

**“The Political Economy of Dissent: Global Publics After
Cancun”**

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Abstract

This paper examines the realignment of forces that derailed the Cancun meeting to broaden and deepen the WTO's world trade agenda held in September 2003, which according to conventional wisdom was supposed to be a done deal. The growing disjuncture between global cultural flows of people and ideas, and the rules and practices of globalization has created a highly unstable environment with many opportunities but at the same time significant political costs. Regardless of what EU and US may admit in public, at Cancun global dissent and its publics acquired visible agenda-setting power. The growth in influence of the 'nixers' and 'fixers' has contributed to a tectonic shift in the international economy that has immediate and far-reaching consequences for destabilizing globalization and its narrow economic agenda.

The second argument is that global cultural flows of ideas, texts and wealth have deepened the global environment of dissent at the WTO. Many of these flows are the consequence of free trade itself. They have accelerated as economic barriers have fallen facilitating the movement of ideas, people and texts driven by new technologies and the appetite for mass culture. Increased trade has increased cultural interaction globally. These concentrated movements of peoples and ideas beget other flows triggering a cyclical movement of dissent and are highly disjunctive for the goals of economic globalization. When these global cultural flows function as catalysts for change, they become both a conduit and channel for the global movement of social forces. They set new agendas and, it is this agenda-setting capacity that challenges state authority globally no less locally. So far there is no single over-riding vision that addresses the collective problem of diversity at the global level. Nonetheless, the global dissent movement intends to have a prominent role in defining public culture and in shaping it in inherently democratic ways.

Keywords:- WTO Cancun meeting, global cultural flows, dissent, counter-publics, cultural diversity, anti-globalization movement, global public opinion, new information technologies

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The Turning Point

No one can afford to be indifferent to the profound absence of forward momentum in the world trading system. Both regional and global trade negotiations, by quite separate paths and for distinct reasons, have arrived at an impasse. Turning point is an apt phrase suggesting the presence of an array of forces pushing and pulling the present world trading system towards a new configuration with different rules, practices, ideas, and mentalities (Prestowitz, 2002; Barber, 2003). To look at the political economy of dissent through this lens helps identify the processes and behaviours that have produced the present global impasse.

In this context it is helpful to analyze the prospects for long-term dramatic improvement in poverty eradication and global governance. States and territorial communities are not about to disappear from world politics. Public spending has risen throughout the 90s in many jurisdictions in the global North. Modern welfare states have not buckled as once predicted but they are smaller and less potent instruments for redistributive ends. (Lammert, 2004) But as sovereignty is rendered increasingly porous, it has become, paradoxically, more important for national authority everywhere and citizenship engagement. Access to information flows from both mainstream and alternative print and electronic media has created highly visible counter-forums worldwide and a yawning digital divide. (World Summit on Information Society, 2000) The revolution in information and technology has diffused power away from governments; this has empowered social groups and individuals to play a large role in world politics, an arena that used to be the exclusive preserve of public authority (Nye, 2002).

We need to drill down and determine the value of these informational flows for the stability and vitality of the global economy and national communities. The question is, will states and global international institutions learn to view these networked flows and actors as a public good essential for a more equitable order? Or, are nation-states on an irreversible collision course with global public dissenters, their 'new rivals and competitors'?

There are two linked parts to the analysis. In part one, we examine the realignment of forces that derailed the Cancun meeting to broaden and deepen the WTO's world trade agenda held in

September 2003, which according to conventional wisdom was supposed to be a done deal. The growing disjuncture between global cultural flows of people and ideas, and the rules and practices of globalization has created a highly unstable environment with many opportunities but at the same time significant political costs. Regardless of what EU and US may admit in public, at Cancun global dissent and its publics acquired visible agenda-setting power. The growth in influence of the ‘nixers’ and ‘fixers’ has contributed to a tectonic shift in the international economy that has immediate and far-reaching consequences for destabilizing globalization and its narrow economic agenda.

Part two focuses on how global cultural flows of ideas, texts and wealth have deepened the global environment of dissent at the WTO. Many of these flows are the consequence of free trade itself. They have accelerated as economic barriers have fallen facilitating the movement of ideas, people and texts driven by new technologies and the appetite for mass culture. Increased trade has increased cultural interaction globally. These concentrated movements of peoples and ideas beget other flows triggering a cyclical movement of dissent and are highly disjunctive for the goals of economic globalization. When these global cultural flows function as catalysts for change, they become both a conduit and channel for the global movement of social forces. They set new agendas and, it is this agenda-setting capacity that challenges state authority globally no less locally.²

The core argument can be summarized as follows: powerful global cultural flows have added a whole new dimension to global dynamics that used to be primarily economic. Culture has become an explicitly fierce battleground against US cultural industries and American trade policies that are attempting to commodify cultural production and treat it like any other commodity on the world market to be bought and sold for profit. Cultural power, and its related issues, is the stamp of collective identity. If democracy is to be fostered argues Yudice, “public

² The Robarts Centre currently has a project underway to analyze the complex nature of these global cultural flows empirically and to determine their impact on global publics. This paper is the first in a series of pilot studies. In this paper dissent is used generically to refer to normative groups or communities of activists engaged in public from across the spectrum on a multitude of issues that challenge and question existing patterns of authority, values and ideas.

spheres in which deliberation on questions of the public good are to be held must be permeable to different cultures.” (Yudice,2003:23) Framing and creating the relevant mechanisms for expressing identity (Zukin, 1995) requires safeguard measures that now do not exist. One of the goals of UNESCO’s Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity is to protect global cultural diversity such as language rights, local cultural production, media ownership and intellectual property from prejudicial trade practices and the unequal advancement of new information technologies (UNESCO, 2001).

It would be nice if globally shared meanings could succeed in creating a common culture of citizenship that would allow the global public to navigate the crisis. So far there is no single over-riding vision that addresses the collective problem of diversity at the global level. Nonetheless, the global dissent movement intends to have a prominent role in defining public culture and in shaping it in inherently democratic ways. What it has come to realize is that culture is not only about the images, symbols and shared understandings that get people to buy branded products, but it is also about the rules and the framework for the ideas and processes of exchange on which business thrives.

One of the principal conclusions that the political economy of dissent points to is that people are learning to use culture as an economic base and when they do trade negotiations become a highly contested sites for the anti-globalization movement and leading countries in the global South. At the present time the public’s appetite for more free trade has soured. The world trading system acts like a magnet for global dissent of all persuasions. The singular focus on the WTO has intensified the cycle of dissent and imposed a degree of cohesion on a highly diverse and conflicted movement. As a result the old process of deal making, which produced the WTO’s Uruguay Round, is in shambles. In these new circumstances governments ought not to underestimate the capacity and resiliency of the global dissent movement to challenge many of the core assumptions about the nature of global politics as presently configured.

What is now evident is that no one owns the public and no one can manipulate it for very long, although political elites always try to channel and control it. Political elites remain baffled by its

power, reach and impact as Bush and Blair have painfully learned. No one can turn the public off; it has its own dynamics and properties. Every counterpublic has to give a lot from themselves; they have to create the counterpublic as a entity with voice.

What distinguishes the counter public today from that of four decades ago is its organizational decentralization and its global reach. Today's counterpublic is user driven and does not rely on face-to-face contact for mobilization. Much of it is maintained without any organization at all, and significantly, a great deal of the dissenting, non-conforming public holds to no grand narrative for toppling state power. It is not an insurgent public rooted in socialism, marxism or social democracy though certainly those elements are present in social movements. The modern dissent public does not need gate-keepers of any vanguard party to make it effective. Nor is it organized around any incipient belief in the historical mission of the working class to seize power in its name or on its behalf. Instead, the primary aim of the modern counterpublic is to wage a non-stop information battle for the hearts and minds of the political middle, the sceptics, the under 30 youth and the disenfranchised.

Its foot-soldiers are the hundreds of millions of epublic users and global news watchers who want to politicize the apathetic and apolitical. So far this strategy of 'winning the middle' seems to be succeeding despite the helter-skelter ebb and flow of success, meager resources, and the marked absence of a revolutionary creed. Their principal accomplishment is not to be understated. Counter-publics have driven a deep wedge between elites and public opinion around the US war in Iraq, the need for broadening and deepening global free trade, and the neo-liberal agenda to shrink the state and cut services.

The Walkout at Cancun

When a coalition of Southern states led by Brazil, India and South Africa walked out of the trade negotiations after the US and EU failed to make concessions on agricultural subsidies, investment and the privatization of public services, the WTO faced an unprecedented collapse of

trade talks. The enormity of this failure to cut a deal cannot be underestimated for the future of the world trading system and the immediate needs of the global South. For the moment it is hard to see where the new spirit for co-operation is going to come from, but this has not deterred Brazil, India and other countries from pressing ahead with their own much more radical agendas for reform of the world trading system with respect to generic drugs, investment rules and agricultural subsidies. Re-starting the Doha trade talks will be very difficult given that major Southern countries are insisting that the elimination of all export subsidies is a condition for negotiations to be successful. (*Financial Times*, December 16, 2003)

At the root of this insistence lies the fact that while the global South was promised new market access in the Uruguay Round, agricultural subsidies in the EU, Japan, Canada and the US have become – dare to say the word – permanent. It is quite a revealing exercise to examine the long-term trend. Agricultural subsidy levels in the North have not decreased appreciably in 50 years, having in fact have risen sharply in the 1990s despite some small declines and modest reforms. While the Bush Administration promised billions more in subsidies to its farmers, the EU and Japan have kept agricultural subsidies off the table.

The World Bank figures show just how extreme and surreal the actual situation is. Today average real incomes in the developed world are 75 times higher than in the world's least developed regions. In 2001 the annual dairy subsidy per cow in the EU comes to \$913 while its annual aid to sub-Saharan Africa kicks in at a shocking \$8 per person. The world's richest countries spent \$311 billion to subsidize Northern farmers, an amount that dwarfs the \$52 billion spent on foreign assistance to all developing countries. This is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg (Drache and Froese, 2003).

With the large American subsidies it costs US cotton growers about \$.87 to grow a pound of cotton; while in Africa the same pound of cotton can be produced for approximately \$.22. Cotton, Africa's 'white miracle' supports about 15 million small farmers and rural people in west and central Africa. Cotton yields doubled between 1990 and 1998 but market prices collapsed due to the overproduction and large harvests. With earnings from exports plummeting, African

producers are desperate. American, Greek and Spanish farmers continue to be subsidized with billions of dollars or euros and these subsidies have protected farmers in the global North from the vagaries of the global market. In 2002 the subsidy per kilo was higher than the world market price per kilo. According to Oxfam, the US is providing “three times as much subsidy to its cotton farmers as development aid to 500 million Africans.” (Johnson 2004)

It is no wonder then that agriculture was the deal breaker at Cancun. Neither the EU nor the US was ready to help the starving producers of central and western Africa by opening up northern markets even as a gesture of good will. The best the US is offering is a deal which does not set any deadline for the elimination of agricultural subsidies, but the global South is not buying into this latest mini-olive branch. (*Financial Times*, January 12 2004) They aren't onside with the US or the EU.

Up until Cancun few insiders dissented from the prevailing orthodoxy which held that the WTO was a far superior organization to the GATT, which had served the world trading system for almost 50 years before it was folded in to the WTO in 1994 (Weiler, 2000). The richest traders had forced developing countries to accept a trade agreement that was not in their best interests. Increasingly this is the primary explanation for why the WTO is in crisis.

Protectionism not an Option

As an institution, the WTO never fully recovered from ‘the battle in Seattle’ despite the fact that today more nations belong to the organization than ever before. Even China is a member of the club, but this has not made reaching a new consensus any easier. China is at logger-heads with the US on a range of trade issues, but particularly over the new quotas Washington imposed in 2003 on Chinese textiles, apparel and other goods. China's tariffs have fallen, but US anti-dumping measures are much more aggressively prevalent. The WTO has had no visible dampening effect on Washington's recourse to pre-emptive trade unilateralism (Prestowitz, 2003).

For instance, US shrimp fisherman are seeking the imposition of stiff tariffs on Thailand, China, Vietnam, Ecuador and a handful of other nations. Shrimp imports are up about 20 percent compared to the same period in 2003. US shrimpers are aiming to increase prices and reduce supply. The strategy in most industries is virtually identical: reduce foreign supply, cut the legs under foreign competition and ratchet up domestic prices. (*Globe and Mail*, December 31 2003) The global South can expect to face all kinds of restrictions from non-tariff barriers as well as politically motivated anti-dumping measures barring their entry into the US market.

The US will continue to be the primary champion of the WTO's rules-based system, if for no other reason than that the WTO is very much a US creation and its laws and rules benefit US multinationals. Aggressive multilateralism has worked in its favour.³ Increasingly the US is shifting gears and using a form of coercive bilateralism to whipsaw the world trading system, if and when American trade policies are found to violate WTO rules. Washington has signed dozens of bi-lateral treaties in the recent period; the advantages of end-running WTO trade law are plain (Higgott, 2003).

In a one-on-one negotiation, the US, as the larger and more powerful country, virtually dictates the terms and conditions of agreements. It has opened negotiations with many small poor countries like the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. To increase its leverage with the Bush Administration, the Dominican Republic is sending 300 soldiers to Iraq in support of the US-led coalition. (*Financial Times* August 12, 2003)

The US administration announced in December that it had concluded a deal with these struggling Central American countries not only to phase out existing tariffs over the coming decade, thus ending the protection of their 'infant' industries, but also to deregulate most sectors of their

³ Canada, along with a group of other countries, brought a case against the US at the WTO that won a landmark victory. US producers were found to be in breach of the WTO's trade rules in being allowed to keep part of the anti-dumping illegal duties. Under this arrangement Washington was creating an incentive for industry to bring anti-dumping disputes against any country where the US competition was doing poorly. Although the Bryd Amendment violates WTO rules, politically Ottawa seems ready to accept a 'dumb' compromise that allows the US to continue to impose quotas on Canadian softwood exports, keep half of the wrongfully imposed anti-dumping duties and restrict Canada's access to the US market (*Globe and Mail*, December 9, 2003). As far as Washington is concerned WTO trade rules are not an inviolable high standard particularly when they collide with US interests.

economies. The crown jewel in the deal is that these countries are required to adopt tough new legislation protecting US patents and copyrights. Central American nations have also agreed to phase out subsidies to particularly sensitive industries for farm and dairy products. While Washington describes this concession as unprecedented in US trade agreements, (*Financial Times*, December 18, 2003) the US Council on Foreign Relations warned in a recent report that the US policy is myopic and dangerous to the region. (2004)

It is very advantageous for the US to push the bilateral trade agenda as hard as possible now because the US has increasingly become a major violator of WTO rules. In terms of its illegal imposition of steel anti-dumping duties, an Administration spokesperson stated bluntly in November that it would defy the WTO ruling because it went against its own interest. In the end the US backed down only because the EU was able to threaten even tougher trade sanctions against Washington. Bush announced that the US would comply, but it had required a major escalation on the part of the EU to obtain Washington's compliance with WTO's legal rules.

Aggressive Bi-lateralism and the Bush Administration

The WTO is in a mess because of the aggressive bilateralism of the US and not the knockout punch delivered by the leadership of the global South at Cancun. With the WTO so polarized internally, it is uncertain it can weather another shock or failure on the scale of Cancun; but no one should read this to literally mean that countries are retreating into economic protectionism and closing their borders to exports. There is no empirical evidence to indicate that exports are in sharp decline because states are not ready to negotiate a new round of global free trade. Despite the WTO's institutional crisis, the world keeps on trading.

Trade remains one of the drivers of all economies, North and South, because average tariff rates have fallen to record lows, around 3 percent, for non-agricultural products. Market access is very broad and growing despite the breakdown in trade talks. Mexico, Mercosur and even the much

troubled Caribbean countries have cut their tariffs and opened their markets to northern industrial and agricultural goods.

For instance, NAFTA exports have grown at record rates as have exports between the Mercosur partners. A competitive Canadian dollar and a super-competitive Mexican peso are the story in NAFTA. Flexible exchange rates in Brazil and Argentina have boosted their exports too. Regional trade blocs in the hemisphere are firing on all cylinders. So even in the absence of a new post-Uruguay round or a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, trade ties within the hemisphere are deepening despite the difficult conditions.

Latin America is not getting its share of foreign investment flows for the equity and bond markets, but they do have China banging on the door for raw materials such as copper and iron ore as well as soya to feed its rapidly growing population. Rising commodity prices and new trade links with Russia, China and India have become very important. Brazil's trade with China has taken off (*Financial Times*, December 2003). So has Washington's. US imports from China rose 43 percent in 2002-3 compared to a paltry 2.8 percent growth in imports from Mexico. NAFTA effects are clearly wearing thin.

The principal difficulty remains that even though regional trading blocs are more export oriented than ever global unemployment has hit record highs. Higher global growth failed to create enough jobs worldwide. If the goal is to reduce poverty by generating enough jobs to meet the UN target of halving poverty by 2015, the world trading system is failing to create sufficient amounts of employment to eradicate poverty. Joblessness among young people aged 15-24 resulted in a poverty rate of almost 15 percent in 2003, two and half times the world wide average. (ILO, 2003) Female unemployment is two to three times the regional average. In their latest Report, the ILO calls on governments to stop treating poverty as an 'afterthought'.

It is wrong to think that southern states are in revolt against globalization but, they have become smarter and much more discriminating in their response to global integration. They are no longer unconditional supporters of the WTO's idealized, but deformed, view of the market. They have

climbed off the world trade express train, at least for the time being, with the basic political understanding that to succeed in the global economy much different strategies are needed. At Seattle the WTO was paralyzed by street protests and at Cancun the negotiations collapsed when an unbridgeable political divide between rich and poor countries broke up the meeting. WTO bureaucrats were naïve not to have seen the crisis coming. It is hypocritical and unsustainable for rich countries to demand that poor nations liberalize their trade when these powerful groups in the global North insist on domestic protection for their own self-interest (Bhagwati, 2004).

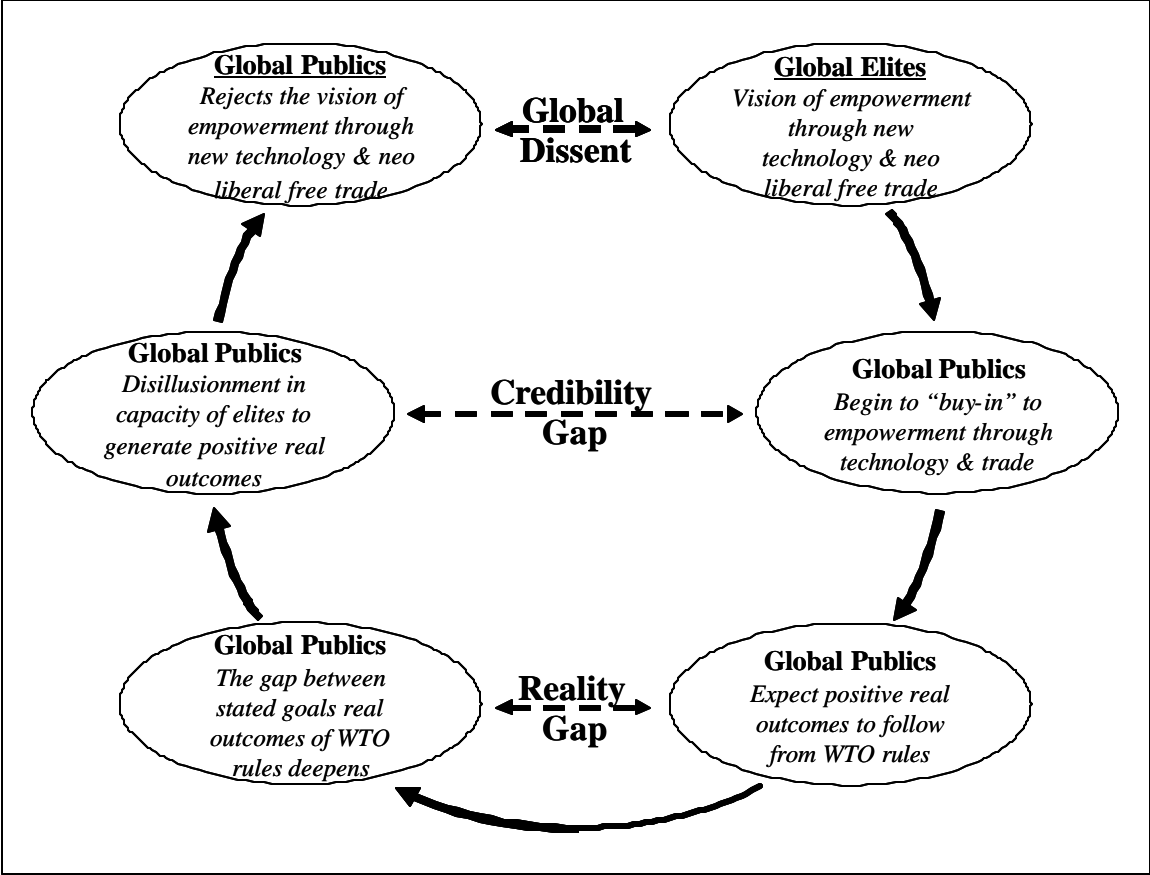
Global Publics and Heightened Expectations

Millions of citizens worldwide are convinced in a way that even five years ago they were not that the idea of a single global order anchored in the WTO's governance capacity is discredited. Global dissent has its own iconography popularized by such worldwide best sellers such as Canada's Naomi Klein's *No Logo* and Mark Achbar's surprise documentary hit *The Corporation*. Michael Moore's no-holds-barred books and films attacking the American abuse of power at home and abroad rounds out this genre. There are dozens of films, books and documentaries in other languages feeding the culture of anti-corporate and democratic dissent.

The perception is that globalization as an economic entity is composed of a series of bi-lateral trade deals and shifting strategic alliances organized out of Geneva, Washington and Brussels. The message of the dissenters, doubters and sceptics is that WTO's narrow political culture has to be radically altered if rising global inequality is to be reversed (Drache and Froese, 2003). The driving force behind these normative communities of citizen engagement is that the institutional failure of the WTO and other international agencies like it needs to be brought into the open, discussed, challenged and addressed by political action (Angus, 2001). The emerging consensus feeding the global public's discontent is that trade liberalization cannot go forward without significant and substantial social regulation.

International civil society has acquired legs that were scarcely present a decade earlier. It is not insignificant that according to the most reliable estimates the NGO global public, an omnibus of groups, civic organizations and coalitions numbering in the ten of thousands, mobilized 25 million worldwide to march in 2003, weeks before the US invaded Iraq. Global protests like this one, and many others that are not in the public eye, have taken the dissent movement to new levels of intensity.

Figure 1: Global Cycle of Dissent Post Cancun



Source: Roberts Centre 2004

The deepening of dissent can be gauged in other quantitative ways. One measure is that there were close to 1,000 NGOs registered at Cancun, a figure slightly smaller than the number of official delegates (roughly 1,300). Since the Singapore Ministerial there were only 150 NGOs present and the growth since then has been unprecedented. NGOs and the social movements are proxy organizations for a variety of highly motivated and determined public interest advocates

and defenders. Their capacity for political mobilization as well as their mastery of complex policy issues have transformed the ‘nixers’ (most radical) and the ‘fixers’ (more reform-minded) into a quasi-permanent but highly effective global opposition (Ostry, 2002).

Today many global NGOs are specialized: Medecins Sans Frontieres – AIDS and public health; debt relief – Jubilee Research; Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth– the environment; the protection of the Global Information Commons; Save the Children and UNICEF – poverty eradication, Oxfam – poverty and trade to name only some of the most prominent. They are funded through their own sources and individual contributions as well as through international foundations, trade unions, national governments, the EU and UN organizations.(Scholte, 2003) ⁴

So far global dissent has gained credibility but it is still far from being ‘mainstream’ for a particular reason. A vast public is connected in ways that no one could have predicted even a decade ago. You may not be ‘the first to know,’ as CNN boasts, but people worldwide are informed about trade politics and the global social environment. (Pew International Survey, 2003) Significantly, the lag effects between the conscious ability to create a new world of structures, organizations and stable social forms are smaller than a decade ago but are still demonstrably large. One important development is that today news flows from diverse sources are organized to broadcast public events and news on a global basis. CNN, El Jazeera, BBC World and TV5 reach over the heads of the anti-globalization movement and governments to audiences worldwide.

What is remarkable is that this recent upsurge in interest and public attention has not followed the predictable path that Anthony Downs wrote about so persuasively, in the early 70s in his seminal article on the “Issue Attention Cycle”.(Downs, 1972) Downs explained that with most public issues the ‘problem suddenly leaps into prominence’, rivets the public’s attention and then fades from view, largely unresolved. Down’s theory predicted that consumers of information get

⁴ .It is estimated that the resources for funding education and the organization of NGO activities runs into the tens of millions of dollars but anti-globalization resources still remain largely financed from very few institutions with deep pockets. The global dissent movement has had to fund-raise from across the social spectrum but the funding remains contingent and unstable.

bored with big issues such as the environment and governance. Today's global public possesses a longer attention span, which has been revealed to be more committed and less fickle than Down's theory suggested. (See Figure 1: Global Cycle of Dissent Post Cancun.)

Although it has taken the better part of a decade to get up and running, it is now almost impossible to turn off the global dissenting public's attention-getting activism because so many issues from the environment to the growth in global poverty are linked to the world trade organization and its impact on public policy. We haven't yet thought about the different aspects of the global public from a political economy perspective. The recent past underscores the fact that there are many connections between cultural flows that make powerful new claims on the WTO and the real and symbolic economy – the images, lifestyles and ethnicities –of the political economy of dissent. What is the magnitude of these flows and why are they surging? Structurally, why are global cultural flows frequent competitors and rivals to global financial flows? For now and into the future, what kinds of institutional pressures are driving global dissent? Where are we in the dissent cycle? Still on the upswing, entering the long plateau, or heading toward the inevitable downturn?

The Political Economy of Dissent and the Long Attention Cycle

Wealth, People and Idea Flows

In the mid-80s, when globalization first caught the attention of many experts, it was possible to regard the movement of people and ideas as less determinant and less real than wealth flows, but this is certainly no longer the case. Financial flows have rivals. Regional trading blocs have acted as an economic magnet at least initially to open borders to the movement of peoples. State policy in the industrialized world has been even more important. Since 1970 the number of migrants has doubled. Between 1990 and 2000 flows of people grew by 14 percent or 21 million persons. Three percent of the world's population have left their country of origin that means about 175 million people now reside in a country other than the one they were born (UN International

Migrant Report 2002). The magnitude of this flow of people is astounding. (See Figure 2 Streaming effects of immigrants, media texts and counter publics.)

The global North is the big winner in this systemic movement of peoples with the global South the principal sending region; between 1996 and 2000 over 12 million migrants left their country of origin for the global North. Between 1990 and 2000 Europe's migration population grew by 16 percent (48 million) while North America's increased by 48 percent (8 million). In Europe net migration represented almost 90 percent of population increase on the continent.

Global Cultural Flows

These Are Intense Transnational Movements of People, Media Texts and Ideas That Are Disjunctive To Financial Flows and Have Unpredictable Streaming Effects on Cultural Diversity. They Give Rise to Agenda-Setting Publics with New Authority Structures That Are Highly Normative. Structural Features Include: World News Networks, the Internet, Cellular Phones, Satellite Broadcasting, International Reports on the State of the Global Economy and Thousands of INGOs Participating in Counter-forms. These Competitors and Rivals to State Authority Are Challenging the Practices and Rules of Existing Global Governance Institutions. Global Broadcasting Networks Function as 'Maps of Meaning' in Overcoming Deep Class, Regional and Linguistic Divides.

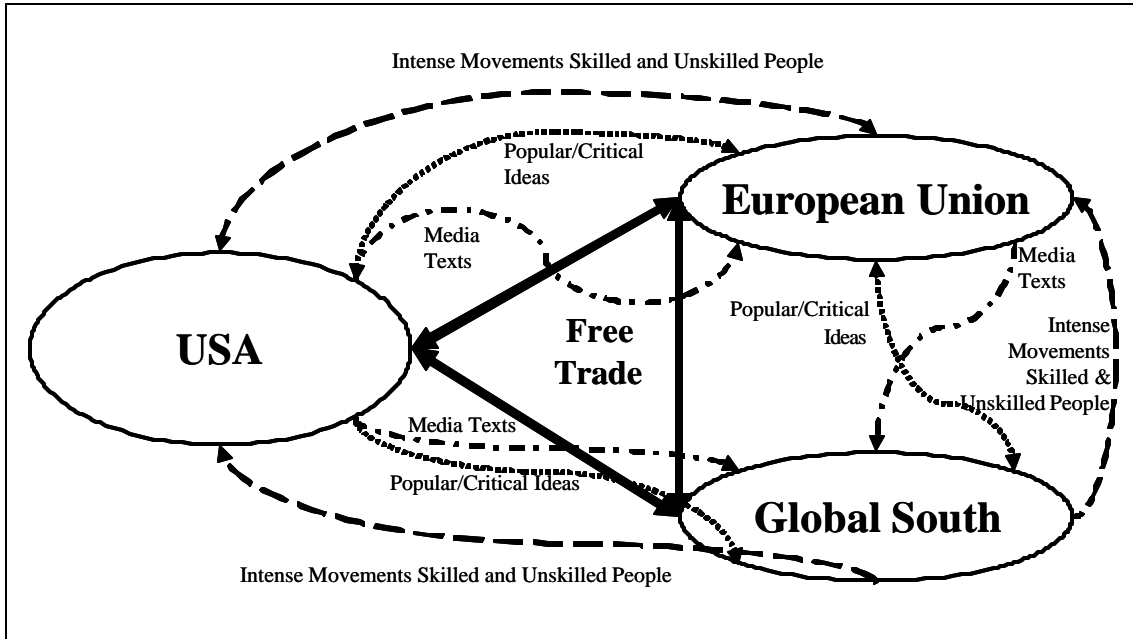
There is no one reason to explain the constant movement of people on the move globally. Skilled professionals move to find better opportunities. In fact, experts stress that most migration takes place in regional settings (Jan Niessen, 2003). Others leave their country of birth out of economic necessity from the least developed regions and nations of the world. Migrant flows into the advanced economies have recorded large increases recently. The US and Britain are the most dependent on foreign workers. Since 1995 the stock of foreign workers has increased by 51 percent and 39 percent respectively (OECD Report, 2003). Still others are forced to flee their country to escape persecution, war and tyranny. OECD latest report warns that humanitarian migration is becoming more difficult as countries close their borders to political refugees.

The process of displacement and resettlement is always disruptive, difficult and change-intensive all along the trajectory. Every Western country has policies to recruit highly skilled migrants from the global South while denying entry to low-skilled immigrants. North America and Europe are able to cherry-pick from among the best educated professionals and workers globally. While individual families benefit, there is a global transfer of intellectual and human capital from poor to rich countries. The world's already rich countries are taking human capital and educational resources from the less-developed world on an unprecedented scale (Castels, 2003).

In 2002, migrants working in the North sent \$88 billion in remittances back home; these revenues far exceed the \$57 billion that the global South received in development aid. For Mexico foreign remittances amount to more than \$14 billion annually and represent the single most important source of earnings after oil revenues. In 2000 at least nine countries received remittances from overseas workers amounting to more than 10 percent of their GDP (UN International Migration Report, 2002)..⁵ More than anything, the streaming effects from the global movement of peoples in and out of labour markets are unequal and asymmetrical.

⁵ Key international agreements include: 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees, 1990 UN Convention of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families entered into force on 1 July 2003; Cairo Programme of Action adopted at the 19th International Conference on Population Development. Other structures include the Regional Conference on Migration or the Puebla process that address a wide range of issues including human rights of migrant children, migration and development. (Jan Niessen, 2003)

Figure 2: Streaming effects of immigrants, media texts and counter publics. Cultural interaction is accelerates but exchange remains asymmetrical.



Source: Roberts Centre 2004

Cultural flows take many forms that parallel the concentrated movement of peoples. Many concern texts, in Stuart Hall’s sense of the term, which denote a cultural object from which individual audience members form their own meanings (Stuart Hall, 1996). Films, books, television, radio, chat-lines, new broadcasting and internet sites of every description fall in this category. These texts create new political narratives in privileged spaces about the state, identity and the global economy. In the hands of counter-publics, access to the internet and all kinds of new information technologies are part of a larger process of creating new agendas and challenging existing ones. The information age has imagined a global order into existence but it does not have a set of structures to sustain it. More importantly the new information technologies have made possible the organization of many different popular kinds of citizen accessed outlets and public forums for counter-publics at the regional no less than the global level.

⁷ Washington Consensus was the name given by John Williamson to an ensemble of market-led policies promoted by economists and trade experts who flew in to Washington to advise the IMF, World Bank and the US Department of Treasury in the early 1980s.

Some flows are designed by experts who want to build world-wide telecommunication networks. Satellite systems, telecommunication grids, local and national telecommunication systems, and wireless networks move information and texts world wide. These flows are both local and global as national jurisdictions and national sensibility remain formidable barriers to the rapid expansion of satellite and other forms of communication. Popular culture has its own identifiable flow circuitry that is very complex. These flows are likely to be identity-enhancing and focused on the local environment, urban renewal, poverty, music, food, and sports (Canclini, 2001). Even highly commercialized in the local language they are recognized as part of the national culture. Connected with regional, ethnic and national territory, this kind of intense movement of ideas, texts and people seeks to build community and strengthen national sovereignty.

The modern ideal of the public is shaped and affirmed through citizenship engagement which builds real and virtual networks generating new knowledge and cultural practices about globalization and its potentiality. Earlier research exaggerated the determining role of corporations on consumers and audiences, and overstated the passivity of consumer networks. In his influential book on Latinity, Americanness and global consumption, Canclini's central proposition is that consumption has been transformed into "an arena of competing claims" and "ways of using it". Flows of media text and critical ideas help reconstitute a social bond that has been sundered by cutbacks and an excessive reliance on individualism.

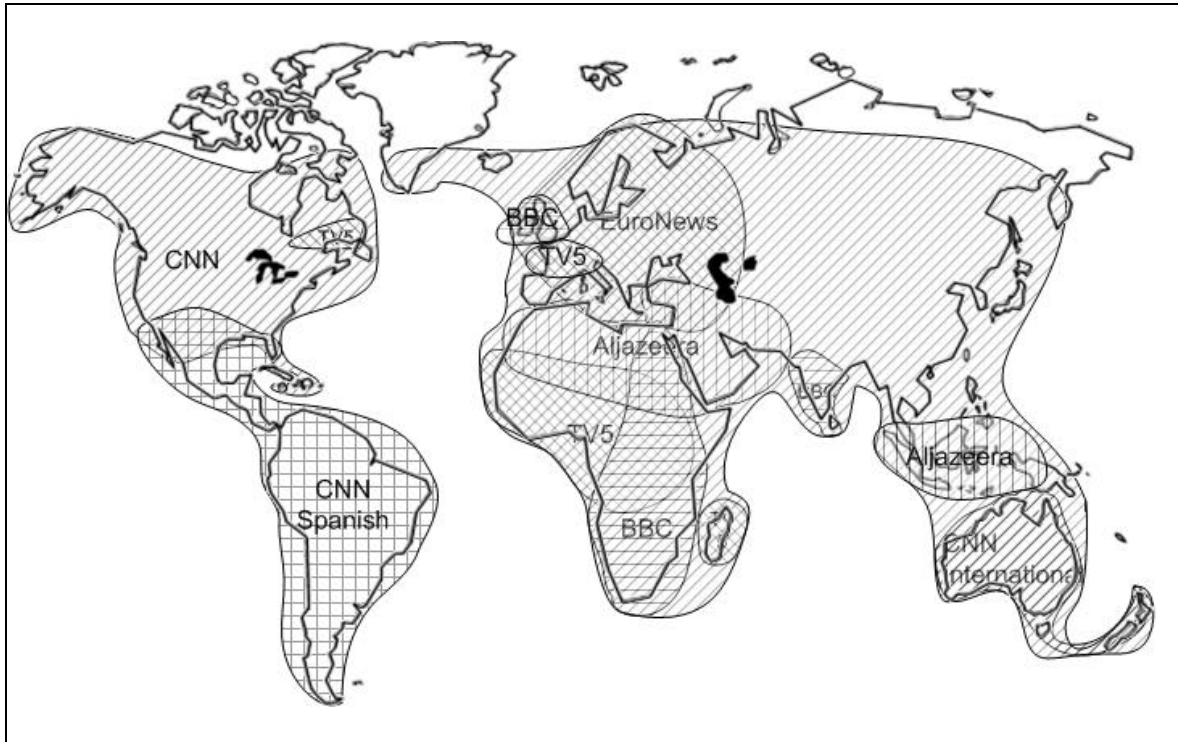
Agenda-Setting Ideas

Media texts have been of great interest for most of the twentieth century as news reports have exerted profound influence in shaping global public opinion. The recent consolidation of media conglomerates has led to a blurring of news with cultural and informational products. What the global public has been persistently searching for is a way to transform state-centered authority and a generalized public interest into a highly effective mechanism for transnational society's self-organization. If there is a core idea behind the growth in global dissent, it is that the public interest can never be an effective voice without strong institutions and pluralistic publics. Social

movements have succeeded in bringing new groups and issues into the public sphere. The adversarial conflict which this gives rise to has been essential for the creation of new forms of democracy. Global dissent's strength has been to generalize from individual experience and give expression to unfulfilled demands of society. The global public always had a potential for self-transformation, largely in the space created by the collision between the agenda of the economic elites globally and those of popular publics. These movements of people, ideas and texts give the global public the means to dialogue with itself (Appaurai, 1996; Rosenau, 1997).

The success of free trade and access to new information technologies has built a global public of viewers and the demand for a global market for ideas and news. The global audience watching CNN, TV5, BBC World and Al Jazeera is, quite obviously, divided by language, geography and politics (See Figure 3 Linguistically Segmented Global Publics). Yet the proliferation of all kinds of global reports spreads a way of thinking against global capitalism, with its omnipresent neo-liberal values, and the deal they are getting from it. *The Human Development Report, The Global Competitiveness Report, The Arab Development Report, The Global Information Technology Report, Corporate Governance and Capital Flows in a Global Economy, World Investment Report*, dozens of OECD studies, studies from the World Bank, IMF, UNCTAD, ILO, and Save the Children Fund all address quality of life concerns rather than narrow economic management issues. As Schumpeter predicted sixty years ago, the market destroys other values that are needed for capitalism to thrive. Even a genuinely free market has to fulfill social needs and requires large public expenditure and state intervention to ring-circle markets, reduce the reach of corporations and address pressing environmental and developmental issues. It has to protect society from the market's harshness and crudity. In the last decade of unprecedented wealth creation, markets have surpassed themselves in their pernicious effects and misconceived priorities. In Schumpeter's words, "capitalism creates a critical frame of mind which, after having destroyed the moral authority of so many other institutions turns against its own. The bourgeois fortress thus becomes politically" indifferent to cope with the attacks on non-market institutions. (John Gray and David Willetts, 1997) For precisely the reason he identified fundamentalist liberalism has created new possibilities for more social exclusion and inclusion simultaneously.

Figure 3: Linguistically Segmented Global Publics



Constituting the Global Public

The movement of people has refashioned many societies towards diversity and multiculturalism. Tourism and travel is a 50 billion dollar annual industry worldwide. Unlike earlier periods of mass migration, today many immigrants from South Asia and India are highly-skilled middle professionals such as computer programmers, doctors, nurses, engineers and individuals with post-graduate degrees. They have a strong sense of ethnic identity, they are well-educated and possess many skills which allow them to adapt to their new country and establish themselves quickly in the new information economy. These diasporic communities had displayed a readiness to think in fresh and innovative ways about a different kind of political world.

At the other end of the scale are hundreds of thousands of unskilled workers looking for new employment in the global North. It is estimated that there are four million undocumented Mexicans working in the US; Canada has as many as 200,000 workers without status; and in the

EU millions of workers without papers arrive from Eastern Europe, the Balkans, North Africa and Turkey. These communities challenge existing authority structures and constitute a growing public for international news broadcasts and multiculturalism (Kotkin, 1993).

As many as 40 million students pursue their studies in foreign countries annually. Most will return home after graduating to form the backbone of a more cosmopolitan generation with new ideas about the information age and development. Thirty-five million people are stateless or are political refugees (World Refugee Survey 2003). As avid consumers of mass culture, hundreds of millions watch politics, and sports events. CNN claims that it has a combined audience of over 1 billion although there is no way to verify this guesstimate. Just as importantly, the growth of ethnic newspapers, books and other kinds of printed matter represent conduits that no longer operate solely in the interests of commercial efficiency. Appadurai is right in stating that the world's structures, organizations and social forms are malformed to address the 'floating populations and mobile technologies' of transnational politics within existing national or international sovereign frameworks (Appadurai, 2001:5).

Still the sense of shrinking the globe and connecting everyone, as though McLuhan's global village is an in-your-face reality, remains a modern fiction because so much of the global South does not have access to clean water let alone a computer (www.itu.int/wsis). Local voices and views are not presented given that nearly 70 percent of the world's web sites are still in English (*Financial Times*, December 11, 2003). It is estimated that as many as 500 million people own or have access to a computer and the internet but the internet is still not worldwide.

In the next decade it is expected that the spread of the internet to larger countries in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe will double again. Forty billion emails are sent and received daily. Hundreds of millions of visitors cross borders each year. Hundreds of millions use cell phones to connect within and across borders. Thousands of activists attend conference, seminars, and workshops in person and on-line. These kinds of information flows, organized to enhance a free trade regime, have also created the critical frame of mind which finds that trade is incompatible with the institutions and values needed by civil society. These counter-publics have proven

remarkably successful in finding a point of commonality to unite the many different sides of the anti-globalization movement. (Angus, 2001)

The word globalization is identified in the popular mind with self-interest rather than the protection and advancement of the common good. The case among educated elites is that they feel free to thumb their noses at their governments and the putative institutions of global government with the IMF and the WTO at the top of their list. As evidenced by the Pew Global Survey of International Opinion the recent growth spurt in the size of the middle class in India, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa has had a marked effect on public opinion. Many in its ranks now reject the view that free trade is to their advantage (Pew, 2003).

There are powerful reasons for being disillusioned with the deformed ideals of global neo-liberalism. First it turns out that the nation-state is a much hardier and more resilient creature than expected (Cox, 2003). The venerable state and its institutions have not gone the way of the plough-horse. Sovereignty is more porous but government spending has risen in many OECD countries for health care, education, pensions and social protection. Secondly there is little evidence, in many jurisdictions, that the welfare state has been as radically dismantled as it was in the US. In the EU alone, three-quarters of its budget is directed towards re-distributive ends. And in Canada, despite deep fiscal cutbacks in the mid-1990s, the social policy regime remains, by a long stretch, more comprehensive, universal and redistributive than its US. Three of Canada's top social policy analysts conclude that "the distribution of disposable income was more equal in 1997 than in 1974". (Hoberg et.al., 2003:269)

It is worth recalling the results of the new International Competitive Index for 2002. The top rankings were held by former social democratic countries led by Norway, Finland, Sweden and Denmark, all high tax, high wage and highly open economies with extensive social policies and redistributive norms. Canada and the US rank 16th and 17th respectively. The index is an important reminder that since the US asset bubble burst in the late 90s, the Washington Consensus is no longer the high and mighty ideological standard it once was. It appears that it is

not only social movements but many states that are in open rebellion against the economic strictures of globalization.

The Psychological Tipping Point

It is unlikely that we have reached the tipping point or anything approaching it. But at the level of psychology the presence of so many multiple identities and loyalties operating at once creates formative connectors. They represent an important structural re-connect post-Cancun and have tipped the balance of power towards identification with both virtual and real communities and networks. 'Hactivism', a term coined by Rob Deibert, captures the way new information technologies have created a unique political form of activism that is anti-authoritarian, anti-corporate, and contests the intellectual property rights as defined by the WTO and US State Department interests (Deibert, 2003). Networks spanning continents have created broad-based coalitions of civil society actors that are now effectively transnational and global in a way they were not a decade ago. They are demanding the expansion of the public sphere for debate and action and they want to make the issue of globalization and democracy front and centre of public discussion.

These kinds of informational news flows have a unique ability to establish people in relationships with other flows. They are never value-free or aimless and in the minds of the global public they involve a lot of borrowing and mixing of cultures and identity. Particularly for those who migrate, the disconnect in the journey to a new society and culture is huge. It involves displacement, resettlement and a new citizenship with inclusion or exclusion the end of the journey (Papastergiadis, 2000). Migration is never a singular experience for society; it is more often like a tidal wave where displacement and a complex cultural exchange operate together. Much has been written about the hybridity of cultural flows that the physical presence of strangers coming to a new country triggers.

But what is more significant today is that this cultural mixing and churning eventually occurs without the movement of people. Face to face contact is not required; proximity is no longer essential. This is precisely the way our national identities were transformed by print capitalism, which replaced face-to-face contact with the idea of the ‘imagined’ national communities (Anderson, 1995). In this computer age, the bumping and jostling has created lots of new circuitry within countries but, equally importantly, what Keane and others call transnational civil society – society beyond borders (Keane, 2003). The term includes both economic and cultural activities as well as political engagements that are organized by individuals and groups voluntarily outside of the direct control of the state (Held, 1996, p.57). As much as these new relationships are rooted in active localisms, there is also something quite distinct and innovative in the way these processes occur.

So far the global public has seen its support grow and its influence expand. Without question we have not yet properly examined how this constant inter-individual communication in real time has very big consequences for the global public itself and states everywhere. Augé calls this phenomenon the paradox of instantaneity that puts “every person into relation with the entire world” (1999:95). It is this pivotal idea of “being in relationship with” the larger structures of the global social order that is one of the essential ingredients of collective identification and has contributed to the growth of global dissent and its particular dynamics.

The Novelty of Political Dissent

Today, the emergent counter-publics, much in evidence at Cancun and other forums, no longer have quite the same knee-jerk reactive response to the unequal conditions of power imposed by economic neo-liberalism. It is now almost conventional wisdom that free markets are pernicious and destructive to other important values. Emergent publics have learned to make effective use of their right to communicate and associate in ways no longer premised on exclusive membership in one national community. Stuart Hall's distinction between different strategies of

action is relevant here: the active public can submit to the new power structures; take an oppositional stance; or creatively innovate. (Hall, 1996)

Two decades ago global public dissent was in its infancy and at the margins of global governance. Today, the global public's loyalties are divided between being the 'nixing' and 'fixing' camps. These counter-publics function as a kind of 'democratic dam' (Hall quoted in Habermas, p.444) against the encroachment of the private use of public interest. While transnational dissent may never get its hands on the levers of power, the global activist public has been forced to make alliances and build powerful temporary coalitions along the way. Global dissent is anchored in a deep critique of the way social power is exercised, distributed and acquired (Scholte, 2003). The election of Lula (Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva) to the presidency in Brazil and of Nestor Kirchner in Argentina has created a world social forum of leaders who speak out against, what Friedman has depicted as the golden straight-jacket of neo-liberalism. (Friedman, 2000)

The issue that we need to think about a great deal is how and why the global information age has transformed once docile consumers of news and information into an agitated, highly opinionated citizenry. There is an appetite for a culture of dissent based on more public participation, more education, more debate and, above all else, more public accountability in international organization (Scholte, 2003). In a world dominated by new information technologies and complex global financial flows, dynamic and complex global cultural movements of people, texts and ideas exhibit an impressive array of agenda-setting powers. What kind of future lies in store for the global dissent movement?

People Power and Global Dissent

Mass mobilization and the influence of the global public is stronger than it was a decade ago because the interstate system has been transformed by, what Rosenau correctly termed, the multiple and diverse sources of "people power" (Rosenau, 1992: 257). At the same time,

governments are less competent to address the major issues facing their societies. Traditional exercise of authority is being contested up and down the line, and in this bifurcated global system, transnational organization has lost the authority and legitimacy it once enjoyed.

We are in an age of the ‘smart citizen’ where the location and exercise of authority is being changed by the way policies and activism is understood. The global public feels itself empowered to “interfere” in the way policies are framed and implemented. Still, many governments are clinging to the remnants of the Washington Consensus even though these discredited policies are a key factor contributing to the growth of global dissent.⁷ It has not escaped the attention of the global public that one of the most sacred pillars of global supply-side economics was that countries cannot run deficits. EU countries were to face stiff fines and sanctions from financial markets if they did.

In a way that was unimaginable a scarce five years ago both France and Germany are in violation of the EU Stability Pact and if the EU was stricter in the way it keeps its accounts, it would have to include Portugal and Greece in the default column as well. In November 2003, the EU voted against sanctions and did not enforce disciplinary action on Berlin and Paris for their failure to conform to the Eurozone’s fiscal framework. (*Financial Times, December 15, 2003*. Instead it accepted promises from Paris and Bonn to voluntarily do better. ‘More flexibility’ are the code words for moving away from the strict letter of the old consensus which interdicted members from running a deficit of more than 3 percent of GDP particularly at times of high unemployment and low growth. In fact it now appears that France will not meet European’s Union’s stability pact through to 2007. If this happens, France will have broken EU rules for six successive years running, but with the need to spend more on health care and employment benefits there is little chance that it will comply with the pact. (*Financial Times, January 27, 2004*).

In the US, Bush has abandoned, for the foreseeable future, the principle of a zero deficit target. The massive \$300 billion defence budget and implementation of deep tax cuts have buried key elements of the Washington Consensus in a way the anti-globalization movement could never

have predicted. The US deficit is at 4.2 percent of GDP for 2004 and well on its way to being closer to 5% by 2006-7. Plans to cut taxes, to spend more on health care reform and greater defence spending will make it next to impossible for Bush to cut the budget deficit. (*Financial Times*, January 28, 2004)

It is evident that many academics mistakenly treated the zero-deficit/zero-inflation targets as holy scripture; but the Washington Consensus was never the ten commandments of public policy (Naim, 2002; Underhill, 2001).⁸ In many jurisdictions, state sovereignty visibly declined and governments had little appetite or interest in promoting social justice (Arthurs, 2001). But in practice, the one-world template was applied in dramatically different ways across national jurisdictions, by the local elites in their own self interest, as such it is hard to discern any singularity of application or outcome from this highly generalized ideology.

Take the examples of Germany, France, Italy and the Scandinavian group of countries. Against all predictions to the contrary, these once social democratic countries remained high spenders on public goods, high tax regimes and high wage economies when compared to the US and Britain. Even Canada and the US did not interpret the Washington Consensus principles with one mind. While the Bank of Canada set an inflation target of zero in the early 90s, the US Federal Reserve set its at three percent. Canada had twice the level of unemployment as the US rate which was under 4 percent (Boyer and Drache, 1996).

Some countries did much better rejecting the Washington Consensus rules. Both India and China ran deficits, used subsidies and tariffs to strengthen their export performance, gradually liberalized their highly regulated economies, battled inflation as well as increased exports. Their non-Washington Consensus mix of policies achieved impressive growth rates! These once mighty 'silver bullets' have proven to be duds. Countries have found they need better ammo and a much larger public arsenal to be effective players in the global economy.

There are ways to acquire this leverage and for some countries going outside the rules-bound WTO legal culture is the most effective measure. In the critical area of public health, the price of medicine has to fall for cancer, heart and diabetes treatment in the global South but with trade talks stalled indefinitely the multinational pharmaceutical giants are not going lower drug prices voluntarily. (*Financial Times*, December 11, 2003) Still South Africa has just concluded a licensing agreement with multi-national drug companies that grants voluntary licences to local generic drug manufacturers. This is a big break through and will lead other countries to negotiate similar arrangements for cheap Aids drugs. Similarly, Brazil is not waiting till an agreement is reached on new investment rules. Instead it is fast tracking legislation to develop private public partnerships to rebuild its run down infrastructure including roads, railways and ports. It is using the same kind of legislation modelled after Germany's and Portugal's experience in using private funds to finance large scale public projects. (*Financial Times*, January 23, 2004)

Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and a score of other countries want to stabilize their economies and protect them from external shocks triggered by run-away-inflation. For the newly elected governments in Argentina and Brazil, job-creation and poverty eradication remain the top priorities. (*Financial Times* December 11, 2003).⁹ Fiscal discipline is an important part of any recovery but it is inadequate as a single template for public policy. Argentina is determined to write off as much as 75 percent of its debt. The Argentina Bondholders' Committee, a New York based group representing about \$7 billion in defaulted loans, has recently proposed a 35 percent write-off. In a recent speech Kirchner pledged "to wage battle against private creditors." (*Financial Times*, January 24, 2004) In his opening remarks to the Summit of the Americas in Monterrey Mexico Paul Martin, Canada's new Prime Minister, summed up 'the new normal' in these words: "Fiscal discipline is important but has to be balanced by social policy."(DFAIT,

⁸ Robert Bartley, long-time editor of the *Wall Street Journal* and champion of supply-side economics, coined the phrase "free men; free markets" but Thatcher's formulation, 'there is no alternative' (TINA) remains the signature words of free market economics.

⁹ Brazil's Lula and Argentina's Kirchner belong to a generation in South America which was persecuted by military authorities; they strongly oppose the use of force. Since the collapse of the Argentinean economy in December 2001, Kirchner's government has been giving 2 million households relief in order to survive. Cutting safety nets, a singular priority of the Washington Consensus, is not part of their current agenda but tough austerity measures remain in place.

January 13, 2004) A strategy of salvage and retrieval to the ruinous liberal political and economic models that have dominated public policy for the last two decades requires a much broader and fuller response to eradicate poverty, alleviate hunger and build sustainable development.¹⁰ The question is, does the global dissent movement have the intellectual resources and political will to cope with the dilemmas created by the wreckage of neo-liberal ideology?

A Turning Point? A World Polity Without Elections

Because it is not a mass political party, the policies, programs and practices of the global public cannot be standardized, packaged, or sold to an eager or sceptical electorate. A global public sphere that is only for the privileged and the powerful and excludes the critical publics is always highly vulnerable to challenges from below. The potential to extend democracy through reform and debate has gained a global political constituency. In a global world of networks and information, the supreme irony is that no one gets to vote for or against more global free trade or for getting the Doha world trade round on track. It is significant that global governance issues never achieve finality, because without finality global dissent is able to occupy a unique, highly fluid space in the political annals of modern theory.

Without a mainstream champion, the anti-globalization movement has had to look inward rather than outward for staying power and influence. This is why Appadurai's idea that disjunctive flows "generate acute problems of well-being and encourages an emancipatory politics of globalization" is so powerful (Appadurai, 2001: 6). People are being forced to resist state violence and seek social redress where ever they find themselves. Dedicated information flows and the movement of peoples create new expectations and vistas that are, by definition, increasingly transnational. Bypassing unilateral state sovereignty is one of the main drivers reconfiguring state-citizen relations. The smart citizen no longer believes as an article of faith

¹⁰ Meeting between President Jacques Chirac, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President Ricardo Lagos and United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan
Geneva, January 30, 2004, Joint Declaration, Action against hunger and poverty.

that matters internal to their country are solely to be determined by their state. This mind/value shift has destabilized existing political hierarchies and opened a range of emergent possibilities.(Sassen 2002)

Protection of global cultural diversity for people everywhere may well become the next front for the global dissent movement. Cultural policy fits uneasily with the WTO's commodify-all-goods approach in the Doha Round. UNESCO's *Declaration on Cultural Diversity* adopted in November 2001 raises the stakes and gives new energy to the need for a global cultural agenda (UNESCO, 2001). Developing strategies to strengthen cultural policies and create an environment that values diversity has been at the margins of the global dissent publics' agenda. Issues such as media ownership, language rights, access to the internet, import quotas and the need to protect local cultures from predatory trade liberalization and rapid technological changes require governments and civil society to provide new opportunities for promoting cultural diversity in the face of globalization.

UNESCO's action plan requires shrinking the WTO's reach, building digital literacy, promoting linguistic diversity and protecting endogenous cultural practices, texts, ideas and products. Articles 18 and 19 require public authority to develop proactive cultural policies and broaden and deepen the role of civil society as a democratic force. Article 14 calls for governments to protect the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and build "synergy between modern science and local knowledge." Sustaining diversity is one of the building blocks to curb the narrow self-interests now ascendant. Articles 7, 8, 9 of the action plan call on states to assert themselves at the local and global level in the area of cultural policy.

So far there is no single over-riding vision that addresses the collective problem of diversity at the global level. Nonetheless, the global dissent movement has a prominent role in defining public culture and in shaping it in inherently democratic ways. It has created a group identity for citizens and brought many issues into the public sphere. At a more fundamental level the discursive reality of global free trade has hardly begun to confront cultural strategies for economic redevelopment.

In an age of deep global cultural flows, co-ordinated global action is needed to safeguard the free flow of ideas, text and people from the homogenizing effects of globalization.¹¹ The UNESCO instrument on Cultural Diversity is a powerful rival to the goals and objectives of the world trading system. It focuses on the mechanisms for an inclusive public culture and for the safeguarding of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. With so many groups claiming the use of the global public, the very notion of a global public culture appears to be modern and progressive. Effective development of the ideas and institutional framework of public culture requires redirecting global interconnectedness so that it is valued as a public good. Today's smart citizen has many more skills to adapt to the dynamism and dislocation of change.

There are many dangers looming ahead. Fears about immigrants and migration flows are already leading to more clampdowns on would-be workers. In Europe and in Washington new legislation makes crossing borders much tougher for political refugees and the least skilled. (Drache, 2004) Many EU countries are imposing quotas and other restrictions. Even if Western Europeans are more tolerant than Eastern Europeans of immigrants from Africa and Asia, the potential for a political backlash is not to be underestimated. Welfare benefits could be a flashpoint. This has already occurred in the US where Washington has denied immigrants the same benefits as US citizens receive. The European Commission requires that member states cannot discriminate between foreigners and citizens but the EU's equality principle now embedded in its constitution could be in jeopardy from future developments. (*Financial Times*, February 9, 2004)

A much bigger issue is that in an interdependent age the global public is disciplined by states, markets and powerful private corporate interests. The inherent lag time between the emergence of new organizational forms and practices is very large. Personal burnout and the fallout from the long cycle of dissent dampen expectations and demoralizes many. Normative collectivities of diverse public activists are not fully fledged political communities. They quickly self-organize but, also, just as rapidly fade from sight. Non-institutionalized dissent remains vulnerable to US Homeland Security. The Bush Administration will continue to try to discredit its influence and

¹¹ In 1998 Canada's Heritage Minister invited cultural Ministers from around the world to attend an international meeting on cultural policy in Ottawa. The meeting established the International Network on Cultural

authority. But the very aggressive information management strategies employed by global elites have failed to dampen the agenda-setting ability of global dissent. So far global publics have been very successful in positioning themselves in the most highly visible parts of the national and international economy.(World Social Forum, 2004)

The current imbalance between public and private has many parallels with the inter-war system of laissez-faire free trade, the direct antecedent of our modern experiment with free trade. The earlier universal system collapsed in the 30s because it failed to generate a new broad policy framework that weighted public good ahead of private interests. The question is, are we reaching a similar fork-in-the road where the global trading system is again dangerously out of touch with the needs of the globe to protect the social bond and eradicate poverty?

The very idea of having a development round was a major shift in direction for the WTO.¹² Trade insiders had long insisted that the WTO was first and foremost a trade organization and to have a so-called ‘development round’ exploded one of its founding myths that trade was only about market access, a level playing field and international competitiveness (Barfield, 2002). All but the most orthodox of trade-hardliners now acknowledge that, after a decade of detailed and compelling research on poverty eradication by some of the world’s leading economists, the unregulated growth of exports and capital flows had visible and disastrous effects on the environment, the most vulnerable, rural women and the household whether intended or not (Rodrik, 2002; Drache and Froese, 2003).

When Mistrust is Endemic: By Way of a Conclusion

When seen in the larger perspective the failure at Cancun is part a much larger crisis of legitimacy that is currently paralyzing the WTO. End-running the WTO’s legal culture has become more flagrant and frequent. The EU and the US are repeat offenders relying heavily on a

Policy, an influential elite lobby group to support and work in parallel with UNESCO. (INCP, 2004)

range of instruments from tax policy to export credits for their largest and most competitive firms. Boeing and Airbus are two cases in point. Each has received billions in dollars from their respective governments. Bombardier, the Canadian manufacturer of mid-range airplanes and Embraer, its Brazilian counterpart, have also received billions in subsidies from their respective government (Robarts Centre, 2001). The US auto industry has received over \$5 billion in state aids of all kinds to attract new investment from Japanese and German auto giants as well as the US Big Three Auto Industry.

It is straining credulity to believe that countries, no less than industries, can become global competitors without massive public support for development, research, higher labour standards, skills-training and cheap credit to finance export sales. India, China, Brazil and Mexico now understand in a way they previously had not that global competition requires public authority to play a large, on-going, and critical role in any eventual success story.

To sum up. The argument presented is that mistrust of the WTO's rules is widespread and endemic; no one should expect any quick reform of its legal culture and practices. Regional trade agreements are stalled as the global South is not prepared to give everything for market access for its merchandise. No northern government has shown a willingness to compromise and reduce tariffs on farm products. (*Financial Times*, February 10, 2004) Politics has become a contest over credibility and credulity, and the basic condition of world wide interdependence has opened up a large and highly influential role for global dissent as states everywhere face tough competition from their global publics. The 'democratic dam' is holding, at least for the present, and global dissent is in overdrive. The re-emergence of counterpublics as a third force globally needs to be further studied, monitored and analyzed.

The primary conclusion of this paper is that the lack of accountability and transparency in global governance now feeds a cycle of dissent. Knowledge and knowledge-based communities empower these diverse counterpublics as advocacy networks and new information technologies

¹² The failure of the UN-sponsored Development Decade, in the early 60s, to eradicate global poverty is an earlier antecedent. See Sneyd, (2003).

become key instruments in organizing across national boundaries. In this context when we speak of the public as a noun with a capital 'P' it means those actions, policies and beliefs that are "open and available to, used or shared by all members of the community" for the promotion of the general welfare." The defining quality of counterpublics is that they cheer and fight for the integrity of their community. Counterpublics give a lot of themselves because they have to establish their credentials as a significant force in domestic and global politics.

We are still in the early stages of the global dissent movement, and the peak of the cycle is not yet in sight. The tough but essential questions that demand more convincing answers are: How can the forces of globalization be harnessed for public good? What is the vision behind global dissent? What is being asked for instead? In the end the political economy of dissent cannot escape the core issues: agency, political will and capacity. Normative questions require normative solutions; strong and vigilant publics are demanding comprehensive action to eradicate inequality and protect social and cultural difference. Compared to a decade ago, the previous psychic dichotomies that, once pitted the local against the global, are less relevant than ever. Tant mieux.

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