 21).

To illustrate my own sense of rupture and disjuncture in relation to organizing against APEC locally and internationally, it is necessary to briefly review my own standpoint and entry point into anti-APEC networks. As I outline in Chapter 1, this arises from my history of local (Aotearoa/New Zealand) and international anti-colonial organizing, research and writing. This work focused particularly on economic, social and ecological justice issues, and opposed neoliberal capitalism both as implemented domestically through Aotearoa/New Zealand’s free market reforms, and internationally through structural adjustment programs or trade, investment and economic arrangements such as the GATT/WTO and APEC. From 1995, my organizing, activist research, and networking continued into ‘alternative’ APEC meetings at an international level within networks that were mediated by People’s Summits and NGO conferences on APEC, email listserves, and other forms of information exchange. In addition to these more formal modes of communication and networking arrangements grew informal networks of people and organizations who identified closer political/ideological connections and alignments.

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<sup>24</sup> D. Smith. (1987). p.177.

GATT Watchdog, the small Aotearoa/New Zealand activist NGO for which I was an organizer for over a decade, organized an international anti-APEC forum and protest rally in Christchurch immediately prior to the local hosting of a July 1996 APEC Trade Ministers Meeting. Called 'Trading with our Lives' (Choudry and Cookson, 1996), it set an explicitly anti-colonial and anti-APEC frame for GATT Watchdog activities on APEC, with strong inputs from Maori sovereignty advocates and others who linked neoliberal projects such as APEC with older histories of colonialism, as well as other domestic issues in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The forum received no state funding of any kind, supported largely by monies from smaller NGOs and trade unions, and individual donations. During this conference, my profile in anti-APEC networks, the media and the public was also elevated dramatically as I was the target of a bungled break-in by the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (NZSIS) during the event and a subsequent police raid on my house allegedly looking for bomb-making equipment.

These events greatly impacted the next three years of my anti-APEC organizing. In late 1998, the New Zealand Court of Appeal ruled in a landmark decision<sup>25</sup> that the break-in had been illegal and that the NZSIS did not have the power of entry. This court case and subsequent legislative amendment to the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service Act, coupled with a high-profile campaign against this law change which we led - formed part of the backdrop to the New Zealand government's hosting of APEC in 1999 and was a valuable resource for our organizing strategy to denounce the human rights implications of these meetings. Starting from this point of confrontation with the state and the APEC forum, GATT Watchdog, the Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring

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<sup>25</sup> Choudry v Attorney-General; CA 217/98, 9 December 1998

Group and associated networks working on a year-long campaign to expose and oppose APEC and the neoliberal model which it advanced contended that the New Zealand government's NGO engagement strategy (discussed later this chapter) was a cynical exercise in controlling domestic dissent and containing critical debate. For institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography, this position of confrontation with state authorities in different ways (I and other anti-APEC activists and researchers were also embroiled in lengthy and antagonistic battles with various government ministries in relation to Official Information Act requests for APEC-related documents) is, as G. Smith argues, a signpost for inquiry and a valuable research resource<sup>26</sup>.

The project to transnationalize institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography which I elaborate in Chapter 3 needs to draw on ways that activists already conduct research transnationally as a collaborative endeavour. At this point it seems pertinent to recall Ng's (2006) contention that institutional ethnography "requires that people share information on what they know on the basis of their locations within institutional modes in order to gain an overview of how a system works as a whole and how to challenge and transform it" (p. 187). Indeed, exposing and contesting the ways in which dominant NGOs shape power dynamics at NGO Summits on APEC (and in turn how they were socially organized by the state and other forces) relied on an informal network of critical activists who communicated concerns via email and other means to alert others to what was happening (e.g. the preparations for the 1997 People's Summit in Vancouver), as well as attention to documents produced in this milieu.

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<sup>26</sup> Around this time I also became known for my prolific research and writing on free trade and neoliberalism in publications that were read by NGO, trade union and movement activists in the Asia-Pacific region as well as broader publics. Thus I became viewed as an expert, but perhaps an unusual one

Feminist critical race scholars such as Grewal (1998) and Razack (2004) offer important conceptual tools for use in considering race, whiteness and unsettling dominant liberal Northern narratives about the North's relationship to the Third World. On the one hand, we must interrogate the processes of white Northern NGO domination. On the other, we must examine local NGOs which articulate to Northern funders and advocacy agendas as well as the ways that they often relate to each other. Manji and O'Coill (2002), Wood (2005) and others draw attention to inequalities of power within NGO and movement networks which replicate North-South colonial relations in NGO practices. Razack (2004) argues:

We are being hailed as civilized beings who inhabit ordered democracies, citizens who are called upon to look after, instruct or defend ourselves against, the uncivilized Other. In this fantasy, we enter a moral universe that limits the extent to which we can even begin to think about the humanity of Others; our very participation depends on consigning whole groups of people into the category of those awaiting assistance into modernity (p. 55).

As noted in Chapter 2, Petras and Veltmeyer (2001), Manji and O'Coill (2002) and Gallin (2002) remind us that many NGOs arose from and operate within a charity model and discourse. Razack contends that "[w]ith its emphasis on pity and compassion, saving the Other can be a position that discourages respect and true belief in the personhood of Others" (p. 55). These observations are important for considering not only the roles of states in international relations and peacekeeping missions, but of non-government actors (albeit many of which have close relations with states). These dynamics underscore much of the literature and power relations that I discuss in this chapter pertaining to alternative APEC networks.

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in this milieu, because I was also a fulltime activist organizer and not operating in a professionalized context.

As noted in Chapter 2, the way in which many NGOs engaged in ‘anti-globalization’ campaigns tend to conceptualize, categorize and compartmentalize issues and causes has drawn criticism from a number of scholars and activists (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; D’Souza, 2002; Choudry 2002). D’Souza (2002) argues that NGOs have de-linked the present from the past. An examination of dominant NGO documents in alternative APEC networks confirms D’Souza’s contention that the language of sustainable development has all but replaced the articulation of the concept of self-determination. For example, the final Summit Plenary in Vancouver, entitled “The People’s Plans Beyond 1997” stated that “[d]elegates will take the next steps to promote sustainable human development in the Asia-Pacific region as an alternative to the APEC policies of trade and investment liberalization.” (1997 People’s Summit on APEC, 1997, p. 18)

Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) attack the ideological underpinnings of the language that development NGOs employ. They charge that “NGOs co-opt the language of the Left – ‘popular power,’ ‘empowerment,’ ‘gender equality,’ ‘sustainable development,’ ‘bottom-up leadership,’ etc. The problem is that this language is linked to a framework of collaboration with donors and government agencies committed to non-confrontational politics” (p. 133). This analysis echoes the concerns that Kinsman (1997) raises in relation to the ways in which state agencies borrowed, transformed and used “consensual language and terms such as ‘partnership’ ...to neutralize and moderate criticism” (p. 222) among AIDS activists and people living with HIV/AIDS. Such processes of redefining discourse serve to obscure fundamental differences in social power, and to filter out histories and contexts of struggle. As Kinsman notes, what tends to happen with the



common usage of such “consensual language” is that the terrain of struggle is framed by the terms of a particular phrase (like partnership) rather than the concept itself. “The struggle takes place within the shared discursive framework ...and does not burst its hegemonic boundaries” (p. 227).

### ***Hegemonic NGO positions and the politics of pragmatism***

The People’s Summits and tensions among NGO campaigns on APEC epitomize the disjuncture between social movements and smaller activist groups on the one hand (often, but not always based in communities) fighting various manifestations of neoliberalism and imperialism and elite, professionalized NGO activism on the other. As I will illustrate, this disconnect between modes of organizing against APEC led to grassroots struggles being sometimes showcased at some APEC NGO forums, yet in ways that did not trouble the centrality of a liberal professionalized NGO practice. The dominant processes of coordination and communications at these summits ignored, silenced or marginalized many grassroots, more radical movements. Many of the organizations most invested in the People’s Summits had no links with, or intentions to build or support mass-based counter-power to neoliberal policies. The work of Michels (1978) and Ostrogorski (1964), outlined in Chapter 2, raises important questions of internal democracy and external accountability to those that such organizations claim to represent. We must also recognize major resource inequalities in the anti-APEC coalitions, a diversity of organizational histories, processes and cultures, as well as the loose and informal membership, and absence of any real basis of unity among those active on the issues. But it is precisely this looseness and insistent claims to democracy

and solidarity which render oligarchical tendencies of dominant NGO players in these Summits and campaigns more difficult to scrutinize.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the notion of a hegemonic NGO politics and a doctrinaire ideology of pragmatism. From a political activist ethnography perspective, this is revealed in text and practice where it is embedded, and organizes these NGOs in the interests of ruling state and private sector relations. NGOs often vehemently protest their independence from ideology and insist that they uphold democracy and consensus. Yet, as NGO Summits on APEC illustrated, those in power define consensus. The “democratic” NGOs that dominated the Manila People’s Forum on APEC (MPFA) in Manila in 1996 labelled and dismissed the rival People’s Conference Against Imperialist Globalization as the “Maoist” conference, when international participants asked about it. Yet these NGO representatives involved in the MPFA did not admit to an ideology beyond vague exhortations to civil society, democracy and alternatives. Liberal democratic NGOs also tend to charge the more militant left for sowing division among ‘civil society’ forces, or detracting from their message (McNally, 2002, Choudry 2003a).

An argument which such ‘pragmatic’ NGOs often make – explicitly or implicitly - is that it is unrealistic to expect very much from those in power, and therefore that it is more desirable to seek limited gains or recognition of some sort by government or APEC than to reject APEC and neoliberal globalization altogether. As I will illustrate with reference to the 1997 Vancouver People’s Summit on APEC, and the political economy of funding these events, many of the key players in APEC NGO networks enjoy close funding relationships with the state, or are oriented towards hegemonic Western liberal ideals, rather than, for example, anti-colonial positions. I will attend to this issue drawing

upon critical examination of these organizations' texts and practices in the NGO Summits. From such an inquiry, it becomes apparent why there is so little space at these events for confrontational politics beyond a certain point. As McNally (2002), Meiksins Wood (1998), and Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) suggest, that point is reached when people actually name and challenge the capitalist relations underpinning arrangements such as APEC, and which move beyond a range of actions that imply belief in the possibility of reforming existing economic and political systems.

It is easy for participants at NGO events to become locked into ways of thinking about 'alternatives' to neoliberalism within certain parameters which become accepted as a kind of "commonsense" (Kinsman, 2006). This then helps to construct any discourse that is not premised on reform within capitalism as radical and marginal. Given that many social movements, especially (but not exclusively) in the Third World (such as those associated with the PCAIG, for example – see later in this chapter), are openly anti-imperialist, this often leads to their positions being re-interpreted by NGOs, ignored entirely in their accounts of international opposition to neoliberalism, sometimes appropriated by NGOs but redefined or constructed as marginal and unrealistic in similar terms to those theorized by Eschle (2001). In turn, such silences are re-circulated and reinforced in NGO and activist networks.

NGOs have frequently played a role of acting as a buffer between militant collective organizing against the structural causes of injustice and the state, national or global capital and the institutions that serve their interests (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001 and 2003; McNally, 2002; Veltmeyer, 2007). The strength of the international mobilizations against both APEC and the MAI were in the success of a relatively diverse

range of peoples' movements, NGOs and trade unions, which adopted a strategy of both exposing the underlying agenda of these processes and in delegitimizing them. Yet at the same time, some reformist NGOs and trade unions, the latter working through the Asia Pacific Labour Network, and the Trade Union Advisory Committee at the OECD (in the case of the MAI), along with quasi-government institutions active in this milieu, like the Canadian ICHRDD (now known as Rights and Democracy), continued to seek to 'humanize' capitalist exploitation operating through these fundamentally unjust economic arrangements. As outlined in Chapter 4, APEC's problems of legitimacy and credibility deepened following the Asian economic crisis. Increasingly, over several years of concerted focus and opposition, many movements and NGOs in the region seemed to move towards a position which sought to delegitimize and oppose APEC, rejecting the notion that the process could be reformed. On the other hand, a number of larger NGOs and unions continued to seek dialogue and reform of the APEC forum (see, for example, Amnesty International, 1998). APEC increasingly turned to public relations strategies to stave off growing criticism and seek to appease some of its milder critics.

#### ***NGO summits on APEC as starting point for investigation***

As discussed, from 1993 onwards annual NGO-organized activities around the respective year's APEC Economic Leaders Meetings slowly grew, from Seattle (1993), Jakarta (1994), Osaka/Kyoto (1995) until during the years from 1996 to 1998, they had become huge events in Manila, Vancouver, and Kuala Lumpur respectively. This reflected the priorities of funding agencies (official and NGO) which supported such events, often channelling funds through well-connected Southern 'partner' NGOs, as well

as the steady rise of NGOs as national and transnational actors as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, and their prioritization of such activities.

It may be argued that NGO conferences are decontextualized and not representative of broader social movements for social and economic justice in the Asia-Pacific. Commentators from across the political spectrum often characterize NGOs as jetsetting summit-hoppers who are either disconnected and disdainful of grassroots struggles and popular movements (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Davis, 2002; McNally, 2002, Hewson, 2005), or professional malcontents who make a living from transnational NGO networks (Friedman, 1999; Ikenson, 2002). Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) characterize NGO summits in the following way:

Hundreds of individuals sit in front of high-powered PCs exchanging manifestos, proposals and invitations to international conferences with each other. They then meet in well-furnished conference halls to discuss the latest struggles and offerings with their 'social base' – the paid staff – who then pass on the proposals to the 'masses' through flyers and 'bulletins' (pp. 131-2).

In my view, and consistent with the political activist ethnography approach that I outline in Chapter 3, questions as to what it is that such conferences actually *do* (and for whom) always need to be asked. For many NGOs and fewer grassroots activists, conferences are a core activity, and are accorded high priority. Many question their lasting effects and relevance for social struggles (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001 and 2003; Cockburn and St. Clair, 2002; Choudry 2002c). The meetings were socially organized through different forms of texts, position papers and campaign documents, as well as workshop presentations (formal and informal).

It would be dangerous to characterize the People's Summits as being the only substantive sites of anti-APEC activism in the region, since this took place in many other

locations. For at least some organizations and movements in these networks, anti-APEC actions occurred throughout the year, and were integrated with broader struggles, rather than being concentrated in a spectacle held over a few days on the sidelines of the APEC Leaders' Summit. But for the purposes of this research, the NGO summits constitute starting points from which to make visible the relationships between these 'alternative' networks and the relations of ruling.

***Manila divisions set stage for future internal dynamics of APEC NGO networks***

The historico-political context of the hosting of the 1996 Summit in the Philippines illustrates some of the splits in tendencies/approaches towards APEC. The Philippines is an example both of a country with vibrant social movements militantly opposed to imperialism, but also a large NGO sector and panoply of social movements and trade unions divided into several tendencies. While a comprehensive account of the ideological splits in the movement after the ousting of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 are outside the scope of this research, let me note that the power struggle on the Philippine left plays out in international forums and networks because of active roles of at least two of the major tendencies and their organizations throughout the region (Kelsey, 1999; Desmarais, 2007). This carried over into other NGO summits and movement conferences on APEC, and is also amplified and reinforced by positions of Philippine diaspora organizations throughout the world with allegiances to the different political tendencies, as well as links and connections with other organizations and movements internationally, including funding agencies. As in other parts of the world, in the Philippines there is a broader trend for the 'moderate' NGOs and their spokespeople to view Marxist-influenced movements as anachronistic or marginal and anti-democratic

(McNally, 2002; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Bulatlat, 2004). As Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) charge, these NGOs usually tender an alternative in the form of some kind of open space and participatory development, defined in rather vague terms, with little attention to matters of political economy, let alone an anti-imperialist platform.

I began to discuss the history of official positions regarding APEC and ‘civil society’ engagement in Chapter 4, and argued that these statements are clearly written from the standpoint of ruling relations. A further example from 1996 illustrates that tension quite sharply. Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Macaranas (1996), the Philippine head official for APEC that year, stated that

the networks of civil society deserve attention in a participatory framework of markets corrected for failures due to externalities and non-provision of public goods. Viewed this way, truly representative non-government organizations must therefore be given chances to present their own agenda for eventual incorporation by the intergovernmental network of APEC in the implementation of action plans.

Who would decide who was “truly representative”, and through what process? Surveying the terrain of initiatives surrounding APEC in 1996, it was not difficult to answer this question. In Manila, there were at least four local purported ‘progressive’ political tendencies which organized events critical of APEC. These ranged from the government-endorsed and promoted Asia Pacific Sustainable Development Initiative (APSUD) through to the anti-imperialist PCAIG. APSUD was a staged event, a highly publicized and stylized dialogue between then Philippine President Fidel Ramos and the mildest critics of APEC, including high-profile academic/NGO director Nicanor Perlas. But at the same time an immigration blacklist of around one hundred names of foreign activists was in effect, which Ramos justified by saying: “It is not so much the threat to national security that we are banning foreigners from this announced fora [sic] relating to APEC.

It is that it is inimical to our national interest” (Agence France Presse, 1996). The Central Luzon region in which the APEC meetings were held was heavily militarized. Urban poor were being forcibly displaced in a clean-up operation to prepare Manila for visiting dignitaries. The Ramos government sought to manage dissent through repression and intimidatory tactics (Choudry, 1997; Kelsey, 1999).

Meanwhile, Ramos also met with representatives of APLN trade unions, just prior to the Manila Summit, who asked him to support the establishment of a Labour Advisory Forum within APEC to parallel the APEC Business Advisory Council, and for the APLN to be accepted on the APEC Human Resource Development Working Group. The APLN wanted “to harness the APEC objective of the internationalization of markets to the improvement of the conditions of work and life of the citizens of our populous region. The reality of economic globalization requires a strategic response reaffirming the human-centred purpose of all growth and development” (APLN, 1996). This engagement did not in any substantive way challenge the fundamental impacts of neoliberal development and trade liberalization on workers’ rights and trade unions. The APLN and APSUD dialogues and consultations were examples within the APEC NGO/movement networks of processes which were clearly organized in the interests of ruling regimes, under the guise of inclusive, democratic discussion. Other more militant trade unions, as diverse as the New Zealand Trade Union Federation and the Philippine Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) vehemently opposed both APEC and the policies that it promoted at domestic and international levels. As with other years, there was a major disjuncture between government talk of ‘civil society’ engagement and the reality of state repression against critics and the poor alike. It seemed clear that to be “truly representative”, NGOs



and unions must remain within the confines of very uncritical parameters of debate, determined and policed by government dictates and the 'market-friendliness' of the organizations.

Many overseas activists and NGO workers participated in the huge MPFA which started with themed pre-forum subforums in different parts of the Philippines, including a women's conference on APEC, and others on "people's rights and democratization", "Labour and Migrant rights", "ecology and environment" and "economic and social development". These streams then came together in the extravagant MPFA, which had as its overarching theme "Fair Trade and Sustainable Development: Agenda for Regional Cooperation" (MPFA, 1996, p. 1). According to the MPFA program, this event was

an effort to focus the attention of the international community – particularly the member-countries of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) – on the need to reflect the people's concerns for human rights, social equity and environmental sustainability in the APEC agenda. . . . this international conference will serve as the parallel process of peoples, communities and sectors affected by the free trade and economic integration agenda embraced by the APEC to the scheduled APEC Leaders' Summit in the Philippines this year (MPFA, 1996, p. 3).

The reformist Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC - which had also been part of APSUD) handled the secretariat duties for the MPFA along with Focus on the Global South co-directed by Walden Bello, who was chair of the International Coordinating Committee of the MPFA, and the liberal Philippine Peasant Institute, an NGO. The MPFA positioned itself as reformist, yet somewhat ambiguously so. It said it noted both positions of reform and rejection camps. Although many people who attended the MPFA, especially those from overseas, were opposed to engaging APEC, it ultimately tended to take a reformist stance with NGOs and citizens' groups who

harbor no illusions that their efforts can significantly or immediately transform the APEC into a forum responsive to the people's needs, they still view it to be an important venue where the people's concerns can be raised and where specific policy reforms can be advocated. They identify certain spaces within the APEC and in parallel international agreements – few and far between though they may be – that NGOs and people's organizations can tap (p. 5).

By contrast to the MPFA, the PCAIG took an uncompromising stance on APEC in its activities, resolving to “Junk APEC, NAFTA, the European Union and the WTO as imperialist instruments to further subjugate and exploit the toiling masses and peoples of the world.” (People's Conference Against Imperialist Globalization, 1996). The statement was explicitly anti-imperialist and framed in unapologetic Marxist language. Further, it was critical of both official ‘civil society’ overtures and implicitly those NGOs that were co-opted by the language of civil society dialogues and partnership:

We denounce and oppose the subservient client states for selling out their peoples' interests. They connive with imperialism in promoting distorted concepts of “democratization”, “civil society empowerment”, and “sustainable development” in a bid to disarm the people and co-opt their organizations into the imperialist stratagem.

In a later section, I will explore the disjuncture between state-‘civil society’ dialogue and reformist NGO strategies on the one hand, and other more critical positions which are met with repressive state measures, drawing particularly from Canadian and Aotearoa/New Zealand examples. Kinsman's (1997) work on “consultation” and “partnership” is useful to refer to as it highlights the ways in which apparently benign, neutral sounding concepts such as dialogue with ‘networks of civil society’ or ‘NGO engagement’ (in the APEC context) put forward by officials are ways of socially organizing and orienting NGO actors in the interests of ruling regimes, and not for the concerns that they purport to advance.

In a sense, the competing positions within networks critical of APEC staked out in Manila set the scene for future meetings, where representatives of both ‘reform’ and ‘reject’ camps met in the Vancouver, Kuala Lumpur, and Auckland NGO meetings. These groupings were somewhat porous in that, outside of the Philippine movement tendencies, other actors sometimes had relations and connections with organizations and individuals from more than one camp. While rifts and schisms pepper leftist politics throughout the region (and the world), perhaps the international influence and impact of this split relates to the fact that the Philippines has had a particularly large and active vibrant left with international networks and capacity/resources, and many left-leaning activists within Asia still look to it for inspiration. One of the ways that this fault line can be understood internationally relates to differing organizational and individual ideological positions and commitments to Trotskyism, Marxist-Leninism, or liberal social democracy, for example. Others reflect a level of pragmatism around past and present tactical and strategic alliances, interpersonal relationships, and issue or sectoral-focused collaborations (e.g., agriculture, biotechnology, privatization). In turn, these political tendencies and their networks or articulation to international funders and other NGOs are important to interrogate in relation to how certain Southern NGOs and NGO leaders come to be valorized and respected by Northern funders and NGO elites.

### ***Social organization and the rise of the APEC ‘NGO Olympics’***

The ‘alternative’ summits on APEC came to be dubbed the “NGO Olympics” (Reid, 1998) and often appeared to be more spectacle than substantive. These NGO forums were based on very professionalized liberal western concepts and frameworks. NGO workers involved with planning and hosting these events sometimes tended to act

as if all participants were the same in terms of resources and power. As an activist from a small, barely funded organization doing both community organizing and analysis, I increasingly began to ask how these NGO summits were organized and for what purpose.

Tensions and frustrations with these meetings and dynamics are socially organized. They are rooted in extralocal practices (D. Smith, 1987; Campbell and Gregor, 2002) relating to articulation of alternative discourses to state and international institutions and arrangements as I will illustrate particularly in relation to the 1997 Vancouver summit. Claims that these forums were open spaces where all could participate and be heard equally need to be examined against actual practice, where certain organizations, ideological platforms and discourses are valorized over others. Despite claims that these spaces were alternative, open and democratic, as I will demonstrate, in many ways the NGO Summits replicated and embodied aspects of the critiques made of the official APEC meetings. Through media coverage, the staging and structuring of these events also influenced the ways that movements became represented to wider publics. These NGO meetings provided snapshots of some of the power dynamics and the ways that these networks were socially organized, and manifested aspects of the political economy of the NGOs and other organizations and groups involved in challenging APEC and neoliberalism. Through funding relations and other unequal resource and power dynamics came a disproportionately high number of white professionalized Australian, Canadian and US speakers who occupied key roles as speakers, facilitators or workshop leaders in these events, and whose right to do so was rarely questioned. The predominance and exalted status of these participants contributed

towards the closure of space for voices from grassroots struggles to be heard in these forums.

There was a strong tendency to avoid uncomfortable discussions and analyses in NGO forums and to portray a common front consensus. This was sometimes done by rigorous policing of narrow theme-based workshop discussions, or justified by time constraints predetermined by a relatively small steering committee within the conference, conforming to Western management paradigms. For example, at the MPFA, there was an extraordinarily short time to discuss a proposed final declaration from the floor after it had been scripted by a number of NGO professionals and academics. This closure of critique could be further accomplished through the framing of workshop and plenary sessions and themes, and fragmentation into summits and workshops based around themes that reflected NGO compartmentalization of issues, rather than more broader social movement visions, preventing much important and deeper discussion. The MPFA, with its women's conference and four pre-summits in different cities on "sector-specific issues" (MPFA, 1996, p. 11) was one example of this trend. By 1998, at Kuala Lumpur, there were at least fifteen issue/sector forums prior to the Asia Pacific People's Assembly (APPA, 1998a).

I turn now to problematize these NGO meetings as terrains for power struggles between different forms of knowledge and organizations. An important aspect of this is the claiming of the power to represent by professionalized organizations and the exclusion or marginalization of subaltern/grassroots voices.

## *II. The power to represent?*

### *NGO meetings as sites of power and organizational hierarchy*

As Wodak (2000) and Mumby (1988) argue, meetings are highly significant for organizations. Mumby says that meetings “function as the most important and visible sites of organizational power, and of the reification of organizational hierarchy” (p. 68). These kinds of conferences are a significant form of activity by certain kinds of actors in ‘anti-globalization’ milieus. Ostensibly they are about building solidarity, sharing resources, putting forward alternatives, and working on joint strategies together. But they are also sites where conflicts, alliances and powerplays can be clearly observed. Wodak (2000) highlights the relationship between organizations, discourses and meetings. For her,

organizations tend to stage their decision processes, much like a drama, orally at meetings as well as through their protocols, directives and other written bureaucratic genres. At least for an insider these scenes are comprehensible; they are hierarchically structured as not everyone has unlimited access to everything, status and power are thus produced and reproduced (p. 75).

Wodak’s observation can be extended to networks of organizations in anti-APEC networks. For the majority of participants, it may be difficult to see past stated claims of openness and democratic space to expose dominant players’ pre-set agendas, whether expressed through pre-scripted conference statements, the choice of speakers and panelists, the tactics of selecting workshop facilitators or rapporteurs who will steer discussions and outcomes in a desired direction, or the composition of steering committees of various kinds.

At NGO forums, some participants clearly wanted to establish or raise their organizational profile in a space where they perceived that influential NGOs would gather. Besides formal presentations, this was done through interventions during discussion time and in workshops, by the distribution of literature, as well as one-on-one conversations. As Jordan and Maloney (1997) note, NGOs often contest “the issue niche over which organizations have monopolistic control” (p. 184). There is sometimes an unspoken race to claim or name an issue, topic, or position first, almost in order to brand one’s organization (or oneself) as an authority on the matter (Bob, 2005). Sometimes this is clearly a power game, sometimes it seems to be a tactic to signal to other participants working on the issues that they should talk, sometimes people are touting for possible funding/collaboration opportunities (e.g., by positioning their organization as a reliable national-level contact on an issue), and more often than not it has a territorial feel to it.

In the case of analysis on APEC, for example, the Bangkok-headquartered Focus on the Global South, its charismatic director, Walden Bello, and Hong-Kong-based Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA) quickly moved to publish a number of books and reports on APEC from 1995 (e.g. Tadem and Daniel, 1995; Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996). Both ARENA and Focus were professionalized research NGOs which had a regional reach, and became key players in APEC NGO networks, yet with little genuine connection to grassroots struggles, let alone a mass base or the capacity or orientation to mobilize social forces. Both also tended towards reformist positions on APEC although they did grudgingly acknowledge the existence of more critical opposition. IBON, the Philippine research NGO, which actively supported militant people’s movements in the Philippines, countered by producing more clearly anti-

imperialist publications on APEC (Tujan, 1996). In the anti-APEC networks and meetings this jockeying for authority and ownership of an issue happened on many occasions. In some cases organizations that I know to be peripherally involved in the issues that they named seemed to use this space to claim involvement, if not monopolistic control. Sometimes these issues or the ways that they were framed had tenuous relations to APEC and neoliberalism. Northern NGOs or individuals with limited connections to issues and movements in the region often took up more space simply because they were relatively well-resourced and oriented towards prioritizing conference participation and presentations. In 1995 and 1996, the US environmental organizations National Wildlife Federation (1995) and Nautilus Institute (1995) produced and distributed APEC-related reports, and their representatives addressed NGO APEC forums, although their interests in APEC seemed somewhat peripheral and narrowly focused. To give another example, in all of the annual NGO conferences on APEC from 1995-1998, representatives of organizations advocating for human rights issues in Burma and Tibet had space on the program, but perhaps contradictorily, the same human rights organizations would not meaningfully address the broader impacts of neoliberal policies on peoples' economic, political and social rights. At a meeting during the Vancouver People's Summit, former Amnesty International Secretary-General Pierre Sané, a keynote speaker, declared that his organization did not have a position on free trade and human rights. Representatives of professionalized labour rights NGOs such as the US International Labor Rights Fund (P. Harvey, 1996) spoke and chaired sessions in Kyoto, Manila and Vancouver and yet rank-and-file workers' voices were barely present. In turn, end-products of conferences often embody these tensions in compromises over language, ideological positions, and



issues of concern to participating organizations in the pursuit of presenting a united front to media, to other NGOs and to governments against institutions like the WTO. The proliferation of such statements and the politics of the process of drafting such texts deserves further examination.

D'Souza (1995) reflecting on NGO and union meetings in Kyoto at the time of the APEC 1995 Leaders Summit in Japan observed:

There is a tacit understanding that the NGOs take a 'consensus' decision. Such an approach is healthy if the composition of the organisations reflects genuine differences in viewpoints that exist amongst people. When there are fundamentally antagonistic class interests, such consensus cannot be arrived at all.

At the NGO meetings on APEC, such interests were frequently hidden beneath talk of rights, values, fairness, democracy, sustainability, (MPFA, 1996; 1997 People's Summit on APEC, 1997a) and an almost classless construction of labour issues by some NGOs (Elwell, 1995; P. Harvey, 1996). With many of the key players in these conferences comfortable with a vision of liberal democracy and the ideology of pragmatism, there was often little space for critical reflection on the composition of such events, and perhaps few incentives for those most invested in organizing the NGO gatherings.

### ***The politics of representation and translation***

As already discussed in Chapter 2, there is a weakness in social movement literature in critically examining questions of coloniality, race, gender and North-South power dynamics in transnational social movement and NGO networks. Feminist scholars of colour, for example, Grewal (1998), Razack (2004), and Mahrouse (2008) have made

important contributions to critical examination of claims of humanitarianism and solidarity in these movement networks.

Grewal (1998) is incisive and worth citing at length on this issue:

The visual evidence of human rights violations, so pervasive in discourses used by organizations such as Amnesty International, relies on modernizing First World narratives of the Third World, representing poor women and children as victims in distress and in struggles against overwhelming odds. Such narratives universalize the Third World as a region of aberrant violence, and this notion of aberration occurs in relation to a First World that is seldom included as violating its women. The First World, imperialist, militaristic, violent, and exploitative, is rarely present in this visual evidence of human rights violations. Its absence constructs the authoritative and objective viewer and rescuer, always outside of history (p. 502).

The artificial construct of the Asia-Pacific region allowed for a multitude of Northern NGOs to campaign on various issues often in ways that denied those in the Third World directly impacted by neoliberal policies their histories and agency, as well as rendering invisible, or even redeeming the role of First World states and capital in creating such conditions. In particular, relatively well-resourced US and Canadian environmental and human rights NGOs such as Human Rights Watch, the International Labor Rights Fund, National Wildlife Federation, the Nautilus Institute, and ICHRDD attempted to orient People's Summit discussions towards reforming APEC, through the distribution of their publications and through the framing and chairing of workshop and plenary sessions and other events associated with the People's Summits.

Grewal (1998) eloquently captures an underlying power dynamic which was a significant factor in organizing much of the practice orientation of Northern NGOs, particularly those campaigning on human rights, in the context of 'alternative' APEC campaigns and People's Summits. Her insights particularly speak to the case when two

women workers from Thailand (the former vice-president of a clothing factory-based union in the Eden Group) and Mexico (a worker fighting management harassment in a Mattel-owned Mabamex toy factory) who were dependent on translation to be able to converse with others at the Vancouver People's Summit, expressed how they had felt used by the event organizers. After they had given their testimonies at an ICHRDD/Canadian Labour Congress-sponsored "International Tribunal on Workers Human Rights" (ICHRDD/CLC, 1997; People's Summit on APEC, 1997b, pp. 49-51) early on in the Summit, they were effectively muted because they had no way of communicating with others. They explained this in a session of an ad hoc, informal dissident labour roundtable which a number of activists, mainly from Asia and Latin American labour NGOs and independent unions had set up at lunchtimes and coffee breaks in response to the way in which North American union and labour NGOs had sidelined them in the Peoples Summit. Many trade unionists and labour rights NGO activists from the South (such as Hong Kong-based APEC Labour Rights Monitor (ALARM)<sup>27</sup>) arrived in Vancouver after finding themselves effectively excluded from input into the final shape of Summit activities on labour rights, despite having a strong involvement in contesting APEC in previous years. The handful of rank-and-file trade unionists and grassroots activists from the Third World fared even worse.

Third World activists are thus often objectified by Northern NGOs which claim credibility by association with them, while mediating what they can say and how it is interpreted. This process could be described as *representing representation*, since the ultimate framing of their inputs at such events lies in the hands of those who have

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<sup>27</sup> I was editor and principal writer for ALARM's monthly bulletin ALARM Update between 1997 and

brought them to the summits. This is one example of the ways in which NGOs play the role of “intellectual policemen” as Petras and Veltmeyer (2001, p. 137) charge. The allotted role of the Third World workers was to give “first hand testimony” (CLC/ICHRDDa, 1997, p. 1). Moreover, unequal power relations between Northern NGOs and Southern participants are obscured as the very practice of showcasing the suffering of a Third World worker is presented as genuine solidarity, with almost a redemptive quality attaching to the NGO sponsor of such an event. Regardless of whether the Northern NGO has any kind of mass base, the mere association that it derives from inviting a worker from a democratic independent union (or mass-based social movement) in the Third World can be used to build an impression among others that it is a trusted ally of such people’s struggles, and is therefore above criticism. The tribunal event made no real acknowledgement of the North’s implication in these injustices, or of worker abuses in Canada, except for a video testimony of Thai and Malaysian workers recently arrested in Toronto from a sex-trafficking ring. Meanwhile, an English speaking official from Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (SBSI - the Indonesian Prosperity Trade Union) which the Canadian Labour Congress and ICHRDD were championing at the time was used to deliver a controversial message supporting their stance on the linkage of labour standards to free trade agreements at the tribunal. Thus he effectively served to legitimate a Northern-led position (promoted by both the Canadian Labour Congress leadership and ICHRDD) that divided many Northern unions and NGOs from more militant rejectionist positions in the South.

### *Playing innocent and seeking redemption*

Razack (2004) notes:

In Canada, we understand our own middle-power role as one of bearing witness to the great evil that dwells in the South, an evil that traumatizes and overwhelms us. It is important to note that in the cultural story we tell about our international role, we always go to the South as innocent parties who are not implicated in the terrible histories we confront there (p. 156).

Embodying Razack's notion of Canada as an innocent party in past and current international politics, Canadian NGOs for the most part denounced human rights abuses in Asia and Latin America, but, apart from some smaller radical organizations on the sidelines of the Vancouver NGO Summit, or in other mobilizations, failed to implicate Ottawa or Canadian capital in the injustices on which they focused. Indeed, organizations such as the Council of Canadians (Barlow and Clarke, 1996) portrayed Canada's "founding principles" as diametrically opposed to an "individualistic and competitive" US narrative, but rather, inherently "collective", based on "sharing" and "a culture of interdependence" (p. 2). This view interpreted moves to adopt free market policies in Canada as "our nation [turning] its back on its history and institutions" (p. 1) and a loss of innocence. Ottawa could be criticized for accommodating Indonesian and Chinese government sensitivities over Tibet and East Timor protests, but not in any more fundamental ways. When grassroots Third World speakers like the Thai and Mexican workers discussed here are recognized as activists, they have frequently been presented as victims in need of saving by Northern NGO (and trade union) advocacy (De Waal, 1997; Grewal, 1998; Desmarais, 2007; Rojas, 2007). Absent from the framing of such presentations is any recognition or attention to geohistorical location of movements and organizations, or honest reflection about the politics of who represents and who interprets (and sometimes *literally* translates). While 'cultural diversity' was celebrated at

Vancouver, it was simply assumed that ‘we’ are all in the same struggle together. As Council of Canadians’ chair Maude Barlow announced in the opening of the People’s Summit (Barlow, 1997), “we come together from countries across the Asia Pacific to tell each other our stories – each one so different and yet so much the same” (p. 14). Yet, in reality, who was afforded the opportunity to do so, and which stories could be heard, was socially organized by the way that the Summit was structured and funded. With this benign and inclusive-sounding story-sharing image, and claims that the People’s Summit was “an open, public gathering of people from around the Asia-Pacific... a place for civil society to build alternative and opposing visions [to APEC]” (1997 People’s Summit on APEC, 1997a, p. 5), asymmetries and the coloniality of power between North and South are denied. It was as if by the act of funding participants from Latin America or Asia to attend and address the People’s Summit event, Northern NGOs (and the individuals that work for them) are redeemed and absolved of any implication in power inequalities, colonial practices, or racism. Drawing from Roman (1997), one might say that the Southern activists were treated by the Canadian organizations as “racial and colonial/neo-colonial subjects who are recovered for the express purpose of participating in a redemptive discourse of ‘common struggle’ and nation-building” (p. 185). Such a process further obscures power dynamics among Northern NGOs and social movement activists from the Third World.

### *Linguistic imperialism and translation*

At these events, the colonial difference is enacted, and power is exercised through translation both figuratively and literally. For most international networking and mobilizations on APEC, the English language dominates. Robert Phillipson (1992) sees

English linguistic imperialism as a sub-type of cultural imperialism<sup>28</sup>. “Linguistic imperialism also permeates all the other types of imperialism, since language is the means used to mediate and express them” (p. 65), he contends. Bourdieu (1982) argues that when a standard language is imposed on a nation (in his example, French),

what is at stake is the creation and re-creation of mental structures. In short it is not only a question of communicating but of ensuring the acceptance of a new discourse of authority, with its new political language, its terms of address and reference, its metaphors, its euphemisms, and the representation of the social world that it expresses, and which, because it is linked to the new interests of new groups, is not expressible in local tongues shaped by usage linked to the specific interests of peasant groups (p. 31).

In considering the role of language in ‘alternative’ APEC and other ‘anti-globalization’ networks, this is a fundamental issue, especially given the extensive opposition to neoliberalism from grassroots movements in the Third World and other non-English-speaking countries. The fact that English is the lingua franca of many of these networks already serves to exclude a multitude of voices and perspectives from being heard, except if they are mediated through translation or English-speaking representatives. This has implications for how and by whom their experiences of, and struggles against neoliberalism are represented and communicated among and beyond these international networks. It favours an Anglophone professionalized elite in the Third World which further overwrites the voices of, and concepts put forward by, grassroots movements. It also creates the conditions for the dominance of English language accounts and documents from these networks being disseminated through forms of public communication, such as mass media. In turn, this helps to determine whose histories are reflected in the texts, positions and documents produced by NGOs about APEC. This also

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<sup>28</sup> See also Pennycook (1998) on this issue.

influences which movements are acknowledged in mass media and scholarly literature, and in what ways.

***Professionalization, representation and the exclusion of grassroots voices***

Grewal (1998) observes that

pressure to professionalize activist work in new and numerous ways, from the search for resources and grants to networking capabilities, creates conditions for work without critical thought as well as an increasing distance from the specificities of communities. Connections to a “community” being served are often believed obvious or transparent, and critical reflection on this connection may be dismissed as an “academic” venture. It is also difficult to assume that one knows the needs of a community or that one represents a community. At best this representation can only be an approximation; at worst it may become a deafness to those marginalized in the community (p. 522).

So who speaks for whom? Given that accounts of the human impact of neoliberalism feature prominently in ‘anti-globalization’ discourse we must ask this question. When large well-resourced NGOs purport to represent the interests of the poor and marginalized at People’s Summits, why should we believe them? When accounts of events in the South are told by NGOs or activists, often decontextualized, or through a limiting framework that distorts and silences, how are these represented and for what purposes? Whose voice is actually being heard? How are the realities and struggles of movements in the South or marginalized communities in the North woven into a discourse of an NGO based in a very different context? Are they appropriated or amplified in this process? In different instances (organizational settings, different audiences), we must repeatedly seek to understand what is told, and what is omitted. If this is, as Vancouver People’s Summit literature claimed, truly a “global justice” movement (1997 People’s Summit on APEC, 1997c), why do some incidents such as



police crackdowns on protests at Vancouver and the 1999 Seattle WTO Ministerial Meeting protests become historicized as emblematic and constructed as turning points for 'the movement', while longer histories and ongoing mass protests against neoliberalism in the South, and experiences of state repression, are ignored almost entirely?

It is no coincidence that it is from the ranks of more militant activist groups and communities of resistance in both North and South that some of the most powerful analysis and challenges to reframe the 'anti-globalization' debate have emerged. However, these voices were rarely present in the same proportion or status as well-resourced and professionalized NGOs were at the APEC People's Summits.

***The politics of NGO conference declarations and the mandate to represent***

Another problematic with regard to representation relates to the desirability and process of ending each NGO forum with a declaration, and in turn, the choice of themes and framing of workshop topics. Declarations from the meetings tended to be ones that stated a 'lowest common denominator' position in relation to various impacts of APEC and neoliberalism. Their production became a ritualized process which claimed to adhere to open and democratic consensus decision-making, but was tightly regimented and sometimes largely pre-scripted. Most participants were expected to accept a pre-set framework and process, and to unquestioningly prioritize the time-consuming production of such statements. This meant less time for concrete strategizing with other activists. These processes were often highly undemocratic, with limited time for discussion and embraced questionable notions of mandate and representation. In 1996, when a Chilean NGO representative and I were tasked by local NGO organizers to write the declaration from the Davao MPFA pre-forum on economic and social development to bring to the

Manila People's Forum on APEC, many of the participants at the workshop had left already. I spoke no Spanish, the Chilean woman was not confident in English, and we had never worked together before. Moreover, we had no genuine mandate from the forum participants, nor a process for checking back with them about the output which was supposed to reflect our discussions and feed into and influence the drafting of a final statement. There had been no genuine consensus at the meeting, in which a range of positions were articulated in regard to APEC, neoliberalism and capitalism. Indeed, my Chilean co-writer and I had quite different perspectives on the issues, as well as the process and substance of the meeting in which we had participated. I complained to MPFA forum organizers in Davao, and again in Manila that the process was anti-democratic, and that the statement was essentially the work of two people with minimal input from others. Others complained of similar experiences in other pre-MPFA sessions. A Chilean trade unionist explained to me that the final document from the Labour and Migrant Rights forum essentially erased the more critical positions held (mainly by Southern trade unionists) in regard to APEC and labour struggles. He explained that the US labour NGO professional from the International Labor Rights Fund (which received funding from major foundations and enjoyed cordial relations with the Clinton Administration), who presided over the meeting had largely drafted a document that reflected the position of his organization. Yet these declarations claim to reflect the views of the participants of such meetings. In Vancouver, because of objections, a pre-scripted conference declaration drafted by Canadian organizers was shelved and replaced by a preambular statement drafted by some participants at the People's Summit (1997 People's Summit on APEC, 1997b, p. 15), but not without a struggle. If one's reason for

attending these meetings is to network and identify allies and build some more concrete relationships, spending hours poring over declaration drafts is unlikely to be a high priority.

In a similar way, Walden Bello and others of the core MPFA players appeared on television and in other media in the Philippines after the end of the NGO Summit, adopting a pro-engagement stance towards APEC, and purportedly representing the MPFA from which no genuine consensus had emerged with regard to APEC. There had been no voting or any other form of articulation of majority or minority positions at the forum. Similarly, in Vancouver, many were taken aback at the way in which the lack of a mandate to engage with government or APEC officials did not prevent some Canadian NGOs present at the APEC People's Summit, in a closing session when participants were about to head to the "Walk for Global Justice" (1997 People's Summit on APEC, 1997c), leaving to meet with government representatives about APEC. This angered many participants whose organizations and movements held a position of non-engagement with APEC. Attempts to challenge these moves were met with excuses that we had no time left to debate, that these organizations were only representing themselves, and that we had to familiarize ourselves with logistics for the march. Of those dismayed at this move, some argued that the fact that many Canadian NGOs involved with organizing the event receive substantial government or foundation funding might explain why their representatives repeatedly sought to direct the People's Summit forums away from blanket condemnation of APEC. They are funded precisely because they agree to operate within parameters set by the government. These organizations do not have an autonomous mass membership base to whom they are accountable in any way. To cite

one example, the now-defunct Canadian NGO, Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS), played a significant role in the Media Forum of the 1997 People's Summit. Its executive director declared during the last few minutes of the People's Summit that she and others would open a dialogue with the Canadian Foreign Minister about APEC. IMPACS funders included the Canadian government (DFAIT, CIDA and ICHRDD) (IMPACS, undated). These instances highlight the ways in which ruling relations underpin the ostensibly 'independent' actions of 'civil society' organizations and account for their behaviour, particularly through implication in dialogues designed to dampen and discredit more radical activism.

The theme of representation and mandate in these meetings and campaigns has a number of features. I continue now with a discussion of some specific ways in which these 'alternative' settings often replicate and reify hegemonic types of knowledge and professionalized NGO or academic 'experts', and how this process in turn served to constrain more critical analyses and action towards APEC.

### *III. Troubling privileged epistemologies: knowledge, 'experts' and ruling relations in 'alternative' networks*

#### *Knowledge and power*

Ideas and conceptual frameworks are extremely important for struggles for justice. Third World NGO and academic elites, in conjunction with liberal First World NGO professionals and academics, dominated the framing of the People's Summits. Although this was sometimes contested, other voices were marginalized or excluded. Many of the hegemonic organizations in these networks held explicit anti-Marxist

positions, fostering the dominance of liberal values and traditions in NGO framings. As noted earlier, non-profit thinktanks like the Nautilus Institute, ARENA (Hong Kong), and Focus on the Global South became key players in terms of publishing and disseminating analysis. But analysis that actually emerged from movements organizing against APEC was marginalized or ignored for much of the time. The people who tended to articulate the alternatives and analyse APEC remained for the most part NGO professionals, drawing on particular kinds of elite knowledge and discourse.

The NGO forums on APEC were also venues for the launches of books and other publications intended both to educate and frame the positions and campaigns of NGOs and as lobby documents for officials. In 1995, ARENA launched *Challenging the Mainstream* at the Kyoto NGO Forum on APEC (Tadem and Daniel, 1995), as did the Australian Council for Overseas Aid and Community Aid Abroad (both of which had helped to fund the Kyoto NGO forum) with their *APEC – Winners and Losers* book (Atkinson, 1995). In 1996, the Manila People's Forum on APEC, Focus on the Global South and the Institute for Popular Democracy (Philippines) compiled and launched *APEC: Four Adjectives in Search of a Noun* (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996), which was funded by Oxfam UK-Ireland and the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) (Bello and Chavez-Malaluan, 1996, p. 3), and whose contributors were all academics or professional NGO workers, rather than grassroots social movement activists.

Plenary NGO summit presentations typically tended to fall into several categories. Analysis of APEC and other economic, trade and geopolitical topics was usually conducted by academics associated with NGOs or non-profit thinktanks, who were sometimes based in universities. Professional NGO representatives would tend to speak

about social or environmental issues and advocacy or other campaign work. Organizers and grassroots/movement/trade union people would generally be slotted into a presentation to give testimony about the impacts of policies on them and their sector. Then discussion of alternatives and visioning would be left to academic experts and/or NGO spokespeople to put forward. The discussions tended to be framed and dominated by academic and professional NGO voices, and organizers and movement people marginalized or forced to fit into pre-allotted roles both validating/embodying the analysis of the experts, but with limited scope for voice and input, as in the case of the women workers from Thailand and Mexico at the Vancouver Summit mentioned above. Likewise, academic and professional NGO staffers dominated the drafting process for statements and declarations that emerged from these meetings. For participants unfamiliar with the key organizers of each meetings, such processes were opaque, to say the least, and there was little opportunity to question or substantively recast proposed drafting committees. Although, thanks to the vigilance of some local activists and the dissemination of information to networks in regard to the closed nature of preparations for such a statement at Vancouver, prior to the 1997 People's Summit on APEC, the planned pre-scripted declaration was challenged and blocked.

Disjunctures or ruptures exist between 'expert diagnosis' of problems, demands made in conference declarations, positions of movements, and often, grassroots popular struggles. As discussed in Chapter 3, political activist ethnography supports an analysis which suggests that the definitions of problems, the framing of struggle and proposals, including the omission of a framework which names and opposes capitalist relations and imperialism are not merely rhetorical differences, but are ways that social relations are

embedded in, and organized through texts. As I discuss throughout this chapter in reference to NGO and activist texts, the standpoints, orientation and strategic perspectives of different positions, are in turn informed by different histories and relationships with ruling.

***Reification of NGO experts and leaders and the constraining of movement critiques***

Having participated in, addressed, chaired and facilitated at numerous NGO conferences and activist teach-ins, and as a seasoned researcher and author of articles and analyses about APEC, the WTO and the global free market economy, I wonder increasingly about the ways which these activities, the documents produced and the discourses employed serve to create and reify 'experts' and 'leaders', particularly through writing, speeches and narratives. These writers, leaders, and spokespeople are frequently academics and or professional NGO analysts and researchers, rather than organizers or people drawn from grassroots struggles. These often charismatic NGO professionals and scholar-activists tend to produce texts prolifically, and in doing so, they claim power to speak for and represent movements and mobilizations, with a ring of credibility and authority. In doing so, they contribute to the silencing and marginalization of voices from grassroots movements and organizations.

As noted in Chapter 2, with regard to certain critical approaches to history (Gramsci, 1971; Guha, 1983; Sarkar, 1998) and organizational theory (Ostrogorski, 1964; Michels, 1978), the ways in which elite leaders appropriate mass struggles, often aided by sympathetic historical narratives, and the processes through which elites legitimate themselves through association with these movements, while seeking to limit or undermine militant struggles for radical social change, has long been a topic of interest

for historians. As discussed earlier, Sarkar and Guha both argue for approaches to histories of social movements which recover histories from below – that is, histories which have been rendered invisible or reinterpreted by elite accounts. Petras and Veltmeyer (2001), employing a Marxist political analysis framework, complement this argument. For them, the vast majority of NGOs feed off mass-based social movements and displace or serve as a buffer against more critical challenges to state power and capital. They charge that meanwhile, NGO professionals put themselves forward as spokespeople for the poor and marginalized. NGO conferences provide an ideal vehicle and venue for this practice.

Once people are validated as authorities or resource people in these settings, they are also asked to formulate alternatives. This is contradictory. On the one hand, there is often a talking up of alternative knowledges and the importance of “subaltern” voices. On the other, there is often a deep reticence among both scholar-activists and professionalized NGOers to meaningfully support these marginalized and excluded voices – including stepping back to allow some space for people from grassroots struggles to talk on the same terms as they do. Sometimes a mobilized mass opposition movement is precisely what is needed to create political space to challenge power relations, rather than ungrounded formulae for ‘alternatives’ contained in conference declarations and NGO charters (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001 and 2003; McNally, 2002). Even in what are supposedly “people’s summits”, one may need to turn to some of the reading techniques employed by Guha (1983) for use in reclaiming subaltern histories in order to expose and analyze who and what is missing from dominant NGO texts and forums.



Kress (1982) and Clark and Ivanic (1997) note that there is unequal distribution of access to “socially prestigious and socially shaping” (Clark and Ivanic, p. 55) forms of writing, and that this has its roots in a society’s economic, political, ideological and social structures. Kress argues that this has economic, political and ideological effects: “those able to produce meanings and messages are few by comparison with those who consume meanings and messages. Hence the control of messages and meanings is in the hands of a relatively small number of people” (p. 3). Clark and Ivanic observe that vast numbers of people and social groups are excluded “from contributing to the collective store of knowledge, cultural and ideological activity; from the production and projection of ideas that fundamentally shape society” (p. 55).

Clark and Ivanic’s observations seem borne out by dynamics in the anti-APEC milieu. The preponderance of academics, charismatic NGO elites and professionalized NGO researchers’ and official-authored papers, presentations, and other publications available in hard copy or online at each Summit are testimony to this. As already suggested, this is compounded by the dominance of the English language in such networks. The capacity to be able to produce and distribute publications that seem credible and authoritative, such as the previously-mentioned books, *Challenging the Mainstream* and *APEC: Four Adjectives in Search of a Noun*, and the priority given to generating such texts tended to be limited to specific kinds of research-oriented NGOs. In turn, these publications reinforced the expert status of those who wrote in them. For movements whose priority was local organizing and mobilizing a mass base against APEC (as one of many instruments of neoliberalism), regardless of the critical analysis and knowledge produced in such struggles, unless these were documented in a form of

writing and publication considered to be credible in a similar way, their voices were often only heard if they spoke from the floor in the NGO meetings. These interventions were often not documented at all.

The status accorded to policy analysts and NGO researchers, and their powers of interpretation pose some challenges for any movement or network which espouses democracy and community. Did anti-APEC networks need their own school of high priests to interpret the texts? In turn, why would these professionalized 'experts' be best placed to propose a program of action? Once again, within movements or networks that advocate democracy, organizations tend to reproduce the same hierarchies which structure broader societal relations. In efforts to uncover the meanings and implications contained in the text of trade and investment agreements, for example, do policy analysts not also frequently create their own elitist discourse, or, indeed, internalize a discourse and a language from the agreement itself? Narrow textual analysis of trade agreements by NGO policy analysts frequently fail to take account of questions of broader social and political context(s) and underlying ideologies which lie beneath the texts. They assume particular kinds of literacy in readers that can comprehend the technical jargon of trade and economic policy, rather than adopting a popular education orientation.

The emergence of a class of 'anti-globalization high priests', and the epistemological privilege accorded to policy analysis is of concern for those committed to putting democratic forms of organization and non-hierarchical values into practice in work to build social movements. As noted in Chapter 2, Michels (1978) and Ostrogorski (1964) warn of the dangers to organizational democracy posed by the technical specialization associated with leadership roles within the organizations that they

examined. We must ask whether such specialized technical discourse – in written texts and in public forums and teach-ins – empowers others, or whether it merely reifies the power, status and language of professional ‘experts’ in the context of the movements? Why are the words of this professionalized NGO stratum valorized over the analyses of people with more direct, everyday/everynight experience of resistance to neoliberalism? What are the implications for building mass movements if the words of writers and ‘experts’, who often lack any social movement base, mediate popular understandings of the contents of neoliberal agreements or policies? Here, insights from critical social history and an awareness of subalternizing processes might be helpful to illuminate the ways in which elite forms of social action dominate, redefine or render invisible those from the grassroots. Similarly, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, Foley’s (1999) scholarship on informal learning in social action contexts, and the emerging area within social movement theory of movement-relevant theory (Flacks, 2004; Bevington and Dixon) challenges elite forms of knowledge by valuing forms of knowledge which arise from actual engagement in social activism.

Mumby notes that managers

maintain power by framing everything within a technorational context, and systematically excluding other organizational perspectives. For example, exclusion of other organization members from participation in the decision making process is justified on the ground that few people have the technical expertise or adequate access to information to make important decisions (p. 2).

Mumby argues that a political ideology - technical rationality – maintains and reproduces the status quo power structure. The claims to power and authority that some professionalized NGO officials make over technical expertise and policy analysis seek to position themselves as more legitimate and credible than mass-based social movements’

platforms of resistance and demands, and echoes Michels' (1978) concerns about the potentially anti-democratic effects of technical specialization and bureaucratization.

Activities in NGO/activist circles can be highly formalized and institutionalized – from internal staff or membership meetings and trainings, to conferences, teach-ins, media events, speeches at rallies, reporting and other relationships with funders. Tensions exist between the possibilities for transformation and space for critical reflection and action, and vested interests in maintaining order, authority and the institution itself. NGO Summits did not prove conducive to much critical reflection, in my experience. For all of the claims that NGO conferences on APEC were democratically organized “people’s” spaces, they were tightly controlled, and quite hierarchical. A particular aspect of this hierarchical structuring in relation to knowledge and power is illustrated by the preponderance of academic and NGO professionals who addressed the meetings. I turn now to discuss this feature.

### ***Troubling the expertise and status of academic-activists and NGO professionals***

In some ways, the institutional self of many prominent NGO activists and spokespeople strongly parallels the position of teachers/professors in academia. Indeed, many of the prominent actors/political entrepreneurs which set up, or have reshaped NGOs as vehicles for themselves have academic backgrounds and identities. To give a few examples from the APEC NGO networks, Walden Bello, Executive Director and co-founder of Focus on the Global South is a Princeton-educated sociologist and a professor at the University of the Philippines. He was joined by other academics, such as Nicanor Perlas (Professor of Applied Cosmic Anthropology, Asian Social Institute, Manila, Philippines), Suthy Prasartset (Professor of Economics, Chulalongkorn University,

Bangkok, Thailand) and Jane Kelsey (Professor of Law, University of Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand), who were all keynote speakers at several APEC NGO forums. Individually and organizationally they all use their academic credentials and locations for their NGO work. There are many others. These people form an increasingly formalized elite of 'anti-globalization' experts and intellectuals. Notwithstanding the important role that socially-engaged academics can and do play in social activism, the emergence, existence and reification of such a stratum seems problematic in movement and NGO networks which purportedly support social and economic transformation, equality, participatory democracy, the rights and voices of the most marginalized, and equitable social relations. This is especially contradictory when one considers the silencing, or absence, of grassroots activists at such meetings. It is also important to explicate the relationships between Northern NGOs which operate along liberal social democratic principles and Third World NGO intellectual elites, to critically appraise claims made by such people as being authentic voices of the south. Class analysis cannot be suspended merely because these networks claim to advocate social justice, or because speakers are based in Third World countries. They are not Gramsci's (1971) organic intellectuals, belonging to and working for a proletarian class or subaltern section of society, by any stretch of the imagination.

From the board meetings of small NGOs and community groups to major international NGO conferences, it is simply not the case that academics leave behind their class, status, authority and power sources as they engage in activist work or community organizing. With them often comes the privilege of money, resources and mobility, status and credibility, all of which are useful resources for participation at a high level within

NGO meetings. In this way they can become gatekeepers between struggles and movements, interpreters and translators of struggles, regardless of their relationship or accountability to a community or mass base.

Many NGOs and activist groups actively court, encourage association with, and promote 'progressive' academics, seeking credibility in the eyes of the media, the broader public, their funders, and their protagonists. There is almost a mutual credibility-by-association game between some academics and NGO activists, as the former gain merit for their non-academic advocacy and analysis work. Moreover, there is an underlying assumption that NGOs can convince officials and politicians involved in forums such as APEC with rational persuasion, drawing upon the credibility of people seen as credible researchers. Yet, in doing so, such organizations ignore asymmetries of power between themselves, states and capital, and place their faith in 'rational debate' as the means of social change.

It is useful to question the social status of 'civil society' speakers or writers. We must ask whether they are accountable to a social base or have a mandate, how and with whom they are connected, and their relations with political and economic elites. However, one learns these things through participation and networking in these milieus at a different level from that of playing the 'expert'. This knowledge is produced in the informal ways that Foley (1999) suggests characterizes learning in social action.

We can see a kind of constrained disruption and stylized militancy in much NGO theory, text and practice that is tied into power relations and institutional power but purports to be progressive and transformative. It is one manifestation of the NGO ideology of pragmatism which I elaborated in Chapter 2. Missing from this is any

fundamental critique of capitalism or reflexivity about the organization's own implication in structures and systems of power. Organizations' official policies, principles, platforms and constitutions must not be transgressed. In addition, funders must be kept happy. But the dominant discourse at events such as NGO Summits remains one of open discussion, democratic space and free speech.

Increasingly, academics and NGO professionals are socialized as entrepreneurial beings, with no accountability for their research activities. There is a frequent failure to appreciate whether research is useful or relevant to a broader audience. A 'star system' operates in the professionalized NGO world, which establishes certain people as authorities through conference addresses or publications, while contributing to the silence of those with most at stake – and perhaps the most effective strategies - in struggles for change. This is evident in the preponderance of academic speakers at NGO summits, and also reflects intellectual and political trends, in terms of which issue or struggle is prioritized and when.

Paul Bové (1986) observes that

[l]eading intellectuals tend to assume responsibility for imagining alternatives and do so *within* a set of discourses and institutions burdened genealogically by multifaceted complicities with power that make them dangerous to people. As agencies of these discourses that greatly affect the lives of people one might say leading intellectuals are a tool of oppression and most so precisely when they arrogate the right and power to judge and imagine efficacious alternatives – a process that we might suspect, sustains leading intellectuals at the expense of others (p. 277).

Notwithstanding the possibilities that they can use their position to highlight injustice, Bové's analysis sharply articulates an unease which I feel about 'leading intellectuals' in APEC NGO/movement circles, especially those that can claim an academic persona, credibility and status. Frequently there seem to be no boundaries about the areas of

expertise that academic-activists have, and little self-awareness about the boundaries of their knowledge and engagement, and what may be best left to others. Indeed what is striking about the programs of the Kyoto NGO Forum on APEC (1995 NGO Forum on APEC, 1995), Manila People's Forum on APEC (MPFA, 1996) and 1997 Vancouver People's Summit (1997 People's Summit on APEC, 1997a) is the almost complete absence of chairs, moderators or speakers at plenary sessions who were *not* either academics or professional NGO executives – or both. It is unclear why a sociology, law or economics professor is best placed to envision broad alternatives for the future any more than a landless peasant farmer or an Indigenous woman. Yet more often than not, as I have suggested, if they do speak, the latter will be pigeonholed into talking about their 'sector' or their 'plight' and the academic given free rein to address whatever issue that they like and treated as an authority on the subject. NGO conferences and networking are often dominated by academic-activists – whether located in universities or NGOs (or both) talking to each other, taking up space and moving discussions and interactions to an elite plane.

As with national popular struggles, (see Sarkar, 1983a, 1983b and 1998; and Guha, 1983) histories of contemporary social movements engaged in 'anti-globalization' written by and about movement elites, leaders and notables, can marginalize, omit and silence important voices, processes, and events in struggles for global justice. They can also influence our movement dynamics, the setting of our parameters, aspirations and strategies.



### *Textually-mediated social organization and anti-APEC networks*

As I have explained, anti-APEC NGO conferences and campaigns produced an abundance of documents. Kinsman (1997) reminds us that “[d]ocuments can be attempts at providing conceptual organization for the co-ordination of state and professional responses to ‘social problems’. They organize knowledge in particular directions and from particular standpoints, which often include the containment of social movements” (p. 216). Kinsman also exhorts us to consider “the different social contexts in which...documents are read: readers located differently accomplish different readings of the texts” (p. 222). This is an important concept for the consideration of how and what the different texts, whether from the APEC Secretariat or governments, NGO documents such as conference declarations, and indeed from voices excluded by both dominant NGO networks and the mainstream, actually *do* in terms of organizing the social relations in which they are embedded. It also urges us to think how different players such as the media, different publics, governments, NGOs, and more radical groups or movements read such texts. Kinsman notes that “[r]egulation is often accomplished through ...texts and how they are read and used. They are an important part of the social organization of hegemony, which counterhegemonic politics must address” (p. 216).

For George Smith (1995) ideology is

a form of social organization dependent on texts which are organized from a standpoint, with an objective structure of relevancies located in documents, in a ‘virtual’ reality, outside actual local settings. Ideology operates from here as the imposition of objective, textually mediated, conceptual practices on a local setting in the interest of ruling it (p. 21).

So we must ask who set the parameters for articulating alternatives to APEC and neoliberal globalization and what is the role of text in this? Words, texts and discourses

are of great significance to the oppositional movements which contest the imposition of neoliberal policies and institutions across the world. Indeed, many NGOs, trade unions, socially engaged academics and activists have examined numerous documents, speeches, and other texts produced to promote APEC and the neoliberal globalization project. A significant part of this work involves analyzing draft trade and investment agreements and legislation, written in the arcane, technicist language of trade law. This discourse redefines and reconceptualizes areas of human activity in terms which commodify them and subject them to a marketization discourse. For example, as noted in Chapter 4, it was not until the Uruguay Round of the GATT that agriculture, investment, services and intellectual property rights became defined as global trade issues, rather than matters for domestic policy decision-making (Raghavan, 1990; Das, 1998; Kelsey, 1999). In turn, this type of NGO policy analysis tends to speak to a class of other professionalized NGO actors, rather than to provide popular education resources which meet the needs of popular movements engaged in struggles against neoliberalism. One must go beyond commonsense assumptions that are held about such documents, and examine how writing NGO texts is socially organized. Who writes what and for whom? Is the production of these texts an exercise in lobby-oriented NGOs establishing credibility with governments and the private sector? How do these texts perpetuate, or seek to rupture, professionalized NGO practices?

Many of the documents produced by NGOs campaigning on issues like APEC and the WTO reflect a compartmentalized worldview which reproduces the way that free trade and investment agreements have redefined broad spheres of human activity in 'trade-related' terms. The embrace of neoliberal discourses and capitalist logic in NGO

practice serves to tie back analysis and strategy to the interests of capital (Mansfield, 2004; Nightingale, 2005), and preclude more radical positions. In doing so, these NGOs fail to question the fundamental assumptions underlying such definitions, remaining within the parameters set by international trade negotiations and trade law. For example, dominant NGO concerns about traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples or farmers tend to be framed within the discourse of trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights. Advocacy on this issue frequently fails to challenge the fundamental notion and capitalist ideological frame of intellectual property rights, but rather urges reforms of language in particular WTO clauses to address concerns about access to medicines or the patenting of lifeforms, for example (Khor, 2001). Similarly, some NGO discussions of farmers' rights to grow food to sustain their families in the context of agricultural liberalization and domination (Watkins, 1996; Oxfam 2002) tend to be constrained by a discourse which does not substantively challenge neoliberal conceptualizations of food and nature as mere tradeable commodities, and posit solutions for poor Third World farmers through better market access to rich countries without challenging capitalism (Desmarais, 2007). In a paper presented at the Davao pre-MPFA meeting, Oxfam United Kingdom and Ireland's former senior policy adviser Kevin Watkins argued for freer trade in agriculture. He contended that the problem facing small farmers in the Third World was comparative access to subsidies and unfair competition with (subsidized) Northern producers, and that what was needed to address this was better "opportunities for participation in markets" (p. 22). Watkins suggests that for Oxfam, the *rules* of the (agricultural trade liberalization) game may be challenged, but not the *system* that underpins the game itself. These discourses, socially organized by the relations of ruling,

and embedded in much NGO literature, often clash with those of social movements and communities for whom these are life-and-death issues (L.T. Smith, 1999; Choudry, 2007; Desmarais, 2007). These movements and communities often challenge the commodification of life, including biodiversity and food (IPCB, undated; Shiva, 1997; McNally, 2002; C. Smith, 2006; Choudry, 2007; M. Jackson, 2007), and seek to frame their analysis in language that contests dominant NGO framings which reproduce capitalist logics. Many NGO documents reflect a colonial power dynamic – whether it is by positioning the organization as an advocate for peasant farmers’ interests in the Third World (without any mandate from peasant farmer movements) (Oxfam, 2002), or by perpetuating myths about democracy and social justice in countries like Canada which continue to dispossess and colonize Indigenous Peoples’ lands and lives, as I discussed earlier in relation to a Council of Canadians presentation (Barlow and Clarke, 1996).

The framing of such texts is influenced by other considerations which relate to an ideology of pragmatism. NGO Summits on APEC tended to be dominated by organizations from both North and South which embraced liberal Western “post-Marxist” ideals and notions of “rights” (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001). These NGO positions usually considered APEC to lack something (such as concern for the environmental impacts of economic growth, or attention to human rights). Such NGOs would not question APEC’s fundamental capitalist logic, but posit that it needed mending. A number of NGOs ineffectively offered themselves as consultants to balance out APEC’s agenda, eschewing confrontation (e.g. National Wildlife Federation, 1995; APSUD, 1996). In their “commonsense theorizing”, “uprooted from actual social practices and organization” (Kinsman, 2006, p. 135), it is clear these organizations did not share a

materialist analysis of power dynamics regarding NGOs and the state/private sector nexus behind APEC. Furthermore, by adopting this idealist position, they held that the solution was just a question of augmenting the existing APEC framework through rational dialogue. These NGO positions reflected both their ideology of pragmatism as well as a belief that capitalist globalization merely needed some reforms and democratization to deliver their environmental and social goals. The closure of APEC to any input by NGOs, and the fundamental goals of the forum clearly make such a position untenable. By contrast, positions that were grounded in popular struggles, and the (usually much smaller) NGOs which supported them, sought to delegitimize APEC, denounced it as a fundamentally anti-democratic process, and its economic vision as unreformable (D'Souza, 1995; PCAIG, 1996; Tujan, 1996; APEC Alert!, 1997; No-To-APEC Coalition, 1997; Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group, 1998 and 1999). Although how alternatives to neoliberalism were conceptualized varied between movements and organization. Since most of these more critical movements and organizations focused on building up resistance to neoliberalism locally (albeit fostering international links with others doing that work), their energies were directed at change from below, rather than trying to negotiate terms of engagement with governments and the private sector for inclusion in the APEC forum itself. The statements and practice of the PCAIG (1996), No-To-APEC Coalition (1997) and the Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group (1998 and 1999) (later this chapter) all reflect this more critical pole of anti-APEC activism. They adopted an openly confrontational stance towards state power, capital, APEC and other instruments for neoliberal globalization. They strongly advocated strategies of non-engagement with, and the delegitimization of, the APEC

forum. Moreover, in their anti-APEC work they advanced broader systemic critiques of capitalism and colonialism.

Mumby (1988) argues that organizational discourse operates ideologically, and “serves sectional organizational interests by articulating and reifying certain perceptions of organizational reality over and above other possible ways of perceiving the organization. The latter, however, often discourages critical thought by virtue of its positional and partial nature” (p. 98). As he argues, in an organizational context, narratives are a very powerful way to achieve this. For Mumby, narratives can serve the dominant ideology in an organization by interpellating subjects and qualifying them for certain kinds of participation in organizational life in the interests of a powerful minority. Moreover, narratives not only construct but also contain and silence, imposing “a sense of closure on the realities which they construct, bringing to the fore certain experiences of the world and hiding others” (p. 106).

Counter-narratives can be produced from the standpoint of peoples’ struggles on the ground to challenge and disrupt dominant discourses within NGO summits, for example, to expose contradictions, and point to other ways forward. These would necessarily need to go beyond responding to official texts and discourses, and identify the systems which lie behind economic, social and environmental injustice. If movement activists were to meaningfully participate in these meetings at all, they needed to prise open space for different voices to be heard besides those NGOs and ‘experts’ who had come to dominate the political space in many countries. The fightback, then, is not only against neoliberalism, but also found in talking and writing back to authoritative ‘civil society’ actors and discourses which dominated much of the international debates on

neoliberalism in 'alternative' APEC milieus. In practice, because of the ways that these NGO forums were organized, this often meant trying to raise challenges from the floor, such as the articulation of concerns by some activists about the desirability and effectiveness of the institutionalization of large-scale People's Summits (Reid, 1998). Similarly, in Vancouver in 1997, Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists demanded that the People's Summit meaningfully address colonial injustices and human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples in Canada, but were ignored. As I have suggested, these interventions are often not documented or recorded, and are valued far less than written documents or formal presentations by 'experts'. I will return to draw out some further implications of this for informing critical scholarship, challenging hegemonic NGO positions and resourcing effective activism in Chapter 6.

***Reading past the rhetoric to uncover the relations of ruling***

Many NGOs and activist groups monitor the statements of officials and analyze changes in rhetoric. As G. Smith (1995 and 2006) suggests, how we read these texts is greatly informed by the standpoint of the organization or individual conducting the analysis, their location and their relationship with government, and the private sector. Some organizations take satisfaction and encouragement at the inclusion of references to terms like 'civil society' and 'sustainable development' in official documents and declarations, and claim that this illustrates a substantive change in the operations of the institution or government (APSUD, 1996, Policy Working Group of the Canadian Organizing Network for the 1997 People's Summit on APEC, 1997). Other, more critical, actors argue that such language is cosmetic, designed to stave off criticism and to present a positive image of APEC to the public (Choudry 1999; Kelsey, 1999; Aotearoa/APEC

Monitoring Group, 1999). These actors adopt a similar approach to Kinsman's (1997) work on texts, language and social relations and HIV/AIDS activism. They look at texts to understand how such "hegemonic discursive frameworks" (p. 234) serve to obscure asymmetries of power, and to contain the parameters of struggles.

As noted in Chapter 4, as APEC and institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO have come under increasing external pressure, they have adopted communications strategies designed to defuse and stave off criticism. In tandem with the way in which terminology from international trade law infiltrates and organizes many NGO texts, this move includes the increased use of discourses which draw on the terms and concepts which many NGOs use. Keywords and formulaic phrases play important roles in the discourses of neoliberalism. Examples include "flexibility", "free trade", "open markets", "good governance", and "competition". So too, keywords and formulaic phrases are frequently used in the counter-discourse – "democracy", "sovereignty" "sustainable development", "justice" and so on. These are not mutually exclusive. Many advocates of neoliberal economics make the assertion that democracy is advanced through freemarket capitalism (Ruggiero, 2004; Moore, 2003; Friedman, 1999). "Fair trade" – long a buzzword of NGOs - is now used by a wide spectrum of forces engaged in some form of discourse and action relating to international trade. These terms are often only vaguely or weakly defined, and tend to form part of poorly defined agendas for change, or rather a slightly humanized version of the status quo. A charity discourse also permeates the documents and statements produced within many international aid and development NGOs. For these organizations, advocacy and campaign work has been secondary to aid and development work. As De Waal (1997) notes, tensions over what



constituted charitable action forced aid and development agencies to set up non-charitable advocacy organizations.

NGO campaigners and researchers often attend to the use of language by advocates for neoliberalism. But, notwithstanding sometimes fierce debates about language and wording of documents, there is far less ongoing analysis and reflection about the language used to articulate their positions, ideas and ideologies. There is often a tendency to overlook significant ideological differences, and the ways that they are socially organized by ruling regimes when seeking allies for campaigns. Closer attention to how language is used by these organizations and movements can help to uncover these differences and deepen an institutional understanding of the different players.

As David McNally (2002) writes,

[t]he sphere of civil society was constructed as a polite space of cultural refinement, commercial exchange and intellectual discussion. While the meaning of the term has shifted over time, it is difficult not to see its use today as an attempt to invite mainstream respectability, to avoid being seen as part of the rabble or mob (p. 197).

Paying closer attention to the publications and discourse of large NGO and trade union bureaucracies which have often been assumed to be ‘on the same side’ in campaigns or mobilizations (Oxfam, 2002; Christian Aid, 2002) would prepare us not to be surprised when they denounce anti-capitalist activists and direct actions, and plead for the right to represent ‘civil society’ in a ‘dialogue’ with governments, international institutions and other players. Any analysis of textually-mediated social organization needs to be carried out in conjunction with a critical analysis of the actual political and social context in which these texts are generated.

A number of examples serve to illustrate the extent to which some NGO positions on APEC were clearly organized from a standpoint of ruling, both through their willingness to accept conceptual parameters set by APEC and capitalist relations, and in their eagerness to join the APEC process, notwithstanding their clear exclusion from any meaningful input into APEC as outlined in the previous chapter. The Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development, a US non-profit thinktank funded by the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation among other major donors (Nautilus Institute, 1995, p. 2), sought not to stand in the way of APEC and trade liberalization, but “to create channels to dictate where the waters [of the APEC tsunami] can go and where they cannot go” (Zarsky, 1995, p. 26). US environmental NGO, the National Wildlife Federation’s 1995 Trade and Environment report on APEC was tellingly entitled “Fixing what’s Broke with APEC: First Steps Toward a Sustainable Development Action Plan that can be adopted at the November 1995 Osaka Ministers’ Meeting”. The NWF sought a seat at the table next to private sector representatives and governments within APEC, to “fashion a meaningful plan of action for sustainable development in the region” (1995, p. 15).

The Canadian organization, ICHRDD, which I will return to discuss further in the final section of this chapter, described the 1997 APEC Summit as “[t]he Vancouver opportunity” (ICHRDD, 1997, p. 15) in its Fall 1997 booklet on APEC, *APEC’s Missing Agenda*. This document reflected the organization’s narrow focus on Chinese and Indonesian human rights in its concerns around the APEC Summit. “There is no evidence”, wrote ICHRDD, “that suggests that trade and investment are opening up democratic avenues in countries like China. They are however exerting a tangible

influence on the ability of countries like Canada and Australia to maintain a consistently critical human rights dimension in their foreign policy” (1997, p. 7).

Illustrating Razack’s (2004) point about the “innocence” of countries like Canada in relation to the Third World, in the ICHRDD booklet, Canada and Australia are exalted as noble, innocent and good governments which are not implicated in injustices domestically or abroad. China, on the other hand was deemed undemocratic and in need of purportedly democratic Western countries to pressure it to become more like them. In all cases, and in focusing on the institutions and the texts that they produce, as Petras and Veltmeyer (2001), Greenfield (2001) and McNally (2002) observe, most NGO-driven campaigns on globalization do not name the systems and processes which underpin them – capitalism, imperialism and colonialism. It is important to understand that these are not mere oversights. These organizational and individual ideological positions, including the language in which they are articulated, are socially organized from a standpoint of ruling. The challenge for movement activists is to find effective ways to disrupt that discourse, valorize and centre a counter-narrative based on analyses that are grounded in everyday/everynight struggles.

In the Canadian NGO context, such as the Vancouver People’s Summit, we should also interrogate the appeals made to “democracy” and “Canadian values” by organizations like the Council of Canadians (Barlow and Clarke, 1996; Ayres, 1998). What wider discourses do these statements reflect? Who exactly is speaking, to whom, and for whom? Do they speak for non-status people resident in Canada, facing deportation? Do they include Indigenous Peoples who do not consider themselves to be “Canadian”? In framing their discourse in this way, who is excluded? Many ostensibly

progressive NGOs campaigning on APEC issues were also reproducing the ideology of democracy and an idealized version of the nation-state (uncomplicated by issues of being founded on genocide and dispossession, and maintained by racist immigration and Native policies) through their various discourses, and through whom and what is omitted (Kelsey, 1999; Choudry, 2007). Once again, a critical historical perspective and political activist ethnography are helpful tools to interrogate the processes and practices which organize the production of history and the framing of campaigns which underpin NGO accounts.

Following on from this extended discussion about knowledge, texts and power, I turn now to further demonstrate some of the tensions over framing, funding and articulation/confrontation with ruling relations in anti-APEC networks by considering some aspects of the 1997 People's Summit on APEC in Vancouver, and organizing against APEC in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1998/1999.

#### *IV. Social organization, ruling relations and framing: Comparing two NGO conferences on APEC*

##### *Vancouver: Co-opt and clampdown*

The 1997 APEC Summit came to be remembered as “SprayPEC” (Klein, 1998) by many people after the controversial security police operations at University of British Columbia (UBC), where many protesters were peppersprayed and others, like then-APEC Alert! organizer Jaggi Singh, targeted for “pre-arrest” and snatched by plainclothes police while walking on the UBC campus during an anti-APEC teach-in<sup>29</sup> in a highly politicized

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<sup>29</sup> I was a speaker on a panel at this ‘Free University’ teach-in organized by APEC Alert! while Mr Singh was being arrested outside the building in which we were meeting.

manner (Pue, 1998; Pearlston, 2000). Meanwhile Ottawa had granted Canadian (CDN) \$100, 000 to the People's Summit for administrative expenses, while the New Democratic Party (NDP)-led provincial government of British Columbia (BC), with close connections to some of the major local union and NGO players involved, gave further support for the Summit (Bramham, 1997). The BC Premier at the time, Glen Clark, was a keynote speaker at a buffet lunch at the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)/ICHRDD-sponsored international forum on workers' rights and democratic development, part of the People's Summit (CLC/ICHRDD, 1997b, p. 4). Ironically, while such a government-supported event would be considered with suspicion by western NGOs and trade unions were it held in Jakarta, Manila or Beijing, the same view did not appear to apply to taking money from Ottawa and Victoria. Again, Canada's assumed innocence and redemptive qualities in relation to the rest of the world seemed to put it above scrutiny for many of those organizing the People's Summit.

In 1999, reflecting on the events that I had experienced surrounding the Vancouver People's Summit, and preparing for the year in which the New Zealand government hosted APEC, I wrote

What better way to control dissent and to set the parameters for the discussions among "civil society"? Corral the critics in a lavish venue (the Plaza of Nations – later to be used as the site for the RCMP Police Complaints Commission hearings into the police actions at APEC). Minimise the risks of political embarrassment to Ottawa and other APEC "economies". Engage people in an "NGO Olympics" which looks good but challenges little. Identifying and throwing money at the "constructive elements" within "civil society" and surveillance, violent arrests and pepperspraying are two sides of the same coin. Coopt and Clampdown (Choudry, 1999).

It is this disjuncture that I want to explore further here. An analysis of official texts by Canadian and New Zealand governments helps to uncover the operations of ruling

relations that underpin stated claims of these governments wanting to work with ‘civil society’ or making APEC activities more inclusive or participatory.

According to Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAIT) the lead government agency with regard to official APEC activities, some NGOs in the People’s Summit were “engaged in constructive discussion on how to broaden APEC’s work to include views of civil society” (DFAIT, 1997d). The DFAIT memo continued, “[t]here was no doubt that Canada wanted to work with civil society organizations (CSOs) and to try and broaden APEC’s discussion to include views from NGOs, academic and other component [sic] of civil society”. But it added that others were “involved in a less constructive process that could undermined [sic] both the efforts of Canada to engage civil society and efforts of the latter to have its voice heard by APEC”.

The following year, CIDA’s SouthEast Asia Fund for Institutional and Legal Development gave CDN \$60,000 to support an international conference in Malaysia on the engagement of civil society in the APEC process, a month before the 1998 APEC Summit came to Kuala Lumpur (DFAIT, 1998). Its focus was on reconciling “civil society” with APEC and moving towards a “deeper and more formal process of engagement between civil society and APEC governments”. Then CIDA put \$25, 000 into the Asia Pacific Peoples’ Assembly held parallel to the 1998 APEC Summit, and another \$25,000 into a meeting of the International Monitoring Group on Trade and Media around the same time (DFAIT, 1998).

“Constructive discussion” and “process of engagement” sound neutral and benign terms. But they serve to erase political confrontation, histories of struggle and contestation with state, and are organized precisely by and for ruling and administrative

interests. As Kinsman (1997) notes regarding the term “partnership”, such terms invite NGOs to engage in a limited debate about its terms, but not what lies beneath the very concept itself. As will be clear from other official documents about the containment of more critical voices on APEC, the Canadian government – and ICHRDD, a quasi-government organization active in NGO networks - played a role in setting parameters of acceptable dissent through the People’s Summit process.

An important part of the context of Canadian organizing for APEC was the struggle against the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA. The dominant framing of NAFTA and globalization by major NGO and union actors viewed it as a US political and corporate takeover of Canada, which was seen as a relatively recent process (Barlow and Clarke, 1996; Clarke, 1996; Ayres, 1998). Indeed these accounts of ‘globalization’ tended to go back only two to three decades to the Trilateral Commission, for example (Clarke, 1997). Furthermore, there was little or no acknowledgement of Canada’s own colonial legacy of expropriation of Indigenous territories and resources, nor the role that its corporate sector and government play internationally in promoting the neoliberal agenda through aid, development trade and investment policies and programs. I suggest that this is a somewhat different set of assumptions and orientation to history and political economy than that which underpinned the Auckland ‘Alternatives to the APEC Agenda’ conference, which I will discuss more fully later in this section.

### *The role of ICHRDD*

ICHRDD, a key Canadian player in international APEC NGO forums since 1995, was established by an Act of the Canadian Parliament in 1988. Led by the former federal leader of the New Democratic Party, Ed Broadbent, and then (at the time of the

Vancouver People's Summit), former Liberal Party MP and Solicitor General, Warren Allmand, it describes itself thus: "with an international mandate, the Centre is an independent organization which initiates, encourages and supports the promotion, development and strengthening of democratic and human rights institutions and programs as defined in the International Bill of Human Rights" (ICHRDD, 1997, p. 2). Whether such organizations can be called "non-governmental", and therefore be included in NGO forums is a question that both I and some activists (D'Souza, 1995) raised since our interactions with them at the Kyoto NGO forum on APEC and the associated labour forum which they co-organized and tried to dominate.

ICHRDD coordinated the drafting of a July 1997 paper, *Canada and APEC: Perspectives from Civil Society*, prepared by the Policy Working Group of the Canadian Organizing Network for the 1997 People's Summit on APEC. The paper was one of a number of documents in a body of texts that were prepared prior to the Vancouver People's Summit in order to steer/frame it. It was

prepared at the request of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in order to provide a framework for discussion between civil society and the Government in Canada. It should not be seen to in any way represent the views of the Canadian Organizing Network, although it is hoped that concerns of many non-governmental organizations, (NGOs) with an interest in APEC will be reflected in the following pages (p. 9).

The authors wrote of trying to find common ground with APEC, arguing that "[t]here are certain items in the various leaders [sic] declarations emanating from APEC that most of civil society would endorse" (p. 9). The process of planning and framing the People's Summit, once it became known, prompted serious questions of independence of the NGOs involved, and the Summit itself, in relation to the Canadian federal and BC



provincial governments. These concerns were transmitted in email correspondence and telephone calls which I received from activists involved in preparation for the 1997 Women's Conference Against APEC and APEC Alert! (Sharma, 1997; Singh, 1997; Thobani, 1997). The policy working group of the Canadian Organizing Network comprised two representatives of ICHRDD, a UBC academic conducting research on 'civil society' in the Asia-Pacific, a Council of Canadians member, and a representative of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), the national coalition of aid and development NGOs. The Vancouver-based activists with whom I had been in touch prior to leaving for the 1997 People's Summit indicated that not only was it playing a major role in framing and organizing the agenda, but that ICHRDD was clearly the contact point for Canadian officials in relation to official concerns regarding NGO activities like the People's Summit (Sharma, 1997; J. Singh, 1997; Thobani, 1997). This was later corroborated by official documents such as a DFAIT email released as part of the RCMP Public Complaints Commission process following APEC security operations in Vancouver. It reads: "We had not heard this information yet on [East Timorese Nobel Peace Prize winner] Ramos-Horta from our NGO contacts, and wanted to know if anyone else has confirmation of this information before we call ICHRDD to see if it's true" (DFAIT, 1997c). Had ICHRDD been an Indonesian government-organized body, Canadian NGOs would have condemned it as a front for the Suharto regime. However, it seemed that there was a double standard in operation between the North and the South when it came to addressing the way in which ruling relations and state interests coordinate 'civil society' organizations.

Meanwhile, one official memo noted that

Ambassador Parwoto [Indonesian Ambassador to Canada] came directly to the point, asking if Canada "could do something to re-arrange the People's Summit", alluding to Canadian government involvement in the arrangements which he suggested should give us leverage. ... While the Canadian government was conducting ongoing discussions with constructive elements among the organizers, which we hoped would be helpful to vent steam, we were in no position to intervene regarding venues or timing (DFAIT, 1997b).

Another DFAIT document states: "Minister [of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy]...had proposed that one way of offsetting radical NGOs was to demonstrate through dialogue that their approach was not acceptable" (DFAIT, 1997a). These documents clearly support my contention that Ottawa had no genuine commitment to truly open democratic debate on APEC, and that its support for the People's Summit was a cynical exercise in staging a non-threatening NGO Summit while preparing draconian security measures for those who dared to speak or mobilize outside very limited parameters.

The 1997 People's Summit on APEC described itself as

an open, public gathering of people from around the Asia-Pacific who are concerned about the effects of the trade liberalization agenda promoted by the members of APEC.... Convened by non-governmental, labour and people's organizations – in such sectors as youth, women, media, education, environment, Indigenous Peoples, peace, poverty, academia, faith and international development – the People's Summit provides a place for civil society to build alternative and opposing visions. Building on the energies and voices of similar gatherings in Seattle, Bogor, Kyoto and Manila, this is an opportunity to meet, to network, to strategize and, in the end, to work toward the creation of alternative visions of sustainable human development in the Asia Pacific region. Let's use this unique opportunity to make our voices heard! (1997 People's Summit on APEC, 1997a, p. 5).

Yet, knowing the background to the organization and government support for the meetings before arriving in Vancouver, I felt very uncomfortable to find myself listed as a speaker on APEC and the WTO in the People's Summit program (1997 People's Summit on APEC, 1997a, p. 16) without having been asked earlier, and having been in

touch with activists in Canada (involved with APEC-Alert! and the Women's Conference Against APEC) who had expressed their concerns about the way in which the agenda of the People's Summit had in large part been shaped by ICHRDD, the leadership of large unions and NGOs, government funding, squeezing out or marginalizing of more radical voices and critiques. I attended but refused to speak at the People's Summit, instead participating as an invited speaker and resource person at an APEC Alert! teach-in.

### *Colonial amnesia at Vancouver*

In Chapters 1 and 2, I drew from anti-colonial literature, Third World Marxism, Indigenous scholarship and my activist practice, to situate the vehicles advancing neoliberal capitalism in a longer historical framework of colonialism and imperialism. This anti-colonial lens and analysis of globalization is central to my research on, and engagement in anti-APEC networks. The Vancouver People's Summit illustrated my contention that progressive organizations/movements and the left in general have not been inherently sympathetic or supportive of Indigenous Peoples' struggles for self-determination (Bedford and Irving, 2001; Churchill, 1983)<sup>30</sup>. In settler-colonial states like Canada and Aotearoa/New Zealand, and in the discourse of many international NGOs, the dominant frame for many 'anti-globalization' campaigns typically identifies transnational corporations, international financial institutions and economic agreements, powerful governments like the USA, and domestic business and political elites as engines of neoliberalism, but essentially proposes a program of reforms and strengthening of liberal social democratic governance as an alternative solution. This frame advocates nostalgia for a Keynesian welfare state, retooling the national government, re-regulation

of the economy, tighter controls on foreign investors, more social spending and more public consultation, participation, and transparency around policy-making. Underpinning this are assumptions about supposedly universal and shared “Canadian” or “Kiwi” values that must be reclaimed to (re)build a fairer society or “sustainable human development” as the 1997 People’s Summit called for (1997 People’s Summit on APEC, 1997a, p. 18). I call this the “white progressive economic nationalist” position. In the Canadian context, critiques of neoliberalism advanced by NGOs like the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and major trade unions exemplify this position (Barlow and Clarke, 1996; Ayres, 1998). There is little reflexivity on the part of such actors about the knowledge on which they base their concepts of social justice, and their own roles in reproducing colonial power relations. Largely missing from this dominant frame is any genuine acknowledgement of the colonial basis of the Canadian state and society, the ongoing denial of Indigenous Peoples’ rights to self-determination, and the highly-racialized construction of Canadian citizenship and state (Thobani, 2007). Likewise, struggles against ‘development’ and neoliberalism by Indigenous Peoples in the North (e.g. Maori struggles against corporatization and privatization of state-owned assets in the 1980s) (Kelsey, 1995 and 1999; Katona, 2001; Gedicks, 2001) have tended to be overlooked and discounted by dominant narratives of anti-neoliberal mobilizations. As I contend in Chapters 1 and 2, continued assertions of self-determination and demands for decolonization by many Indigenous Peoples are a rich but woefully untapped source of theory and critique of both capitalist economic systems and the state itself.

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<sup>30</sup> This section is adapted from Choudry, A. (2007).

I saw the “white progressive economic nationalist” frame at work during the 1997 People’s Summit (NGO Forum) on APEC in Vancouver. There, speakers from Canadian NGOs and trade unions attacked corporations and the US administration, and identified them as the driving forces behind APEC, yet ignored struggles like that of the Lubicon Cree Nation (in neighbouring Alberta) – against gas, oil and timber TNCs invading their unceded territory with the complicity of the Canadian state and Alberta’s neoliberal provincial government. The issue forum, “APEC’s Corporate Agenda: Unmasking the transnational corporations that are the driving force behind a free trade regime in the Asia Pacific region” was primarily sponsored by the Council of Canadians and the Polaris Institute (1997 People’s Summit on APEC, 1997a, p. 17). Self-determination for East Timor and Tibet were central issues on the People’s Summit agenda, but no such space was given to focus on Indigenous Peoples’ struggles within territories claimed by Ottawa. Besides an opening speech by former Liberal Party Member of Parliament Elijah Harper (Cree) – another example of Canadian government involvement in the Summit - a round dance, and the marginalized Indigenous Peoples’ caucus, in the main forum and workshops, there was hardly any sense in which Indigenous Peoples’ struggles within Canada were present, let alone links made between this resistance and neoliberal globalization.

When some of us raised these concerns in workshops and plenary sessions at the Summit, discussion was actively discouraged by session chairs and moderators. Militarism, human rights violations, and undemocratic governments could be challenged if they were in Burma, China, or Indonesia. But the fact that a liberal democratic government of Canada, like the one which through hosting APEC hoped to influence

Asian trading partners with “Canadian values” (DFAIT, undated) had mounted major armed operations against Indigenous Peoples in the 1990 standoff at Kanehsatake (near Montreal) and again in 1995 at Gustafsen Lake in interior British Columbia, did not warrant a mention from the podium. This is hardly surprising. Not only did the People’s Summit receive funding and other support from provincial and federal sources. Also, many of the Canadian organizations present had already positioned themselves within a framework of the ideology of pragmatism which I discussed in Chapter 2, enjoying non-confrontational relationships with government, for the most part. The funding for their participation and hosting of this event reinforced this position. Some NGO actors, in their appeals to Ottawa in relation to APEC, expressed some belief in Canada’s humanitarian claims (Canadian Organizing Network for the 1997 People’s Summit on APEC, 1997; ICHRDD, 1997). Such silences illustrate the problematic and selective way in which ‘social justice’ continues to be framed by powerful NGO actors, while simultaneously pointing out pedagogical opportunities (assuming that there is a commitment to decolonization) that might be explicitly geared towards addressing these absences. However, apart from protests from the floor, for the most part, the claims to innocence on the part of Ottawa and Canadian NGOs were only challenged, and the silences broken in more radical and locally grounded initiatives organized by local Indigenous Peoples, APEC Alert!, and the No-To-APEC Coalition. I turn now to discuss these and contrast them with the People’s Summit.

### ***Radical challenges to the Vancouver People’s Summit***

The People’s Summit mode of constrained ‘progressive consensus’, its failure to directly name capitalism and imperialism as the system underlying APEC, and its

marginalizing of Indigenous Peoples was somewhat addressed by two separate, smaller, more militant initiatives against APEC. While organizations from several tendencies of the Philippine left (and their allies) participated in the Vancouver People's Summit, two other mobilizations, No-To-APEC and the mainly UBC-based APEC-Alert! – contested mainstream NGO positions towards APEC.

No-to-APEC aimed to expose and oppose imperialist globalization “at its Vancouver meeting, entitled the “Peoples Conference Against Imperialist Globalization – Continuing the Resistance”. It built upon the conference of the same name held in the Philippines one year before at the time of the 1996 APEC Summit. The No-to-APEC Coalition described itself as “a broad coalition of over 50 grassroots organizations and individuals in Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, and the United States”. (No-To-APEC, 1997, p. 2). It had formed in Vancouver in 1996 on the basis of opposition to APEC and imperialism. A significant section of the local Philippine-Canadian activist community was a key player in this coalition, with strong links to the national democratic Philippines left which had organized the PCAIG. It brought together “grassroots women, youth, and students, solidarity and anti-imperialist organizations and individuals”. Its objectives and basis of unity are as follows:

Expose free trade myths and the anti-people effects of APEC and free trade; Oppose imperialist globalization and the US-Japan domination of the Asia-Pacific; Build a grassroots coalition against APEC and a critical understanding of APEC and the present global crisis; Strengthen strategies of resistance, our ability to organize for alternatives and international anti-imperialist solidarity. (p. 2)

On an even smaller shoestring budget, APEC Alert! (comprised mostly of student and greater Vancouver activists working on local justice struggles) made explicit links

between decolonization struggles in Canada, and a clear position of rejection of APEC and free trade in their activities, in which I also participated. The APEC Alert! panel on Indigenous Peoples' struggles in Canada and other speakers with a strong anti-colonial analysis helped to situate these issues as being worthy of support and relevant to anti-APEC actions as the Asia-Pacific human rights abuses profiled at the People's Summit, and promoted an anti-colonial analysis of corporations, APEC/neoliberalism and the Canadian state. APEC Alert!, which operated from a more anti-authoritarian, decentralized and informal base also took an oppositional stance to APEC with slogans such as "Refuse APEC" (APEC Alert!, 1997) and literature which connected local grassroots social justice struggles and colonization in Canada with the dominant neoliberal vision of APEC.

Meanwhile, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) which had been sidelined in the People's Summit, issued a direct challenge to the APEC process, corporate elites, foreign business leaders and politicians and the Canadian state:

Treaty and non-treaty Indigenous Nations shall not surrender, cede our Aboriginal Title for an economic development agreement which deprives our future generations of benefits from their sacred homelands. We give notice to the APEC state leaders and their corporate elites that investment, especially in British Columbia, remains very uncertain (UBCIC, 1997).

It seems quite clear that it was these groupings and Indigenous Peoples that worried the government more than the sanitized People's Summit. Security documents made public during the RCMP Public Complaints Commission identified "long-standing native issues in British Columbia such as gaming, self-government, land claims, fishing rights and resource control over claimed lands, along with a collection of ad hoc groups



opposed to APEC” as “a potential security risk” (Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 1997).

The hegemony of North American NGOs and trade union elites was clearly on display at the Vancouver People’s Summit. It was reflected in the way that the Summit was funded, conceptualized and organized, in the constrained discourse, silences and uncritical stances taken towards the Canadian state and capital by the majority of speakers on the official program<sup>31</sup>. On the other hand, smaller, more militant mobilizations maintained a critique both of capitalism and the Canadian state and corporations, as well as the institutionalized nature of the People’s Summit. At the heart of some of these tensions was the relationship with the state either through funding or other forms of support. For those outside of the People’s Summit process who were grounded in everyday/everynight confrontations with state and capital, it seemed quite clear that it was deeply shaped and penetrated by ruling relations, rather than representing ‘the people’.

Such concerns informed the shape and modalities of organizing over the next two years in preparation for 1999, the year that the New Zealand government took over the reins of the APEC process. In the following section, I build upon the experiences and analysis of Vancouver to discuss this.

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<sup>31</sup> Canadian mining corporations Placer Dome and Barrick Gold, responsible for environmental disasters in several ‘developing’ APEC nations were criticized at the People’s Summit (Barlow, 1997). However a systemic critique of Canadian industry’s role in capitalist globalization, and the role of Canadian corporations in the ongoing colonial exploitation of Indigenous Peoples’ territories within Canada was largely absent.

### *APEC 1999 in Aotearoa/New Zealand*

I have already touched upon some of the historical context for the growth of New Zealand opposition and organizing against APEC. The major players in this, GATT Watchdog, the Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group, the New Zealand Trade Union Federation, and Maori sovereigntists had different histories and forms of antagonistic and oppositional relationships to the New Zealand state, APEC, and neoliberal policies in general. As outlined in Chapter 4, the strong non-engagement position with New Zealand government APEC initiatives can perhaps be best accounted for by these organizations' and networks' confrontational position in relations to domestic struggles against neoliberalism and colonization, of which APEC was yet one more manifestation.

Analysis of official texts was a key aspect of practice which informed strategy for the opposition to APEC 1999. As noted in Chapter 3, our orientation to these texts was to ask what they actually *did* in the interests of ruling relations. In 1998, well in advance of the start of New Zealand's chairing of APEC the following year, I obtained a New Zealand Cabinet Strategy Committee paper "APEC 1999 – Engagement With NGOs" for GATT Watchdog under New Zealand's Official Information Act. From this document, it became evident that government intentions were to co-opt NGOs and harness them to promote APEC domestically, and also to project to international audiences an image of a democratic government which valued differing opinions.

Deletions in the document clearly refer to managing the risks (opposition to APEC), since there are several references to risk management and preparedness for "a

protest element” (p.3), but gave no specific details to what this entailed, corresponding to sections that have been withheld. What remains in the document is instructive:

On the positive side, the Government has a real opportunity to develop a wider sense of ownership and participation. Ensuring constructive participation by NGOs in the APEC process will be critical part of the overall strategy of communicating the what, why and how of APEC to the New Zealand community. It would serve to demonstrate to the international community New Zealand’s ability, as a participatory democracy, to accommodate debate and dissent among a variety of NGOs....On the other hand, as the experience of CHOGM and the MAI indicated, there is significant risk of disruption and protest at APEC events. In particular we are likely to see a protest element around the Leaders’ Meeting in Auckland in September (p. 3).

The document also advised that “New Zealand’s chairing of APEC should reflect the values of an open and participatory democracy where NGOs have an opportunity freely to express their views” (p. 3). “We propose a dual strategy of *constructive engagement*: [paragraph deleted]” and then:

The target audience in this strategy is not just NGOs per se, but also the wider group of “middle” New Zealand who will want to see NGO voices given a fair hearing. [Deletion] This will require engaging effectively with *responsive groups* and helping to meet, as far as possible, their own objectives of *being seen to influence outcomes*...the requirement for cost-effectiveness suggests there will be limits to the extent of outreach that may be possible. It will be important to avoid getting bogged down in long, resource-intensive consultations (p. 4).

The strategy “involves building broad support for APEC and actively *managing the risk of disruption*” (p. 1) (my italics).

The New Zealand government’s NGO engagement strategy paper was a clear example of a document which operates in the state’s interest in drawing up a plan to contain dissent and manage the government’s image, rather than being a background paper to inform a dialogue among equals. Like the Canadian government before it, and the earlier-cited statement by the Philippine Foreign Affairs official (Macaranas, 1996) it

is clear that Wellington, by its use of the term “responsive groups” assumed the right to determine who was in and who was out in New Zealand ‘civil society’. It also clearly sought to divide and rule NGOs into constructive and disruptive elements.

For GATT Watchdog and Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group activists, our reading of the document was accomplished because of our own confrontation with the government over APEC, experience of being targeted by New Zealand state security forces for lawful dissent against APEC in 1996 and interactions with police at demonstrations and increased surveillance during 1999. Drawing from these documents, a key part of our anti-APEC strategy of 1999 was to explicitly and publicly denounce the New Zealand Government’s APEC Taskforce communications strategy, and to politicize attempts to co-opt or silence critics through ‘dialogue’ in a similar fashion to that revealed in Canadian official documents relating to Vancouver. This included a picket of the first dialogue on APEC 1999 with NGOs outside the office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Wellington in January 1999, and a rejection of approaches made by the official APEC NGO Liaison officer (hired by the New Zealand Government’s APEC Taskforce) to discuss APEC matters. Through media work and dissemination through NGO and community group mailings and meetings, we publicly revealed the government strategy of containment and propaganda through limited dialogue and state surveillance and harassment of the more radical critics. Our strategy used what was essentially a political activist ethnography analysis of official documents, politicizing the disjuncture between stated intentions for dialogue, the calculated actual rationale expressed by the official documents obtained under the Official Information Act, and past actual experience of state practice of criminalization of

lawful dissenters. After we circulated the Cabinet papers to a wide range of NGOs and trade unions, the government's plan to co-opt NGOs and harness them to do their work of selling APEC to "middle" New Zealand failed dismally, with few attending their NGO consultation sessions.

Organizers for the Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group/GATT Watchdog-organized Alternatives to the APEC Agenda conference, held in Auckland in September 1999, both built upon and distanced ourselves from the model of the prior three years of largescale People's Summits when we announced plans for the 1999 year of APEC at the November 1998 Asia Pacific Peoples' Assembly in Kuala Lumpur. Although most of these discussions took place informally and outside of sessions of these meetings, a growing number of people involved in movement networks were questioning the worth of big NGO People's Summits. However such discussions tended to happen in spite of, rather than because of the supposedly open spaces in these meetings. The scale of such meetings and their budgets also tended towards necessitating significant funding from government (in Canada's case, often through CIDA and DFAIT) and large NGO donors, and professionalized NGO modes of activity. Many activists felt that the scale and centralization of this sort of undertaking detracted from sustained mobilization throughout the year. In 1998, at APPA, a forum with a larger contingent of social movement activists<sup>32</sup>, some voiced a sense that these events were often disconnected from movements fighting neoliberalism on the ground in the respective countries of the region (Choudry, 1996; Varona, 1996; Reid, 1998). The Aotearoa/New Zealand proposal drawn up by Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group and GATT Watchdog and

presented by trade unionist and fellow APEC Monitoring Group activist Robert Reid and myself, argued that the People's Summits had served their purpose, but that we would refocus our energies on building opposition throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand against APEC and its neoliberal agenda. The proposal stated:

The Asia-Pacific Peoples' Assembly (APPA) in Malaysia should be seen both as a turning point and a new beginning for the direction of the APEC people's fora that began with the NGO Forum on APEC in Osaka, Japan in November 1995.

These types of regional fora have served a very useful purpose in uncovering the nature of APEC and developing a people's response and consolidating the regional people's opposition to APEC. Events have vindicated our stand as we witness the havoc caused by capital markets on a rampage in so many countries in the region. Faced with a series of crises, the very architects of APEC are now looking to incorporate some of our criticisms as they struggle to find solutions for the problems of international capital.

But changed circumstances call for new strategies that go beyond uncovering the nature of the APEC process, which focus on strengthening local and national organisations and struggles, and initiating the process of finding alternatives that emerge from people's experience and struggles. There is a risk that we may get caught up in a round of yearly peoples fora that do not take the process of analysis or action any further but end up being an end in themselves or part of the counter-summit industry. We believe that it may be useful in 3-4 years to meet together again as a regional peoples forum if the APEC process continues, but in the meantime we must concentrate on acting rather than meeting. This does not undermine the worth of regional meetings or exchanges but simply reaffirms our view that our strategies need to change with the changes in circumstances (Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group, 1998).

This statement met both positive and negative responses from the floor, with the latter most emphatically articulated by a representative of the B.C. Federation of Labour who forcefully claimed that it was New Zealand organizations' duty to host a People's Summit in Auckland, and that we were somehow shirking a responsibility which they had

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<sup>32</sup> In part, this was because a number of social movement activists came en masse from several conferences hosted just before APPA by NGOs and social movements on the national democratic left in the Philippines, including an "Alternatives to Globalization" conference organized by IBON, which I had attended.

shouldered in 1997. Another Canadian participant at APPA canvassed the possibility that outside NGOs might stage a People's Summit type event in Auckland, although this never eventuated. Others, mainly Asian movement-based participants agreed that the NGO People's Summits were not particularly constructive in building opposition to APEC, and that they were becoming a rather ritualized reactive response to APEC and neoliberalism. These activists favoured building people's movements over expensive NGO conferences. These tensions were somewhat illustrative of some of the tendencies within APPA in terms of mobilization and building local opposition to APEC, or supporting institutionalization of large unwieldy and unfocused People's Summits.

A central platform of the Aotearoa/New Zealand organizing was an anti-colonial, pro-Indigenous sovereignty stance, and an interconnected understanding of neoliberal processes at both home and internationally as another wave of colonization. This was in stark contrast to the Vancouver People's Summit. By contrast to the generous state support for the 1997 People's Summit (and funding for many of the Canadian NGOs at its core), most of the funding for the Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group activities came from the Projecta Foundation, a small New Zealand foundation which supported local social justice initiatives. There was a strong commitment to the centrality of an anti-colonial critique of APEC, which drew from longstanding relationships with Maori sovereignty advocates both directly related to neoliberal globalization and other struggles. There was no government funding, and indeed a confrontational, non-engagement position with the government and APEC was a key platform of the organizing. As an Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group document stated: "Throughout all our work in 1999 we tried to keep at heart our belief in Tino

Rangatiratanga [Maori sovereignty] and that this economic agenda we live under called globalization is an ongoing part of the colonization process” (Aotearoa/New Zealand APEC Monitoring Group, 1999b).

The Auckland conference program stated:

*The Alternatives to the APEC Agenda* Conference will build on a year-long education and action programme opposed to APEC and the global freemarket economic agenda which it is part of....Alternatives to the APEC Agenda will have a strong domestic focus on the impact of the free trade and investment, free market model on Aotearoa/New Zealand. It will draw the links between this form of “development”, colonization, and the extreme market reforms which successive governments have implemented. Speakers from around the Asia-Pacific region will discuss the implications of the agenda on their communities, and their peoples’ responses. The conference aims to develop concrete strategies to expose and oppose corporate-driven processes like APEC and work on genuine alternatives to a fundamentally flawed globalization agenda. *Alternatives to the APEC Agenda* is completely independent of official APEC activities and is not funded or sponsored in any way by any government or political party (Alternatives to the APEC Agenda conference program).

So while on the whole, more critical voices were marginalized in Vancouver’s People’s Summit, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, this was somewhat reversed. Due to the history of involvement of myself and several other activists in anti-APEC, PP21, APWSL and other NGO, union and movement networks, the Aotearoa/New Zealand Monitoring Group/GATT Watchdog activities were the ones which linked local organizations to the international anti-APEC networks and gained most publicity. In spite of government endorsement and large union involvement, “Anticipating APEC”, a reformist trade union-hosted conference scheduled to be held in Wellington in August 1999, which touted the former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz as keynote speaker (who pulled out prior to the event), attracted only a handful of registrants and was cancelled (Anticipating



APEC, 1999). Another reformist conference organized by PROUT<sup>33</sup> and some environmental organizations called “Reclaiming APEC” was publicized by the APEC Taskforce but also failed to attract much attention (Reclaiming APEC, 1999). While other organizations such as Amnesty International (New Zealand) organized their events around similar framings of human rights issues as previous summits, and the escalating violence in East Timor (after the August 1999 referendum on independence) overshadowed the APEC conference, the more liberal and conservative voices within the NGO networks responding to APEC were, by contrast with Vancouver, marginalized. In part this was because of the incremental work, over a decade of most of those involved in the Alternatives to the APEC Agenda program, which had also translated into growing credibility with mass media. Collectively, this activism had connected local struggles against domestic free market reforms, deregulation and liberalization within Aotearoa/New Zealand with international movements against structural adjustment and transnational corporate power. It drew in more critical strands and actors from the New Zealand trade union movement, the New Zealand Trade Union Federation, which had taken a far more combative stance to neoliberalism than the larger New Zealand Council of Trade Unions. It maintained strong connections at both organizational and individual levels with movement activists, NGOs and activist researchers throughout the Asia-Pacific. It had made explicit connections between colonization and neoliberal globalization through its support for decolonization and self-determination struggles for Maori and other Pacific peoples. This work had taken place in the context of opposition to GATT/WTO, the MAI and APEC. It had intensified in the eighteen months prior to the

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<sup>33</sup> Followers of P. R. Sarkar’s Progressive Utilization Theory, linked to the Ananda Marg cult. See: [www.anandamarga.org/social-philosophy/prout.htm](http://www.anandamarga.org/social-philosophy/prout.htm)

start of 1999, due to a concerted campaign against the MAI and a program of events and activities targeting APEC. Incrementally, both in terms of analysis and relationship-building, a strong anti-colonial platform for anti-APEC action in 1999 had been built. This work had always combined an orientation towards mobilization and confrontation with the state and capital, with popular education and activist research to build a body of knowledge and analysis that could be drawn upon to contest APEC in 1999.

### *Conclusion*

Ng (2006) suggests that “the power of institutional ethnography lies in its ability to link local experiences to broader social and global processes, which are not always immediately apparent at the local level” (p. 186). The focus of most ‘anti-APEC’ organizations was supposedly on neoliberal globalization and the networks of actors promoting this process - corporate, governmental and intergovernmental. Yet, ironically the webs of power and forms of ruling relations which socially organize the activities of NGOs, trade unions and other organizations are often invisible and even obfuscated.

Hegemonic NGO positions and NGO conferences are entry points for investigations of a terrain of activism against neoliberalism in order to explicate whether, where and how knowledge(s), power and organizational hierarchy are linked to, and organized by ruling regimes – states, international economic institutions, agreements and forums, for example. Attention to the political economy of NGO activities, particularly through funding relationships is one tool for analysis. These relations were analyzed and explicated through attention to texts and practice at NGO conferences. This includes a focus on the professionalization and bureaucratization of social action which institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography highlights as ways to restructure knowledge

and connect it to a hierarchical ruling perspective (Ng, 1984; D. Smith, 1987; Kinsman, 1997). I have problematized the reification and roles of experts and professionalized forms of knowledge in this milieu, and argued that this process contributes to the silencing and devaluing of marginalized and grassroots voices and positions. I also troubled implicit and explicit claims to representation by individuals and organizations which monopolize the formal inputs at these meetings, and pointed out how coloniality and asymmetries of power between North and South play out in these networks.

I highlighted some ways in which these dominant NGO positions and practices were challenged, with particular attention to activities in Vancouver that were more grounded in actual local struggles against neoliberalism and colonialism, and anti-APEC organizing in Aotearoa/New Zealand. These initiatives departed from the ideology of pragmatism which I discussed in Chapter 2, and challenged the prevailing dominant NGO assumptions about the effectiveness and purpose of NGO summitry. Both expressed clearer anti-colonial, anti-capitalist positions, were independent of state funding (or other forms of support), and indeed took a confrontational stance against the respective governments that hosted APEC.

It is my contention that many of the tensions, disjunctures and dynamics that I have discussed within the context of anti-APEC campaigns prefigure and foreshadow (albeit with some overlap) the rise of 'global justice' movements as they came to be recognized and acknowledged particularly in the wake of the November/December 1999 mobilizations and NGO activities contesting the Seattle WTO Ministerial Meeting. Many of the same actors remain engaged in contestation of various forms of neoliberalism, even though there has been less concerted focus on APEC since 1999 (see Chapter 4). In part,

the fact that the majority of APEC campaigns and mobilizations took place outside of North America led to them being overlooked as being part of a longer history of struggle against neoliberal globalization, along the lines that Katsiaficas (2002) suggests. In part, I believe that this is also because of the ways in which the NGOs and other organizations that tended to dominate the production of much of the documented history of anti-APEC mobilizations in the region, were disconnected from, filtered out, or effectively silenced the transmission of knowledge from a variety of grassroots mobilizations and coordinations against both APEC and the broader neoliberal agenda. This was accomplished both within the NGO Summits on APEC, and through the framing of campaign materials on the subject, which often compartmentalized and disconnected APEC from other forms of neoliberal globalization. However, this was not complete, and it is important to understand that some of those involved in APEC mobilizations in the 1990s continue to see these actions in the context of longer-term challenges to neoliberalism and imperialism. On the whole, Northern NGOs and activist groups, and a few well-resourced organizations in the South, (usually with close connections with Northern NGOs operating within a liberal rights framework) have been better documented than grassroots, more militant struggles in the South. A historical understanding of these other mobilizations and campaigns is instructive for current movements and campaigns on social and ecological justice.

I do not see NGO networks on APEC as standing outside of, or necessarily confronting, ruling relations. I have explored several ways that ruling relations enter into 'alternative' milieus, through funding relationships, and/or organized through texts, for example. Understanding some of the tensions and ruptures within networks contesting

APEC must be informed by an appreciation of how ruling relations – whether through funding of NGOs and their activities, or through acceptance of official parameters of discourse and actions – penetrates ‘alternative’ networks and orients them in particular ways that are not always evident from a cursory reading of NGO literature or conference statements.

NGO and global justice movement activities and texts must be examined for clues that show how they may be socially organized by, or in relation to official foreign policy and development assistance policies, for example. As I suggested in Chapter 3, much of the activist research which went into unravelling the social relations of the anti-APEC milieu, while not explicitly using its language and concepts, resembled a kind of transnationalized political activist ethnography. The geohistorical location of specific movements, organizations and actors, and a critical stance towards vague and totalizing conceptualizations of ‘civil society’, the ‘global justice movement’, and ‘transnational activist networks’ is vital for sound analysis that goes beyond a level of abstraction – and often Eurocentrism - characteristic of much of the scholarly literature on social movements. Questions of mandate and representation, power and resource inequalities among movements remain crucial issues to be addressed in events such as World Social Forums, and other purportedly alternative and oppositional meetings. Struggles over knowledge claims, and tensions over the hierarchies of elite forms of knowledge and action, and the rendering invisible of, reinterpretation, or appropriation of subaltern struggles and voices remain frequently unchallenged in ‘alternative’ arenas. We must attempt to recover hidden, silenced or forgotten histories and traditions of struggle to build effective political strategies for the present and future. That can pose some specific

challenges to research, when many grassroots positions and critiques of dominant NGO practices are not documented, but instead, communicated informally and incidentally. Yet by analyzing the power dynamics and histories of the height of opposition and activism against APEC, vital lessons, and questions can be drawn for the examination of contemporary struggles, along with conceptual resources from older struggles.

## CHAPTER SIX: Looking back, looking forward: Lessons from theory, practice and struggle

It is no secret that the reformist bloc of Northern development NGOs led by Oxfam had found itself increasingly marginalized as the poor and exploited of the global South suddenly emerged to represent and speak for themselves and not through the medium of the professional aid worker. And when the poor spoke, they read from a very different script to the Oxfams of this world, talking about ‘self-organization’ and ‘struggle from below’ and the need to mobilize and organize independently of state, capital, party and trade union bureaucracies. This represented an enormous challenge to the traditional interest groups exerting leadership over civil society and left NGOs like Oxfam needing to be re-legitimised as the ‘official’ representatives of the poor (Hewson, 2005, p. 142).

The period of NGO and social movement activity against APEC which I have examined prefigures and overlaps with the rise of what became dubbed the ‘anti-globalization’ or ‘global justice’ movements, particularly in North America and Europe. I begin this conclusion chapter with Hewson’s commentary regarding NGO and social movement dynamics at the 2005 Group of Eight (G8)<sup>34</sup> Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, and a vignette<sup>35</sup> from my own experience. Both illustrate how the dynamics and tensions over power, knowledge, representation and ideology within networks of NGOs and movements contesting neoliberalism in the 1990s have continued in more recent years. I follow this with brief theoretical and methodological discussions, and some comments on the current context and state of play of movements against neoliberalism. I then turn to draw out five fundamental themes of my analysis in order to summarize my research. I discuss the implications of this work, theoretically and methodologically, through a lens

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<sup>34</sup> The Group of Eight is an international forum comprising the governments of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the USA.

<sup>35</sup> This vignette is adapted from Choudry, A. (2003a).

that views this inquiry as a contribution to academic scholarship and equally, as an exercise in mapping the terrain(s) of struggle, to inform strategy and practice of movements for social change. As Boron (2005) suggests, “no emancipatory struggle is possible without an adequate social cartography to describe precisely the theatre of operations, and the social nature of the enemy and its mechanisms of domination and exploitation” (p. 20).

In October 2001, I was invited to speak at an alternative conference organized against the East Asia Summit of the World Economic Forum<sup>36</sup>, by a Hong Kong coalition of local activist groups, NGOs and unions, called Solidarity and Resistance against Globalization. For the closing plenary session of the conference, I was asked to speak about strategy in confronting corporate globalization. Prior to me, Oxfam Hong Kong’s director advocated a tripartite approach to move towards a better world as his vision. Advancing a familiar argument, he said that NGOs like Oxfam, governments and the private sector could work as partners together to reform the WTO and the other Bretton Woods institutions.

I responded that to expect such international institutions to reform in any meaningful way was unrealistic – rather like expecting a tiger to become a vegetarian - and suggested that real change would come about through mass peoples’ struggles, not polite dialogues between large unaccountable NGOs and the vehicles driving the global free market economy. I maintained that it was paradoxical to expect the very institutions which so zealously promote deregulation and liberalization to the benefit of global capital

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<sup>36</sup> The World Economic Forum (WEF) is a private foundation best known for its annual forum bringing together business and political leaders, journalists, intellectuals and others in Davos, Switzerland. It – and



to somehow now regulate to protect human rights and the environment. I argued that we cannot build alternatives on the rotten foundations of an inherently unjust social, political and economic system. I suggested that this form of engagement by NGOs serves to legitimate the institutions and their operations, and to marginalize more radical critiques which were connected to the everyday realities of people struggling for justice against market reforms. I contested that while the cooptation of some NGOs would serve the public relations strategies of international institutions attempting to recover from crises of credibility and legitimacy, they would also help rationalize official and media portrayals of the more militant opponents of free trade as troublemakers and criminals, and justify security crackdowns against them.

Afterwards, Oxfam Hong Kong's campaigns officer invited me to their office the following day, ostensibly to share notes about strategy. This turned out to be a pretext for chastising me for suggesting that the WTO could not be reformed. She berated me for "dictating" what people should think and do about the WTO. As I sat in their upmarket corporate offices, I told her that I found it ironic that I – and my comrades from Philippine people's movements in the audience who stood up in support of my position – were being admonished for dictating what people should do by Oxfam. I pointed to the irony of being summoned to the corporate offices of a multinational aid agency to be accused of dictating to people and suggested that there was an extraordinary asymmetry of power between me and Oxfam. She accused me of supporting violence (interpreting my reference to "people's struggles" to mean "armed struggle") and denied that there was any link between the way that "good NGOs" like hers, which hope to politely influence

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its regional forums – have been targeted by mobilizations against neoliberal globalization and a range of

power elites through lobbying, and take part in staged media photo-opportunities demonstrating civil society dialogues, were played off against more uncompromising groups, who, in turn, are criminalized by the state.

This incident vividly reaffirmed and further concretized concerns which had grown throughout the period of my most active engagement in anti-APEC activism and which I have addressed in my thesis about the divides within the ‘anti-globalization’ movement, and struggles over power, knowledge and representation. The world of ‘alternatives’ to neoliberalism remains a contested arena between reformist organizations which are deeply integrated into neoliberal capitalist relations at national and international levels, and those – mainly in people’s movements - who seek a genuine and deep transformation of the capitalist system and its power relations. Through a political activist ethnography lens, informed by a Marxist political economy analysis, an attention to geohistory and histories from below, armed with insights from the sociology of organizations, and a critical view of professionalization and claims to representation, such encounters serve as an entry point to explore how ruling relations become visible through moments of disjuncture, and confrontation. As I state in Chapters 1 and 3, drawing upon the work of D. Smith (1987), G. Smith (2006), and Kinsman (2006), both disjuncture and confrontation are crucial tools to orient research according to institutional ethnography and political activist ethnography.

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NGOs, some of whom have occasionally been invited as participants. See <http://www.weforum.org>

### *The importance of theory*

My thesis research has emphasized both the importance of connecting theory to practice, and highlights the value of theory which can arise *from* and is tested *in activist practice*. Foley (1999), L. T. Smith (1999), Kelley (2002), Bevington and Dixon (2005) and Kinsman (2006) all contend that research and theorizing – whether or not they are recognized as such – are integral, everyday activities in community, activist, and social movement milieus. All of these authors assert the need to acknowledge, value and build upon such knowledge(s) for future research – within, and outside of the academy. In this thesis, I have argued that the dominant strands of social movement theory *and* dominant NGO practices and ideology tend to be disconnected from the everyday world(s) and lives of people in struggle. Indeed, sometimes they actively work to render voices and histories from below even less visible. Consequently, I have questioned the relevance of abstracted forms of theory to those engaged in social activism, drawing upon challenges from within activist movements, insights from political activist ethnography (Campbell, 2006; Kinsman, 2006 and G. Smith, 2006) and the work of Flacks (2004) and Bevington and Dixon (2005) who state the case for “movement-relevant theory”.

We need to ask what kinds of theory and theorizing advances understanding of complex movements and networks. We also need to trouble assumptions that theory which has developed predominantly in North American and European academic contexts can be unproblematically applied to movements in the Third World. My research has been informed by a number of areas of critical scholarship in order to help contextualize and analyze the networks of NGOs and movements contesting neoliberalism. However, as I have argued, these contributions from scholarly literature must be tested in the

everyday world, and anchored and grounded – at least in a dialogical sense - with/in actual struggles which many academic treatments of these phenomena fail to do. Further investigation by both activist researchers and academics might examine how and where trends and turns in academic scholarship influence and permeate NGO and movement practice, analysis and strategy. Such an inquiry might track whether such theories are taken up by international institutions, funders, and foundations, and how they link to shifts and currents in national and global economic policy-making.

### *Research for social change*

Institutional ethnography and political activist ethnography are research tools for social change rooted in a materialist analysis of the world. D. Smith (1987) requires that “we must begin from some position in the world”, and that our research should “begin from where we are” (p. 177). Political activist ethnography acknowledges and draws upon rich activist resources and traditions of research (Kinsman, 2006) while also offering conceptual tools with which to analyze our everyday worlds. The key concept of ‘ruling relations’ is helpful to critically examine the world(s) of NGOs, social movements, advocacy campaigns, and ‘civil society’ summits and the ways in which they are socially coordinated, connected, and regulated, often in textually-mediated ways by extra-local forces, thus enabling activities to be reproduced in different contexts.

This methodological framework also critically orients us towards processes of professionalization which are prevalent in the milieu which I discuss, and which, regardless of good intentions, orient professionalized NGO representatives to take up the

standpoint of ruling (G. Smith, 2006). In Chapter 3, I outlined how political activist ethnography can be transnationalized and democratized for use by and for networks of activists operating from different standpoints in different locations but seeking to collaboratively analyze institutions, policies, organizations or other processes which are located at both national and transnational levels. In Chapter 5, I further illustrated this approach to research with reference to collaboration and exchange among activists concerned about the domination of anti-APEC activities by larger NGOs and forms of governmental support which seemed to frame these ‘people’s’ gatherings in ways which excluded or silenced more critical and grassroots voices. If we agree with Flusty (2004), who, drawing from D. Smith, theorizes that “the world market place is a product of articulated social practices” maintained and policed by “supranational institutions such as the World Trade Organization, legitimized through coordinated administrative rubrics like ‘deregulation’ and ‘privatization’” (p. 171), I suggested that we also need to go beyond and behind the discourse of those ostensibly challenging neoliberalism to uncover how their *practice* is coordinated, and in whose interests. This necessitates close attention to the roles that texts play in this social organization and coordination (and as I emphasize, this milieu is rich in many forms of texts, written or otherwise). The transnationalization and democratization of political activist ethnography outside of the academy can greatly serve effective struggles for social change by the ways it can uncover the implication of NGOs and activism in the very ruling regimes which they purport to oppose. This, in turn, can inform critical scholarship in this field, including “movement-relevant” theorizing.

*Contemporary context: Neoliberal capitalism and resistance in an era of war*

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the capitalist crises and strategies outlined in Chapter 4 continue, alongside new aspects – or rather, newer versions of older forms of imperialist aggression. Boron (2005) suggests that we are experiencing “the old practice of conquest and plunder repeated for the umpteenth time by the same old actors wearing new costumes and showing some technical innovations” (p. 12). On the one hand, regional and global free trade and investment initiatives have made slow progress precisely because of the kinds of internal divisions among governments which I discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to APEC, and the overbearing demands of imperialist powers in international negotiations at the WTO. APEC continues in a fairly low-profile fashion, largely as a talkshop for economic and security concerns, and partly as a launchpad for new bilateral free trade and investment negotiations (APEC, 2002). On the other hand, the ‘war on terror’ has been used as a pretext to try to advance neoliberal economic policies worldwide (Choudry, 2003a and 2003e; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003; bilaterals.org, BIOTHAI and GRAIN, 2008).

The attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent ‘war on terror’ have been used as a justification for renewed militarization and war, as well as various forms of domestic state intervention in the US economy. Meanwhile, repressive domestic national security and immigration legislation is being ratcheted up in many countries, North and South (Tujan, Gaughran and Mollett, 2004; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003; Boron, 2005; Mathew, 2005; Thobani, 2007). This has had worldwide consequences for the political space in which NGOs and ‘anti-globalization’ movements exist. The momentum behind major mobilizations against

meetings of the World Bank/IMF, G8, WTO, the Summit of the Americas<sup>37</sup>, the World Economic Forum and other conferences of economic and political elites, mainly in the North, that carried from Seattle into late 2001 faltered somewhat after 9/11. Nonetheless, such mobilizations – and the cycle of ‘alternative’ NGO/civil society summits have continued, often on a smaller scale, as have questions as to how connected these mobilizations were with mass social movements or everyday resistance against capitalist exploitation, and just how representative they were of the most marginalized voices of the societies for whom they sometimes claimed to speak (Martinez, 1999; Prashad, 2003; Hewson, 2005). Similar questions have also been raised about the internal dynamics, NGO domination and political economy of the World Social Forum and regional social forums in the same period (Petras, 2002; RUPE, 2004). In the North, much of the momentum and focus that was directed against the institutions (and their cyclical meetings) most closely identified with the promotion and maintenance of neoliberal globalization has been channelled into anti-war movements (Solnit, 2004; Wood, 2004).

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century began, major mobilizations against these institutions, and various economic crises continued to seriously call the legitimacy and claimed benefits of free market capitalism into question. Immediately after 9/11, a number of free trade’s strongest proponents, perhaps most notably former US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, drew dubious connections between opposition to neoliberalism and ‘terrorism’, and insisted that further trade and investment liberalization (by the USA’s trading partners, at least) was the most effective way to fight ‘terror’. “[M]any people will struggle to understand why terrorists hate the ideas America has championed around the

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<sup>37</sup> Initiated in 1994, the Summit of the Americas has met a number of times to lay the groundwork for a

world," Zoellick (2001) said. "It is inevitable that people will wonder if there are intellectual connections with others who have turned to violence to attack international finance, globalization and the United States". For Petras and Veltmeyer (2003), after 9/11, the divisions between NGOs and labour unions calling for moderate reform of the system, and anti-capitalists or anti-imperialists seeking radical changes "seriously deepened, creating a fundamental rift within the [antiglobalization movement], with an increasing intolerance for radical change and confrontationalist politics" (p. 228). The Mobilization for Global Justice (2001) cancelled planned mass demonstrations against the World Bank and IMF in Washington "out of respect" for the victims of the 9/11 attacks. Some NGOs urged others to abandon direct action tactics and more confrontational positions. Debates within networks in North America and Europe regarding "diversity of tactics" and the parameters of direct action in mobilizations continued, but often with an air of caution and self-censorship after 9/11 (McNally, 2002, Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003; Kinsman, 2006).

In some ways, the responses of movements to the post-9/11 climate illustrate a growing disconnect between anti-neoliberal activism in the North and South. As McNally, 2002; Petras and Veltmeyer (2003, 2005), Boron (2005), Desmarais (2007) and bilaterals.org, BIOTHAI and GRAIN (2008) illustrate, people's struggles against neoliberalism, particularly peasant movements, Indigenous Peoples and militant trade unionists in Latin America and Asia, have continued to vigorously challenge states and transnational capital, notwithstanding increasing militarization and the use of anti-terror legislation against activists and communities of resistance. There continue to be major

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(stalled) US-led proposal for a free trade and investment agreement covering all the nations in the Americas



popular struggles in a number of countries throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America against bilateral free trade and investment agreements which threaten to accelerate even more radical trade and investment liberalization regimes than multilateral or regional agreements have been able to achieve (bilaterals.org, BIOTHAI and GRAIN, 2008). With few exceptions, there has been very little activism addressing these agreements in the North. While in many Northern activist networks, the focus on explicating and mobilizing around the connections between war and links to political economy and neoliberal capitalism has often been limited to articulating US oil interests in the Middle East with the invasion of Iraq, for many on the frontlines against FTAs in Colombia, for example, South Korea or the Philippines, and in the daily struggles for justice and dignity by Indigenous Peoples and immigrant communities in the North, these links are often identified and articulated in a far more sophisticated manner (McNally, 2002; Choudry, 2003e; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003; Mathew, 2005; bilaterals.org, BIOTHAI and GRAIN, 2008).

Since Seattle, more voices critical of NGO and trade union bureaucratization have emerged from smaller activist groups, marginalized sectors and communities, rank-and-file workers, and movements in the South. Important critiques of NGO/trade union bureaucratization and the professionalization of social activism have been raised in recent years within movement circles (D'Souza, 2002a and 2002b; Bevington and Dixon, 2005; RUPE, 2005; Reinsborough, 2005). Other analyses have challenged 'anti-globalization' positions and actions on questions of racism, class, patriarchy and colonialism (Martinez, 2000; Prashad, 2003; Choudry, 2007).

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except for Cuba – known as the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

As Rucht (2001) suggests, perhaps the bureaucratization and professionalization of NGOs has reradicalized fringes as a result of growing discontent with institutionalization and cooptation. Increasing challenges to the legitimacy and mandate of NGOs continue from all ends of the political spectrum. Meanwhile, older mass-based struggles continue alongside newer efforts to build mass-based political work, the latter ranging from the organizing of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance (Mathew, 2005) - and other immigrant workers' struggles in both North and South - to reconfigurations of popular movements in the South such as the *piqueteros*<sup>38</sup> in Argentina (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003 and 2005).

NGOs have struggled for legitimacy in the eyes of elite institutions and challenges from grassroots organizers and social movements from below, but remain key actors in national and international political arena. Desmarais (2007) notes the tensions over framing issues, power, strategy and representation between NGOs and peasant farmers from La Via Campesina<sup>39</sup> in international 'civil society' meetings on agriculture. She documents the sometimes dismissive and condescending attitude of some NGOs for whom it is "extremely difficult (if not ideologically impossible) to give up the space they had long dominated" (p. 133).

There has been much scholarly interest in 'anti-globalization' movements since Seattle (Starr, 2000; Goodman, 2002; McNally, 2002; Day, 2005). Yet even critically-engaged scholars in the North have sometimes tended to normalize, centre, and universalize their analyses of the modalities of activism in the North against the major

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<sup>38</sup> Mass mobilizations of the unemployed which came to prominence since Argentina's IMF-triggered economic collapse.

<sup>39</sup> International peasant and farmers' movement network active in struggles against neoliberal globalization and corporate agriculture.

summits. In this literature, much attention has been paid to autonomist/anarchist direct action groups and tactics, for example, but far less to other forms and dynamics of struggle in the South, (especially those inspired by Marxism or anti-colonial lineages) or mass-based struggles ‘from below’ in the North (such as those of Indigenous Peoples, and immigrant workers). As McNally (2002) and Katsiaficas (2002) contend, within ‘anti-globalization’ networks, a disproportionate focus and awareness about the modalities of mobilizations and activism in North America and Europe lends itself to overlooking what are often far more complex, mass-based and sustained forms of resistance to capitalism and colonialism in the Third World. Many pronounced Carlo Giuliani to be the “first martyr” of the ‘anti-globalization’ movement when the young Italian man was shot dead by police during protests at the G8 Summit in Genoa (Hari, 2001). By contrast, few activists even heard of, let alone knew the names of, four Papua New Guinean students killed by police in Port Moresby in an anti-privatization, anti-World Bank/IMF demonstration weeks earlier – and countless other Third World activists who have died in the course of struggles against neoliberalism (Choudry, 2001a; McNally, 2002).

### *Knowledge production in struggle*

Foley emphasizes the importance of “developing an understanding of learning in popular struggle” (p. 140). His attention to documenting, making explicit, and valuing incidental forms of learning and knowledge production in social action is consistent with others who understand that critical consciousness and theory emerge from engagement in action and organizing contexts, rather than ideas developed elsewhere being dropped

down on 'the people' from movement elites (L.T. Smith, 1999; Kelley, 2002; Bevington and Dixon, 2005; Kinsman, 2006). As Bevington and Dixon (2005) note, important debates inside movement and NGO networks often do not enter the literature about social movements, while few activists read social movement theory.

Scholars who seek to understand social movement and NGO networks need to attend to questions coming out of social movements and activist research in regard to power dynamics and the valuing of certain forms of knowledge. These questions are often based on sophisticated macro- and micro- analyses of what, to an outsider, might seem a baffling network of relations, and shifting power dynamics. This is not to argue that evaluation and analysis from the standpoint of being embedded in activism is *necessarily* rigorous or adequate, G. Smith (2006) and Kinsman (2006) both warn of a need for activist researchers to go beyond the 'commonsense theorizing' which often goes on in these settings, but which does not attend to actual social practices and organization. We must also acknowledge that there are anti-intellectual, and ahistorical currents inside some movements (Katsiaficas, 2002; Bevington and Dixon, 2005). Reflexivity is crucial when starting from, engaging with, and analyzing activist knowledge(s). In a similar vein, Foley (1999) writes that the

process of critical learning involves people in theorizing their experience: they stand back from it and reorder it, using concepts like power, conflict, structure, values and choice. It is also clear that critical learning is gained informally, through experience, by acting and reflecting on action, rather than in formal courses (p. 64).

Many scholarly, NGO and activist accounts pay inadequate attention to the significance of low-key, long-haul political education and community organizing work, which goes on underneath the radar, as it were.

We must actively seek out accounts from critically engaged movement activists and intellectuals in the South or in struggles from below in the North. Yet as Gupta (2004) notes, it is not easy for activists “to sit down and record their work, but in this age of information overload you need to record in order almost to prove that you exist” (p. 3). It is important to document the articulation of challenges to hegemonic NGO and ‘civil society’ positions – otherwise these will prevail unchallenged as the definitive ‘alternative’ discourses to be referenced by, and inform, future movements and academic inquiry.

To return to my engagement in, and earlier discussion of anti-APEC networks, I saw that the richness of movement conversations, often in informal spaces and places was reflected neither in many of the publications and campaign literature of the well-resourced NGOs that campaigned on ‘free trade’ nor in academic or journalistic accounts of these activities. As I note, debates which questioned hegemonic NGO practices, power, knowledge, mandate and representation were often shut down or avoided. Yet it was often those moments when critical voices were raised from the floor of a meeting which broke through the silences of such events as NGO summits. It is partly through recovering, documenting and validating those ‘voices from the floor’ - as well as those who are excluded from, or refuse to participate in such settings - that we can trouble professionalized NGO forms of knowledge and write and talk back to hegemonic positions within NGO/movement milieus. In doing so, we can also write to ourselves, and contribute to building a body of knowledge and resources for struggle.

I have also highlighted the importance of attending to knowledge(s) and histories that emerge from across the colonial divide – from Third World movements and

Indigenous Peoples' struggles. Mignolo (2000) and L.T. Smith (1999) raise important theoretical considerations about the subalternizing of these forms of knowledge, and reassert the value of conceptual resources which arise from non-Western traditions. In the context of transnational social movement/NGO networks, as Thayer (2000) notes, "barriers to South-North conceptual migration are both economic and discursive. On the one hand, the periphery and its intellectual products are constructed as both exotic and specific, while the center and its discourses and theories enjoy all-embracing, universal status" (p. 229). The privileging of Western, professionalized epistemologies of knowledge manifests itself within NGO and activist networks with the reification of 'experts' and the dominance of professionalized forms of knowledge such as technical policy analysis. It plays out in the practice of *representing representation* which I discussed in Chapter 5, in relation to NGOs positioning themselves as trusted allies of the same Third World movement activists to whom they deny a voice. It positions certain kinds of knowledge, individuals and organizations as authoritative, and devalues or ignores others. "In their role as gatekeepers, major NGOs may act as brakes on more radical and exceptional ideas emanating from the developing world, and for that reason some important challengers eschew foreign ties", comments Bob (2005, p. 194). Yet this gatekeeping practice and the replication of dominant hierarchies of knowledge is also challenged from the reassertion of grounded grassroots perspectives, non-Western epistemologies and pedagogies of struggle, sometimes within networks dominated by NGOs, and sometimes in entirely separate forums and arenas of struggle. We need further research into the possibilities for forms of critical intellectual leadership that play supportive roles to, rather than claiming to speak and strategize for, social movements.

We might also investigate links between organizational or movement models and forms and the politics of knowledge.

### *The centrality of anti-colonial analysis*

As I argued in Chapters 1 and 2, an anti-colonial analysis, and attention to what Quijano (2000) calls “the coloniality of power” (p. 218) is a central theme of my research and practice. Besides an analysis of neoliberal globalization which understands it in terms of capitalist relations, an anti-colonial lens, drawing attention to past and present features of colonization and decolonization struggles, is an important conceptual resource for explicating and historicizing this phenomenon. It is essential to the understanding of contemporary asymmetries of power that exist between imperial powers (states and private capital) and Third World nations, and within them. It is very important for analysis of the dynamics of contemporary capitalism and state power in colonial-settler states such as Canada, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia and the USA – and the roles that their governments and private sectors play internationally. But it is of equal importance in analyzing struggles over power, knowledge and representation among actors which locate themselves as ‘alternative’ or in opposition to dominant political and economic systems. Attention to the diverse histories and dynamics of colonization, and rich conceptual resources that can be drawn from over five centuries of resistance to colonialism around the world are often overlooked in academic and professionalized NGO/activist approaches to neoliberal globalization. As noted by D’Souza (2002a and 2006), it is vital to retrieve, reappropriate and redevelop the idea of self-determination, as a conceptual tool of social transformation in an era in which it has been overwritten, or excluded from many scholarly analyses of imperialism and in the language of NGOs. As I illustrate, the

voices and ideas of Indigenous Peoples, Third World and immigrant activists which draw explicit links between the advance of neoliberal capitalism and older forms of colonialism are often excluded, silenced, marginalized or otherwise filtered to fit hegemonic positions dominated by NGOs and Northern activist networks. As Wood (2005) notes in reference to the transnational social movement network, People's Global Action, even stated commitments to non-hierarchical modes of organizing, direct action and anti-capitalism are no guarantee that power asymmetries between Northern and Southern movement activists will be adequately addressed.

### *Learning from history and geohistory*

My research emphasizes the importance of critical engagement with histories of earlier social struggles in order to interpret contemporary movements, and the need to uncover histories from below in order to trouble dominant accounts of social movements. Social history and the impetus behind subaltern studies (notwithstanding the critiques which I have discussed of this field of historical research in Chapter 2) flag important concerns about how history is written, and for whose interests. There is a tendency for academic inquiry of social movements to study them from the top, and through a narrow lens, rather than seeking out histories from below. As Mignolo (2000) and D'Souza (2006) urge, geohistory is an important concept with which to understand the ways that capitalism and colonialism operate in particular contexts in relation to specific histories.

As I discuss, NGO and movement accounts should also be subjected to critical scrutiny. They are often authored by professionalized NGO or academic writers, and in some ways replicate the tendency which Eschle (2001), Sarkar (1983b and 1998) and others charge academic scholarship with, that is, ignoring or misconstruing forms of



social action which do not fit within a pre-established theoretical framework. In studying activist/NGO networks, we must also attend to their specific geohistorical context and the specifics of social forces in which they are implicated, going beyond objectifying kinds of analysis. Guha's (1983) historical reading techniques should also alert us to silences, omissions and misrepresentations that may exist in dominant NGO accounts of campaigns and mobilizations.

Mathew (2005) argues that in order to understand contemporary social movements in the Third World, and their ideas, we have to take history seriously:

Maybe our collective task ... is to look carefully at the resurgent left social movements all across Africa, Asia, and Latin America and comprehend the ideas of justice that inhere within these movements and the historical memory they are rooted in (p. 203).

The traditions, trajectories, hopes, visions, and dilemmas of older struggles are not only rich sources for academic study, but also offer vital tools for contemporary activism.

***Political economy: More than just a matter of who pays the piper?***

Flacks (2004) contends that the importance of Marx is his effort to embed power relations in an analysis of the political economy as a whole. "Much of Marx's intellectual career involved the effort to analyze capitalism as a developing and contradictory system and the ways in which such development would necessitate and make possible collective actions from below." (p. 139)

As Petras and Veltmeyer (2001 and 2005) and Kamat (2004) note, the notion of civil society and NGOs as somehow existing in a space separate from the state is very problematic, not least because these organizations are intimately integrated with states –

and often international institutions - in an era of neoliberalism. We need to critically interrogate the term 'civil society' in its many contexts and uses, and with it, claims of NGO autonomy and the ways in which these articulate to and are coordinated by contemporary capitalist relations and institutions. Close attention to NGO texts and discourse following lines of inquiry suggested by institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography can help to reveal how texts – whether official or 'alternative' - organize NGO practice. Veltmeyer (2007) reminds us that the

actual intent of these NGOs is not the issue. In many cases the individuals involved genuinely believe that they are acting in the interest of the local communities, providing the poor tangible benefits. But we need to look at whose interests are in fact served by their actions as strategic partners of the World Bank and other international organizations. The critical question is how NGOs play into the relationship of the state to the social movements and the struggle for political power? (p. 83).

Perhaps we should not be surprised at the reluctance of many groups that identify as part of the 'anti-globalization' movement to name capitalism as the problem that they are confronting. As I note in Chapter 1, my own choice of terminology in this thesis reflects precisely the fact that many NGOs and activists in the opposition networks to APEC and neoliberal globalization that I have been part of stopped short of opposing capitalism *per se*, rather than my own understanding that neoliberal globalization would be better termed imperialism or capitalism. McNally (2002) argues that failure to name capitalism comes at a cost, encouraging the movement's supporters

to see the problem not as the system that organizes our lives, but merely as a set of policies pursued by those currently at the top. The effect is to de-radicalize the movement by proposing merely to change the ideology that drives government policy, not the system as a whole. Consistent with this, critics reluctant to name capitalism as the problem advocate building a citizen's lobby to revamp government policy within a capitalist framework (p. 60).

This failure to name capitalism, alongside common threads of NGO discourse about participation, fair trade, sustainable development, vaguely defined claims about democracy, rights and justice, and sometimes a kind of stylized, ‘respectable’ militancy, also helps to obfuscate the ways in which many of these organizations are implicated in ruling relations. Most NGOs operate within what Kamat (2004) defines as a “pluralist liberal democratic space” (p. 166) and what Meiksins Wood (1995) calls the “interstices of capitalism” (p. 1) - local spaces within the existing power structure. They have defined themselves solely in terms of fitting into the existing structures of power to supposedly represent the interests of the people or civil society. As Petras and Veltmeyer (2001), McNally (2002), Kamat (2004), Reinsborough (2004), A. Smith (2007a and 2007b) and others charge, many of these organizations explicitly orient their focus upwards towards the structures of power, seeking legitimacy through lobbying and reporting/maintaining relations with state institutions and other national and international funders, rather than through building or resourcing a mass movement base with a capacity to meaningfully challenge existing power relations. Moreover, some charge that even though some NGOs have gained access to policy-makers in relation to trade policy, this has largely failed to bring about substantive changes in policy outcomes – “inclusion without influence”, as Dür and De Bièvre (p. 86, 2007) put it .

I am not arguing here in favour of a totalizing, overly-dismissive or over-deterministic analysis of NGOs which conflates their many different organizational forms, contexts, and histories. Analysis of NGO activities in specific times and settings calls for micro-level analysis and careful attention to geohistory. But it must be contextualized within a political economy framework which attends to interconnected

processes of funding and other forms of donor patronage, the depoliticization and fragmentation of grassroots organizations and movements, claims to representation, and the changes to state institutions and processes in a neoliberal regime. As I highlight in Chapter 2, given the recent ascendancy of NGOs in national and global settings, the notion of an NGO ideology of pragmatism, and the ways in which these organizations articulate to ruling relations are phenomena worthy of further and ongoing research.

### *Contesting compartmentalization*

A Marxist political economy analysis and an anti-colonial standpoint may help to inoculate against a tendency for both academic scholarship and many NGOs to compartmentalize issues and struggles. On the one hand, as L. T. Smith (1999) argues, we must contend with the dominance of systems of knowledge based on a colonially-driven “systematic fragmentation” (p. 28), disciplinary carve-up and disconnection of peoples from their histories, landscapes, social relations and ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world. On the other, we also live in an era of coalition politics, in many respects. The anti-APEC networks could be characterized as uneasy, usually loose, coalitions, and as I noted in Chapters 4 and 5, many of the organizations involved approached APEC through a compartmentalizing lens. Armstrong and Prashad (2005) contend that coalitional politics has positives and negatives. In the US context, they see it as a result of fragmentation and the “NGOization” (p. 184) of the left. “[E]ach of our groups carves out areas of expertise or special interest, gets intensely informed about the area, and then uses this market specialization to attract members and funds. Organizations that ‘do too much’ bewilder the landscape.” While they argue that specialization can result in valuable resources, analytical and strategic for a broader

movement, the authors suggest that fragmentation is problematic because it leaves us without a sense of common strategy, tactics or movement, or political agreement about how the systems currently operate and reproduce themselves. They write:

As we extend coalitional politics from our local and national contexts to webs of networking fostered by international conferences, we need to ask again about how we know what we fight, and what alternate futures we see emerging from our often delinked, but not disparate struggles (pp. 184-5).

In the absence of a unifying vision or platform, these questions are highly relevant for transnational coalitions and networks. For Biel (2000), NGOs as key actors in a liberal pluralist civil society are central to a “new political economy of co-opted empowerment” which promotes fragmentation and inhibits “the gathering-together of the forces of the poor” (p. 298). Mathew (2005) also notes the “self-fragmenting” (p. 193) tendency of progressive movements in the USA which comes with the institutionalization of the separation of communities at each and every level possible, resulting in a rise and proliferation of community-based organizations which each have their own interests (but not necessarily accountability back to the community that they claim to represent). Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) and Kamat (2004) note how this dynamic operates internationally. This concern connects to Michels’ (1978) warnings about the dangers to democracy of the growth of specialized leadership and the professionalization of mass political organizations.

We need to contest compartmentalization both in terms of academic disciplinary carve-ups and in the way that professionalized NGO activism – often driven by ruling regimes – frequently follows this path. In Chapter 5, I problematized the exaltation and reification of a class of experts within ‘alternative’ networks, where a technician,

compartmentalized analysis of an APEC document or a WTO agreement which is not grounded in a struggle perspective is often valued over a more broadly framed, and more critical analysis from social movement organizers. NGOs tend to graze a global food court of struggles and issues which go in and out of fashion. We need further research into the processes of framing, selecting and marketing these concerns by NGOs (Jordan and Maloney, 1998, Bob, 2005), which links these back to questions of political economy. At the same time, we should recognize that an awareness of the comprehensiveness and systemic nature of neoliberal capitalism's impacts can explain the resistance from broad fronts of social movements in many countries which *do* mobilize and resist against a common enemy (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003 and 2005; bilaterals.org, BIOTHAI and GRAIN, 2008).

### ***Conclusion***

The disjunctures that I experienced in the worlds of activism and community organizing against neoliberal globalization and the parallel disjunctures and disconnectedness of much scholarly literature about social movements and transnational activism are both starting points and a place to conclude. The disjunctures, however, remain.

There has been relatively little analysis of internal movement dynamics and questions of power and knowledge within recent NGO and social movement networks contesting capitalist globalization, nor attempts to draw learnings for contemporary and future struggles which attend both to geohistorical specificities and which situate these in relation to capitalist relations and continuums of colonialism. Drawing from an earlier phase of struggle, during the 1990s, my research offers some insights and possible

directions for future scholarly research in this field. It also seeks to inform effective activist practice, bridging knowledge produced by movement activists and conceptual resources for struggle gleaned from several areas of scholarship. In my research I have proposed, developed and applied theoretical and methodological tools for analysis of social movements, and problematized hegemonic practices including the production of knowledge in NGO and movement networks. More work is desperately needed on the phenomena of NGOism and the NGOization of social change.

Mathew (2005) is correct to draw attention to the rich and radical repositories of histories and knowledge in social movements in the Third World. But activists and scholars of social movements situated in the North need not fetishize and seek to model themselves on movements overseas. There is much work to be done in seeking out, recovering, and validating histories of local struggles, as they unfold around us, whether we are aware of them or not.

Building analysis and building movements go hand in hand. Effective research can help move activist practice beyond reacting only to the immediate, and inform longer-term strategy and vision. Foley's (1999) work on learning in social action and the emerging field of political activist ethnography highlight and value the incremental building of knowledge, which arises from actual engagement in our everyday world. Yet Foley and others also highlight the inherently contradictory and contested nature of such knowledge production and forms of social action. There is no silver bullet or special formula for addressing the concerns which I raise. Alternatives arise from struggle, active engagement, reflection and action. Ultimately, possibilities to think beyond the kinds of ideological pragmatism and constrained dissent practiced by many NGOs discussed in

my research need to be anchored in everyday worlds of activist struggle against capitalism and colonialism, and the knowledge produced there.



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