

**COLLECTIVE POLITICAL AGENCY IN THE XXIST
CENTURY: CIVIL SOCIETY IN AN AGE OF
GLOBALIZATION**

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CSGR Working Paper Series No 187/06

January 2006

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Abstract:

It is possible to note, since the 70s, an intensification of the globalization processes of the social relations, intensification that has direct implications in the studies of the contemporary world politics. One important aspect in which such implications express themselves regards the emergence of new actors in the world politics that organize themselves no more in national terms only, but paying attention in the local, national, regional and global dynamics – in other words, seeing the global political economy as a whole. In some sense, it is possible to note that dominant and the dominated social groups are being influenced and are influencing such globalization processes – in other words, it would be possible to note, nowadays, the rising of a transnational fraction of the capitalist class and the rising of a globalized resistance in the ambit of a civil society influenced by the globalization processes. Therefore, the objective of the present proposal is to analyze this process of transformation of the social forces in an age of intensification of the globalization processes of the social relations; in other words, to analyze the transformation of the civil society in an age of globalization that are presenting new dilemmas and possibilities to the collective political agency in the XXI century.

Keywords:

Globalization, Gramsci, Hegemony, Civil Society, Alterglobalist Movement.

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Collective political agency in the XXIst century: Civil society in an age of globalization¹

“However, hegemony is never complete”
Robert W. Cox

Introduction

Approaches which stress the existence of a “global civil society” have neglected, among other things, the importance of local social dynamics in the configuration of social relations, especially in what regards hegemonic supremacy and the growing resistance to it (cf. Cohen, 2003; Falk, 1995, 2001, 2004a, 2004b; Ghils, 1992; Kaldor, 2003; Keane, 2003; Kenny, 2003; Lipschutz, 1992, forthcoming; Peterson, 1992; Shaw, 1992, 1994a, 1994b and 2003; Vieira, 2001). Conversely, approaches which stress the importance of local politics go to the other extreme, failing to capture the emergence of globality as something new, a truly historical rupture (cf. Colás, 2002). Therefore, as noted by Cohen,

“what is missing is a systematic and careful reflection about the ways in which globalization has transformed the fundamental parameters of civil society and how this change affects the potential impact of civil society in national, regional and transnational structures. Without a meticulous reflection, we lack the tools to perceive what is new and what is possible, and we are at the risk of overloading the concept of civil society with regulatory and democratizing functions that it probably can not fulfill” (2003:422).²

In light of the inherent limitations evident in current approaches to the study of “global/international civil society”, an alternative critical research program should take into account the consequences of the intensification of globalization processes, conceived as transplanetarization and supraterritoriality (Scholte, 2000 and 2002b), and take seriously Gramscian and Neo-Gramscian contributions to this issue. Such an approach would us understand contemporary transformations and their consequences for resistance movements. Moreover, this paper proposes to conceptualize and study civil society as an arena of struggle; between the dominant and the dominated. Such an understanding of civil society helps to better understand the complexity of such a process of struggle, drawing attention to its conflictive character and helping to capture a ‘position war’ which is engaged in the construction of a counter-hegemonic global historical bloc.

In this context, the aim of this article is to introduce some ideas for a Neo-Gramscian perspective of civil society in an age of globalization which takes into account the relevance of

¹ This article has benefited from the insightful comments of João Pontes Nogueira, José María Gómez, Carlos Nelson Coutinho, Dawisson Lopes, Ana Cristina Alves, Lucas Grassi, and Geraldo Zahran Filho.

² Author’s own translation from Portuguese.

local, national, regional, and global dynamics in the construction and maintenance of hegemony and of resistance to this hegemony. Once civil society is seen as an arena of struggle, as a space where the struggle over hegemony between social forces occurs, both sides of the struggle can be analyzed for “*both elites and social movements shape the historical dialectic*” (Gill, 2003:159). Hence, the first section of this paper aims to discuss the dominant social forces and their influence as well as the impact of globalization processes on the formation and organization of such dominant social forces.

The second section is concerned with the counterpart of such a global organization of the dominant social forces, namely, the emerging globalization of resistance – a resistance that is increasingly organizing itself in local and global terms, taking into account that, as the space of struggle is being transformed, new opportunities for the organization of resistance are emerging. Finally, some conclusions will be presented regarding the dilemmas and opportunities facing the alter-globalist movement today.

The dominant social forces and globalization: The formation of a transnational fraction of the capitalist class

Several contemporary authors deal with the emergence of a transnational fraction of the capitalist class or a transnational capitalist class – a social group that is less and less bound to specific states (cf. Cox, 1986 and 1987; Gill, 1990, 2001 and 2003; Robinson, 2004a and 2004b; Sklair, 1999 and 2000; Strange, 1996; van Apeldoorn, 2000 and 2001; van der Pijl, 1984, 1993, 1995 and 1997). It must be stressed that the formation of a class is a historical process and refers to changes which occur through time in a society’s class structure – including the rise and the disappearance of class groups. Therefore, the premise behind this point is that it is possible to conceive of the existence of a new class fraction (i.e. the formation of a transnational fraction of the capitalist class).

As noted by Cox, an analysis about the class formation phenomenon ought to start in the primacy of the social relations of production in the constitution process of antagonist classes and the fact that class fractions – for instance, the transnational fraction of the capitalist class – derive from the class struggles which arise out of such social relations (Cox, 1986:234).³ Hence, in order to understand the class structure of a given society in a given historical moment, it is necessary to begin with an analysis of the economy and the prevailing social relations of production. It thus possible to affirm that “(...) *the globalization of production and the extensive*

³ “Now, as a consequence of international production, it becomes increasingly pertinent to think in terms of a global class structure alongside or superimposed upon national class structures” (Cox, 1986:234).

and intensive enlargement of capitalism in recent decades constitute the material basis for the process of transnational class formation” (Robinson, 2004b:5).⁴

In other words, the intensification of globalization processes provokes a modification in the central premises of social class analysis - what van der Pijl refers to as the “*Second Glorious Revolution*” (1995:100) - particularly in the notion that classes are, by definition, bound to the state. In accordance with some Marxists⁵, the bourgeoisie, in spite of being a global agent, is organically national, because its development occurs inside the frontiers of the nation state – been, in this sense, a nationally based class. Authors who base their work on imperialist theories (e.g. Hilferding, 1985; Lenin, 1979) developed a Marxist framework which affirms that the capitalist class is organized through the distinct political frontiers of the nation state. Competition between capitalists – a feature inherent to the capitalist system – takes the form of a competition between capitalist groups of different countries and expresses itself in competition, rivalry, and also war (Brewer, 1990).

Contributions from the IR critical analysis camp – as well as in the present century (Callinicos, 2002) – is based on such a framework. However, limitations are evident in such a framework for it fails to recognize the historical specificity of such social phenomenon. What one finds instead is the overstatement of a transhistorical conclusion regarding the dynamics of class formation as a precise historical period of capitalism. Relations between states, economic institutions, and social structures were transformed once the national economy was reorganized and integrated in a new system of global production. Therefore, although nation states still remain a very important aspect of the global political economy, at the same time the globalization of production provides the material basis for a transnationalization of the classes and the emergence of a transnational fraction of the capitalist class. In other words, in a world of national economies the classes develop themselves among the national circuits of accumulation. Once such circuits are transnationalized, the same occurs with the classes.

At this point the following question emerges: in what way have such social forces been generated by globalization processes? The local social structures of accumulation which were developed during the so-called ‘state phase’ of capitalism – in other words, the phase in which classes developed within the bounds of specific nation states – frequently took the form of development, corporatist and welfare state projects, all of them based on a redistributive logic and on the incorporation of labor and other popular classes in national historical blocs (Cox, 1987; Przeworski, 1989 and Rupert, 1995). Once such Keynesian/Fordist modes of accumulation start to waste away impelled by the intensification of globalization processes

⁴ “*These structural transformations thus engender **transnational** social forces, and indeed a process of **transnational class formation** (author’s own emphasis)” (van Apeldoorn, 2001:73). Globalization is also promoting the emergence of these new class fractions while also fomented by such fractions (cf. Rupert, 2000). It is this relevant in this context to stress the dialectical character of globalization.*

⁵ cf. Wood, 2001.

witnessed since the 1970s (Cox, 1997a), new modes of accumulation emerge and the social arrangements which existed previously between dominant and subordinated groups start to succumb.

More specifically, it is possible to note that at the turn of the past century transatlantic finance was the predominant form of capital internationalization. Substantial European investment – especially British investment – flowed to the US, financing its economic development at the end of the XIXth century and at the beginning of the XXth century. By the end of World War I, the Allies had heavily indebted themselves with North American bankers, contributing to rise of *Wall Street* as the new financial center of the world. The class fraction more closely linked to the Atlantic circuit of capital represented and defended a liberal-internationalist concept of control of these financial flows (van der Pijl, 1984; Polanyi, 2000). Such *laissez-faire* fundamentalists were predominantly international bankers, but included also industrial and agricultural interests engaged in transatlantic commerce and industrials financed by such bankers. Nevertheless, as the industry of mass production emerged in the US, North American firms penetrated foreign markets, remodeling the global division of labor and establishing new paths of productivity and competition in the world (Rupert, 1995).

Therefore, the predominance of financial capital and its internationalist-liberal world vision was challenged by a class fraction which represented the industrial capital in large scale - representative of the Fordist mode of accumulation – and its concept of productive capital. This concept presented a critical tendency regarding volatile and “non productive” financial capital and its kingdom in deregulated markets, a critique that grew strong in the face of the financial collapse and global crisis in the interwar period (Polanyi, 2000). While fascism and the war covered the European continent, a new dominant class fraction was emerging in the US, a class fraction that formed the basis for a hegemonic vision of a transnational capitalist order. Such vision is:

“the synthesis between the original laissez-faire liberalism of the liberal-internationalist fraction (...) and the state intervention elicited by the requirements of large-scale industry and organized labor, which in the period between the wars accompanied various forms of class conciliation generally referred to as corporatism” (van der Pijl, 1984:xiv-xv).

It was this ‘proto-hegemonic’ world vision, allied with the anti-communism in the post-World War II, which made feasible the intricate alliance between Keynesian planners (compromised with the national economic policies directed to economic growth) and liberal economists (committed to the financial stability and the multilateral commerce). In short, the reconstruction of the liberal capitalist economy after the end of the World War II was shaped by the interaction of these visions.

This historical bloc promoted the growth and expansion of international commerce and investment in this period especially inside and among the regions of the so-called ‘triad’. Successive rounds of the GATT multilateral regime reduced tariff barriers in a progressive way⁶. However, globalization was not limited to commerce. Within the financial ambit, the excess of liquidity brought about constant deficits in the USA balance of payments, the collapse of the Bretton Woods monetary regime and the capital control associated, while the recycling of the petrodollars and the emergence of offshore markets resulted in a significant volume of international commerce and speculative investment. Such changes started to inhibit the development of government reserves and could, quickly, take the financial markets of particular nations to bankruptcy (Held, *et. al.*, 1999; Chesnais, 1996 and 1998). Such financial globalization has been followed by the re-emergence of *laissez-faire* fundamentalism since the 1970s. Thus, it becomes clear that neoliberal austerity has, in a large way, eclipsed the ideology oriented to growth which had previously served to support the post-World War II world economy.

In spite of the change from the concept of ‘productive capital’ to *laissez-faire* fundamentalism characteristic of the financial capital, the historical bloc that is behind contemporary transnational liberalism shows a fundamental continuity with the political project of the hegemonic post-World War II bloc. Despite the fact that “corporative liberalism” (van der Pijl, 1984) oriented to growth and neo-liberalism can diverge in terms of international openness, both partake in the view of a more opened world economy based on private property and generalized exchange of commodities. Such project of the liberal capitalist globalization is justified, ideologically, by the orthodox theory of free trade. This doctrine is still an integral part of the central ideology of those international institutions that work to sustain the post-World War II world order, such as the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF.

In short, it is possible to argue that globalization has several implications. In the past, the state was the predominant *locus* of struggles between social classes and groups, being also a fundamental actor in the mediation of class relations and a fundamental political determinant in class formation processes. The dominant classes developed under state protection and developed their interests in opposition to the interests of rival national capital. Hence, nation states reflected the classes and groups coalitions which were incorporated in the national historical blocs. However, as national productive structures became transnationally integrated through globalization processes, social classes – whose organic development occurred through the nation state – experienced a supranational integration with national classes from other states. Therefore, as the local production systems are integrated in globalized circuits of production through transnationalization processes, the global and local accumulation logics tend to

⁶ Cf. Held, *et. al.*, 1999.

converge and the rivalries formerly existing are no longer national ones. In other words, there is not a unique and general interest in the capitalist class (Gill, 2003) for the competition between capitalists still exists but now it occurs between oligopoly clusters in a transnational environment.⁷

This new transnational fraction of the capitalist class includes the owners of the transnational capital or the group owns the means of global production represented principally by transnational corporations and private financial institutions. This class fraction is transnational because (1) it is linked to the global circuits of production, marketing, and finance – detached in this sense from the identities and territories of each particular nation state – and (2) its interests are linked to global accumulation rather than local or national accumulation. It is possible to affirm that the difference between the transnational fraction and local and/or national fractions derives from the fact that the former is involved in the global production and in the management of the globalized circuits of accumulation that give it existence as an objective class and an identity in the global system that is spatially and politically beyond the local politics and territory. Therefore, as agent of the global economy, the transnational fraction of capitalist class has become over the last years the hegemonic fraction of capital on a world scale.⁸ The capitalist class could be seen, therefore, as a dynamic and heterogeneous unit in which there is a dispute over which projects and interests should have primacy in the process of social relations reproduction and, more specially, in the process of capitalist accumulation. In short, there is a struggle over the leadership in the historical bloc – a struggle over hegemony.

As noted above, the historical bloc that emerged in recent years consists of several economic and political forces led by the transnational fraction of the capitalist class whose politics are conditioned by the new global structure of accumulation and production and by the desire of this class to coordinate the local, national, regional and global dimensions of accumulation and legitimacy. In this sense, this new transnational liberal historical bloc (Rupert, 2000; Gill, 2001 and 2003) can also be called *globalist historical bloc* (Robinson, 2004a and 2004b). In its centre is the transnational fraction of the capitalist class, which comprehends the owners and managers of the transnational corporations and the other capitalists that manage transnational capital. This bloc also includes the technicians and bureaucrats that manage

⁷ It is important to differentiate between internationalization and transnationalization. According to Robinson, “*internationalization occurs when national capitals expand their reach beyond their own national borders. Transnationalization is when national capitals fuse with other internationalizing national capitals in a process of cross-border interpenetration that disembeds them from their nations and locate them in new supranational space opening up under the global economy*” (Robinson, 2004b:8-9).

⁸ It is important to note that the concept of fraction here regards segments inside the classes that are determined by their relation with the social production and with the class as a whole. The hegemonic fraction of capital would be, in this sense, the fraction that was able to impose the general direction and the character of the production and the one that conditioned the cultural, political and social character of

international institutions (e.g. WTO, IMF, and World Bank) and the governors, bureaucrats, and technicians from both the North and the South and from other transnational forums. The organic intellectuals that provide ideological legitimacy and technical solutions are also included in such bloc. These include for instance those intellectuals linked to groups such as the Trilateral Commission (Gill, 1990), Bilderberg Conferences (van der Pijl, 1995), World Economic Forum and think-tanks such as the *Mont Pèlerin* Society, Adam Smith Institute, and Brookings American Institute. Under such transnational elite – or “globalizing elites”⁹ (van der Pijl, 1995; Gill, 2003; cf. Sklair, 1999 and 2000) – there is a little stratum formed by medium classes and cosmopolitan professionals that, having little or almost no real power, forms a fragile buffer stratum between the transnational elite and those impoverished and excluded.¹⁰

The globalizing elites – and those who are under their ideological influence – see NAFTA, the WTO, and other multilateral commerce agreements as fundamental to the progressive de-politicization of the global economy, labeling their opponents as self-interested, protectionist, and globally dangerous. Globalizing elites fear the politicization of free trade not only because it could lead to a distributive struggle but also because the philosophy of abstract individualism under this world vision cannot admit another kind of politics different from the struggle between pre-constituted individuals and groups formed the globalizing elites in order to promote their interests. However, this is not the only vision of politics in the debates over globalization. In fact, “*the struggle for hegemony is always unfinished and ongoing*” (Robinson, 2004b:10); so, a deeper understanding of politics – an understanding that sees politics in terms of a social self-construction process – sees the global economy restructure as an opportunity to deepen and amplify the institutions and the democratic practices through which a significant self-determination can be reached.

Such a discussion serves as an example to demonstrate an extremely relevant point in the configuration of the globalist historical bloc: although this bloc has emerged in a triumphal way since the 1970s and consolidated itself in the 1980s, serious crisis has made the reproduction of hegemony more difficult. A historical bloc refers to a historical congruence between material forces, institutions, and ideologies. Broadly speaking, it refers to an alliance between distinct classes (and fractions) among a set of hegemonic ideas that give the strategic direction and coherence necessary to their constituent elements. In this sense, in order to

the capitalist society. For more details, see Robinson, 2004a e 2004b, Overbeek & van der Pijl, 1993 and van Apeldoorn, 2001.

⁹ In accordance with Gill, “*globalizing elites can be defined as a grouping of organic intellectuals and political leaders within what can be called the transnational fraction of the capitalist classes of the world*” (2003:169).

¹⁰ It is possible to distinguish for example between small and medium businesses that are frequently contracted by the great corporations; professionals that work in the import-export sector, in companies that render services of publicity, public relations, informatics, brokerage, accountancy, as well as educational entrepreneurs, architects, urban planners and sport stars that contribute to the image and identity of global corporations (Gill, 2001).

establish a historical bloc in a hegemonic way, it is necessary to overcome the particular interests by a universal ideology as well as the concrete coordination of the interests of subordinated social groups and the dominant group in order to guarantee the realization of at least part of the subordinated social group interests. Nevertheless, the particular and short-term interests of the transnational financial capital frequently undermine the hegemonic project. Moreover, it is possible to identify a crisis of global capitalism since the 1990s, a crisis that is expressed in different dimensions.

It is possible to note a structural crisis of over-accumulation and social polarization. Globalization processes are limiting the capacity of states to cope with the inherent tendency of capitalism towards social polarization. In fact, there is an increase in the absolute number of paupers in the world and in the gap between the rich and the paupers since the 1970s, as expressed in the tables below.

Table 1

Shares of Total World Income, 1965-1990				
Population	Percentage of Total World Income			
	1965	1970	1980	1990
Poorest 20%	2.3	2.2	1.7	1.4
Second poorest 20%	2.9	2.8	2.2	1.8
Third richest 20%	4.2	3.9	3.5	2.1
Second richest 20%	21.2	21.3	18.3	11.3
Richest 20%	69.5	70	75.4	83.4

Source: Robinson, 2004a

Table 2

Shares of Total World Income, 1988 and 1993			
Population	Percentage of Total World Income		
	1988	1993	Difference (1988 minus 1993)
Top 1%	9.3	9.5	0.2
Top 5%	31.2	33.7	2.5
Top 10%	46.9	50.8	3.9
Bottom 10%	0.9	0.8	-0.1
Bottom 20%	2.3	2	-0.3
Bottom 50%	9.6	8.5	-1.1
Bottom 75%	25.9	22.3	-3.6
Bottom 85%	41	37.1	-3.9

Source: Robinson, 2004a

Hence, the system is not able to expand itself in a satisfactory way, once there is a marginalization of a significant portion of humanity and a significant decrease of wages in function of the new global division of labor (Mittelman, 2000), a reduction in consumption and an income polarization that reduces the capacity by the world market to absorb surplus. Such structural problems of global capitalism can be viewed as structural factors underlying the economic crisis that initiated in Mexico in 1994 and intensified with the Asian crisis in 1997-1998, as well as one of the reasons for the low growth of the world economy in the XXIst century. While the world's GDP in 2003 (2.6%) grew more than in 2002 (1.9%), such increase is still inferior to the growth seen in the 1990s (e.g. 1999 – 2.9%). To a certain degree, the reason for such occurrence is the low growth rate of the US economy in the same period. Even though the US economy has demonstrated signs of recuperation (2.9% in 2003 and 2.4% in 2002), it continues to show growth rates which are below those of the 1990s (e.g. in 1999 the rate was 4.1%) (World Bank, 2004).

The system is not able to supply the basic needs of humanity or guarantee the conditions for its minimal social reproduction, what has hampered ongoing consensus among the globalist historical bloc. This issue is in an intrinsic relation to another dimension of the crisis of global capitalism referred to earlier: the crisis of legitimacy and authority. The legitimacy of dominant social groups has been deeply questioned, not only by the excluded sectors of society but also by intellectuals, technocrats, and politicians who until recently were active members of the globalizing elites – most notably, Kofi Annan, Jagdish Bhagwati, Bill Clinton, Paul Krugman, Jeffrey Sachs, George Soros, and Joseph Stiglitz.

Such crisis clarifies why there is a constant and high recurrence of resistance and the use of force nowadays.¹¹ As underlined by Gramsci, the supremacy of a social group occurs in two ways: through hegemony or coercion. Therefore, “*the crisis consists in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms*” (Gramsci, 2002b:184). If on the one hand the dominant group is trying to revert such crisis¹², on the other hand it is at this juncture that the importance of the resistance

¹¹ The question of the use of the force draws attention to an important aspect of civil society. For details see Ramos, 2005; Rupert, forthcoming; and Robinson, 2004a and 2001.

¹² For instance, the embedded neo-liberalism expressed in the Maastricht Treaty. Such “embedded neo-liberalism” is neo-liberal because it champions the primacy of market global forces and the free movement of transnational capital, distancing itself from the national institutions established in the post-World War I. It is embedded because it recognizes the limits of *laissez-faire* and accepts that some compromises have to occur. Therefore, at least a “limited embedded” is preserved. According to van Apeldoorn, such embedded neo-liberalism can be interpreted as a potentially hegemonic project unifying the transnational capitalist class in Europe and expressing its collective interest at the same time that it appeals to a bigger set of interests and identities. For more details see van Apeldoorn, 2000 and 2001. For more details about the seminal concept of embedded liberalism see Ruggie, 1983.

movements emerges, movements which contribute to the contestation of contemporary neoliberal globalization.

The globalization of resistance

As noted previously, the intensification of globalization processes has provoked a set of transformations and modifications in the central premises of social class analysis, serving as a material basis to the formation of a new transnational fraction of the capitalist class. However, such a process is not restricted only to the dominant class. In fact, globalization – as a new configuration of the spatial geography (Scholte, 2000; 2002) – influences and is influenced by the dominant and the dominated, the included and the excluded. Some authors (e.g. Gilpin, 2003:396) do not appear to comprehend the relation between globalization and resistance. This represents a critical issue which merits close attention.

Some of the most important changes in recent years include the detrimental consequences – social, economic, ecological, and political – emerging from approximately two decades of neo-liberal globalization as promoted by states that seek to regulate de-regulation (Scholte, 2002a), international institutions with their structural adjustment programs, the WTO with its promotion of free trade, and private agents (e.g. transnational corporations, rating agencies, international financial investors and speculators). Such consequences relate to one of the most notable aspects of the predominant form of globalization, namely, the propensity to wealth concentration. The wealth of the world's richest 200 billionaires reached US\$ 1.1 trillion in 1999 and, in the same year, the income of people living in the least developed countries was US\$ 146 billion. In addition, the annual income of 358 billionaires is equivalent to that of the poorest 45% of the world's population (Keane, 2003b:90).

This extremely unequal configuration of the distribution of world income derives from the absence of redistributive mechanisms, partly intrinsic to neo-liberal globalization. Such absence is problematic because it contributes to establishing, aggravating, and perpetuating the contemporary crisis of this global mode of accumulation. In other words, both the dissatisfaction of the excluded by such mode of accumulation and consequent lack of legitimacy by the global historical bloc have profound roots in such inequalities. In fact,

“as experienced from below, the dominant form of globalization means a historical transformation: in the economy, of livelihoods and modes of existence; in politics, a loss in the degree of control exercised locally – for some, however little to begin with – such that the locus of power gradually shifts in varying proportions above and below the territorial state; and in culture, a devaluation of a collectivity's achievements or perceptions to them. This structure, in turn, may engender either accommodation or resistance” (Mittelman, 2000:6).

It is possible to perceive that such globalization processes have a profound influence in daily life. The globalization of capital and economic decisions has a profound impact on a set of aspects of human life. In spite of the significance of these impacts on the economic sphere, it is necessary to highlight the consequences of the penetration of the market logic in a set of realms such as education, health, and culture. The penetration of the market logic in such realms draws attention to how vulnerable such realms are, especially if we consider that social rights pertaining to these spheres were conquered progressively through social struggles and mobilization.

Such historical conquests have nowadays been re-conquered by capital. The state has increasingly tended to privilege capital interests, principally the interests of global financial capital. In this context, the rise of resistance on a global scale derives not only from the fact that social movements present, since their genesis, an international character (cf. Colás, 2002), but also from the increase in the number of the collective victims of the neo-liberal globalization. Such victims are not restricted to the people directly linked to the capital-labor relation. Indirect relations link myriads of individuals that, despite not be conscious of the relations that unite them to the global economic system, also suffer the ominous effects of this global economic system.

In sum, the “globalization of resistance” can be seen as arising out of a dialectical relation between the consequences of this process of transplanetarization of the capitalist relations of production – and the increasing lack of legitimacy of the hegemonic neo-liberal globalization associated to it – and the action of social forces rival to those capitalist forces (Gills, 2000)¹³. Hence, if on the one hand the lack of contestation openly declared is not synonymous with acquiescence (cf. Scott *apud* Mittelman, 2000:172)¹⁴, on the other hand the politics of resistance to neo-liberal globalization have assumed forms which are more and more organized. For instance, such organized forms include: the feminization of poverty which has contributed to the radicalization of feminist movements; the destruction and privatization of the environment has promoted the creation and radicalization of movements in defense of the environment; cultural destruction has stimulated defensive reactions (Houtart, 2001a). Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the immediate origin of the alterglobalist movement dates back to the second half of the 1990, during which time an intensification without precedents of

¹³ In some sense, as affirmed by some NeoGramscians (Cox, 1995 and Mittelman, 2000), it is possible to perceive in this process something similar to the “double movement” previously theorized by Karl Polanyi – a movement in defense of the self-regulation of the markets followed by a counter-movement contrary to such self-regulation,“(…) a *selfpreservative action of the community* (...)” (Polanyi, 2000:237).

¹⁴ On this point see also Cox, 1999; van Beek, 2000; Stavenhagen, 1997; Cheru, 1997a, 1997b, and 1997c.

the protests and acts of social resistance emerged in distinct parts of the world against neo-liberal economic politics.

It is important here to see such increasing globalization of resistance from an historical perspective in order to identify the process of constitution not of the so-called “antiglobalization movement” but in fact of the “movement of movements”, the alterglobalist social movement, “(...) *sui generis agent of transnational transformation* (...)” (Gómez, 2004b:174).¹⁵

It is possible to establish as the initial inflexion point of the alterglobalist movement the First Intercontinental Encounter for the Humanity and Against Neo-liberalism (July-August 1996 Chiapas, Mexico), convened by Zapatist Army of National Liberty (EZLN). After this encounter in early 1997 notices about the Multilateral Agreement of Investments (MAI) were widely diffused through the North-American organization *Global Trade Watch*. Up to that point, MAI was secretly negotiated in the ambit of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Such agreement was concerned with the protection of foreign investments to the detriment of the regulatory capacity of the state.¹⁶ The social mobilization against it was the first locus of global articulation – in representation it was fundamentally European and North-American (Seoane & Taddei, 2004) – between NGOs, intellectuals, and activists from diverse social movements who made advances in furthering their causes. Even if this represented a momentary success, many of the issues raised in the context of MAI later came to be discussed in the WTO and regional integration fora such as NAFTA.

Since then, organizations notably from the environmentalist and civil rights camp and movements against transnational corporations and financial and commercial de-regulation have been active. The protests against NAFTA (Rupert, 1997 and 2000) and the sweatshops deserve to be singled out. In this case, it was not only general complaints against capital and the present mode of global accumulation, but also the organization of campaigns that aimed to question the inhuman practices of production and exploitation adopted by certain companies (e.g. Nike and Monsanto) often spurring boycotts against their products (Lipschutz, forthcoming). It is relevant to highlight such events because several associations which were established during this period collaborated in the preparation of the “Battle of Seattle” (Seoane & Taddei, 2004).

Before the Battle of Seattle, on the occasion of the WTO ministerial meeting (Geneva, 1998) and the second annual meeting of G8 (Birmingham, 1998) the First Global Action Day

15 There are various names for this “movement of movements”. In French it is referred to as the “alterglobalist movement” (*mouvement altermondialiste*) and in English global justice movement, anti-capitalist movement, and the movement against corporate globalization. Such movements do not seek the end of globalization but its transformation – in other words, the establishment of another type of globalization, more just, inclusive, and ecologically sustained. This paper adopts the term “alterglobalist movement”.

16 The creation of the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens (ATTAC) was fundamental. It was created with the objective to defend and stimulate democratic control of financial markets and associated institutions. For more details of ATTAC see <http://www.attac.org>. For a NeoGramscian analysis of ATTAC see Birchfield & Freyberg-Inan, 2004.

(an event not restricted to 1998 but organized also in later years) was organized. During the Global Action Day several demonstrations were convened by different groups (e.g. ecologists, women, anarchists, peasants, and unemployed) who converged around issues such as the repudiation of the inequalities promoted by neo-liberal globalization. In 1998, the Intercontinental Caravan brought together more than 400 activists from around the world in order to protest against the G7 annual meeting held in Colonia.

All these transplanetary manifestations and mobilizations served as a kind of prelude to what can be considered the moment of political consolidation and crystallization of the alterglobalist movement: the Battle of Seattle in 1999 (Gómez, 2004a). Students and youth from the US and Europe, ecologists, trade-unionists¹⁷, feminists, farmers, human rights activists, and sexual and racial minorities marched through Seattle in protest against the WTO. There were several manifestations of rebellion and civil disobedience: activists blocked access to the hotels where the official delegations were staying and to the convention center designated for the opening ceremony; approximately 50,000 people marched through Seattle blocking meetings in hotels as well as the WTO opening meeting. In spite of repression by the police, the protests went on in a nearly uninterrupted fashion for three days revealing the divergences which existed in the WTO. Moreover, a group of underdeveloped countries assumed a position contrary to the proposals of the “Millennium Round” which contributed to the rise of commercial divergences between the US and Europe.

It is possible to affirm that “(...) *Seattle was the baptism of fire and the consolidation moment of this vast, diverse and new planetary movement against injustice*” (Seoane & Taddei, 2004:268). Among the reasons for such affirmation, it is possible to single out the following: it was a protest that occurred in the center of the world power, mobilized a high number of participants from different parts of the globe and gained a symbolic and relevant victory. This victory was represented by the suspension of the Millennium Round, with the decisive help of the conflict of interests evident between developed and underdeveloped countries and between the developed countries themselves. However, it should be noted that it is not possible to understand this “Battle” without taking into consideration the previous transplanetary struggles and mobilizations which preceded it. In this context, it is possible to affirm that Seattle:

“(...) was the culmination of the hard process of progressive and precarious convergences between innumerable networks, organizations, movements and mobilizations, alimented by the (...) experiences from the past and new initiatives (...) of political contestation against the neo-liberal global governance (...). Therefore, it is since the crystallizing impulse of Seattle that an accelerated phase of protests, campaigns, and

¹⁷ It is important to bear in mind the involvement of trade-unionists in street manifestations, trade-unionists who did not solely and exclusively defend the interests of their social group. I thank José María Gómez for bringing this point to my attention.

forums has been inaugurated in many cities from all over the world, showing, in a short period of time, the political presence of a social movement in complete expansion” (Gómez, 2004a:324)¹⁸.

The alterglobalist movement has matured and especially since 2000 it has consolidated the coordination between different movements and organizations and has intensified and expanded geographically both its scope and the scope of the struggle. In April 2000, 30,000 activists protested in Washington during the IMF meeting; in June, the mobilizations concentrated in Bologna during the Summit of OECD; in September, approximately 30,000 activists protested during the World Economic Forum Summit in Melbourne. Also, during the Fifth Global Action Day (September 26th) nearly 15,000 activists met in Prague on the occasion of the IMF and World Bank meeting; in December, the movement met in Nice on the occasion of the European Union Summit.

The First World Social Forum (WSF) organized in 2001 in Porto Alegre was the result and expression of the multiple processes mentioned above. In accordance with its “Charter of Principles”¹⁹, the WSF defines itself as a place to meet and exchange experiences, to democratically debate ideas and articulate action proposals by different sectors of civil society united against neo-liberal globalization. Hence, the WSF is not only an annual event, but a permanent and global process seeking alternative forms to construct a new globalization based on the respect of human rights, the environment, social justice, and difference (Gómez, 2004b; Santos, 2003). As noted by Santos, the novelties of the WSF can be expressed in the following three points:

1. A very broad conception of power and oppression. Neo-liberal globalization is seen as promoting a set of forms of oppression that affect women, ethnic minorities, indigenous people, peasants, the unemployed, workers of the informal sector, legal and illegal immigrants, ghetto sub-classes, gays and lesbians, children and young. All these forms of oppression must be resisted in order to make another world really possible. Hence, political priorities come to be seen as situated and conjunctural. The organizational novelty of the WSF is also evident in its rejection of hierarchies and its emphasis on network formation and strengthening;
2. Equivalence between the principles of equality and recognition of difference. Equality, understood as equivalence between equals, frequently tends to exclude what is different. In this sense, emphasis on the necessity of equality without putting aside the question of difference is a novelty that follows, in some sense, the principles defended by the

¹⁸ Author’s own translation from Portuguese.

¹⁹ Cf. <http://www.worldsocialforum.org>

Zapatistas: “*a world where many worlds fit*” and “*we are equals because we are different*” (Ceceña, 2004c:301, 312);

3. Privileging rebellion and nonconformity to the detriment of revolution. There is not a unique theory that is able to strategically guide the movements present in the WSF. Hence, the novelty is the fact that there is, at the same time, an emphasis in the defense and maintenance of diversity, pluralism, experimentalism (in function of the *sui generis* character of the WSF which has no precedents) and radical democracy (Santos, 2003).

The above-mentioned points are important for they express the inclusive character of the WSF, in terms of both its activities and its themes. Therefore, the fact that in an age of hegemonic neo-liberal globalization “there is no alternative”, as noted by Margaret Thatcher, has created a place destined for interaction between the discontents of social forces with the course of history. Such social forces seek not only to contest neo-liberal globalization but also, and fundamentally, exchange struggle experiences, debate ideas, and articulate actions with the intention of developing alternative forms of globalization. This “*signifies the return of hope and possibility of a better society and world*” (Gómez, 2004b:182).

However, in spite of the success and consolidation reached, 2001 presents another inflexion moment to the alterglobalist movement. In function of the vertiginous increase and success and increasing recognition and legitimacy of the WSF by various segments of public opinion from different countries and its contribution to the construction of a “supraterritorial public space” (Gómez, 2004a), it is not surprising that the dominant historical bloc – which had sunk in a period of crisis – reacted so quickly. Therefore, it is possible to identify two types of reaction: first, a passive revolution reaction that seeks to give a human face to globalization (Rupert, 2000); second, a more coercive reaction that criminalizes and denigrates the alterglobalist movement (Porta & Reiter, 2004).

Hence, even though previous manifestations had taken place in Washington, Prague, Nice, Davos, Quebec, and Gotemberg in 2000 and 2001, it is with Genoa that it is possible to perceive the culmination of such a repressive strategy (Hayes & Bunyan, 2004). Also, a strategy of isolation was successfully adopted which consisted in preventing the realization of international meetings in cities that could serve as a stage for alterglobalist protests. Such strategy was used in the WTO meeting in Qatar and in the G8 Summit which took place in a remote location in Canada. Finally, in addition to such complications, it is relevant to consider that there are the 9/11 terrorist attacks which spurred a new phase in world politics, which compelled the alter-globalist movement to confront a number of dilemmas and impasses. Hence, a kind of “Imperial Leviathan” (Gómez, 2002 and 2003) or “Neo-Imperial Moment” (Rupert, forthcoming) appear to have emerged that seek to resolve in a repressive way and with social control its challenges, utilizing the same supraterritorial mechanisms used in the 1990s. In

this sense, the dilemmas and adversities faced by the alterglobalist movement are various. These include problems internal to the movement itself such as the issues of representation and the need to develop and elaborate viable alternatives to neo-liberal globalization, reaching out to the critics of such propositions as well as external constraints, structural or exerted by other political agents such as the globalist historical bloc or the transnationalized terrorist groups.

However, after an initial period of perplexity, the movement recuperated itself and has maintained itself active, organizing other demonstrations such as the protests in Brussels during the meeting of the European Union Summit as well as various demonstrations in defense of peace and against the invasion of Iraq. The organization of two editions of the WSF after the Neo-Imperial reaction is noteworthy for it contributed to ending the fear and inhibition, and recuperated the initiative of debate and fight at a more elevated level of convergence and coordination for future actions (Gómez, 2004a:337). It is also important to note that the IV edition of the WSF occurred in Mumbai (India), revealing the concern by the WSF participants that problems exist which must be confronted and surpassed by the WSF. Such problems include the issue of representation and the need to integrate more sectors and groups from diverse areas of the world, principally Asia and Africa that are not well represented in the WSF (Santos, 2003).

In short, it is possible to establish four inflexion-points in the constitution process of the alterglobalist social movement or the “progressist global resistance”: first, with the Zapatistas that in some sense inaugurated a new “inclusivist” form of protest against neo-liberal globalization (Ceceña, 2004c; Morton, 2002); second, there was the crystallization of the “movement of movements” as seen in Seattle (Rupert, 2000; Gómez, 2004a); third, the realization of the First WSF which can be seen as an “*expression and primordial symbolic referent*” (Gómez, 2004b:173) of the alterglobalist movement; fourth, the phase which began in Genoa and ended with the 9/11 terrorist attacks represents the beginning of the “neo-imperial reaction” of the globalist historical bloc (Gómez, 2002, 2003, 2004a).

Here it is helpful to comment briefly about such “progressist global resistance”. First, the alterglobalist is not a large and unique world movement. In fact, there are many movements (a “movement of movements”) whose activists give attention to many causes – rules for commerce, gendered policies, labor legislation, religious issues, questions related to corporate power, education, postwar reconstruction, and environmental and human rights. The targets of such movements are also distinct and the loyalty spectrum of such movements is wide, including for instance radical ecologists, Christian pacifists, Mohammedan activists, Buddhists and anarchists (Keane, 2003b). Their types of action are also diverse and superimposed including encounters, information and transnational advocacy networks through either direct contact or electronic communication.

The architecture of such movements is complex and marked by a variable geometry. A majority of the participants and supporters dedicate themselves to the movements part time. The full time activists in these movements represent a minority. In addition, these movements do not have a globally recognized leadership or secretary. Consequently, such activists do not have a common locus for collective political action although a degree of unity can be noted during public protests. In view of such a cephalous character, some organizations of the alterglobalist movement “(...) *concentrate on the task of heightening the movement’s self-conscious commitments to networked and coordinated pluralism*” (Keane, 2003b:61)²⁰. Such organizations are specialized in spreading information on a global scale, encouraging other social movements (e.g. Zapatists in Mexico (EZLN); the Brazilian organization of landless peasants (MST); and the Ogoni people in Nigeria) to promote the image not of an isolated movement but of a participant of something bigger, a global resistance to neo-liberal globalization whose deleterious effects re-territorialize in the local specificities. This points to the fact that the resistance is local, regional, national and global. In other words, the social movements must find ways to be flexible – theoretically and practically – as the capitalist class.²¹

Hence, it is clear that to label these movements as anti-globalization is a mistake for such movements are marked by a transboundary mentality and by forms of solidarity and contestation which are not restricted to national state boundaries. In addition, their action is not restricted to the global ambit; in fact, it occurs on many levels, from the micro-local to the macro-global. Therefore, it is not possible to conclude that the supraterritorial manifestations come to acquire a kind of primacy over local manifestations. In fact, what occurs is that while transnational activism intensifies and it increasingly identifies the global as an indispensable space of struggle, the consequences of neo-liberal globalization reverberate at the local, regional, and national levels.²²

However, not all forms of resistance are politically or ideologically similar (Gills, 2000). In fact, it is possible to affirm that the globalization of social relations serves as a material basis to the emergence and formation of a transnational fraction of the capitalist class and of various forms of resistance, be they progressist or reactionary. The kind of resistance we see is one that seeks structural changes and the transformation of neo-liberal globalization. Nevertheless, in contrast to the alter-globalist movement, such movements, groups, intellectuals, and activists are on the right end of the political spectrum and thus aim to reaffirm religious,

²⁰ Examples of such organizations include ATTAC, Peoples’ Global Action (<http://www.agp.org>), Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) (<http://www.asc-hsa.org>), Brazilian Network for the People Integration (REBRIP) (<http://www.rebrip.org.br>), and Via Campesina (<http://www.viacampesina.org>).

²¹ According to Harvey: “*Where is anti-capitalist struggle to be found? The answer is, I think, everywhere*” (2000:31).

²² See for example HSA (<http://www.asc-hsa.org>).

ethnics, racial, and linguistic identities in an exclusionary way, representing the ‘other’ (frequently the immigrant) as a threat to such national identities. Movements based on religion, for example, reacted in a drastic way to the diverse consequences of decades of neo-liberal globalization crediting it with the destruction of community values and the consequent dissolution of the social fabric in society (Mittelman, 2004).

Regarding the rise of Islamic terrorism on a transnational scale, as expressed in the 9/11 events, this represents a new kind of terrorism. Global in nature, it does not depend on any particular state and may ‘disappear’ and rearrange itself – in other words, deterritorialize and reterritorialize – with extreme facility, operating without fixed or vertical structures of command, with access to private resources and to technological, financial, organizational, and mediatic processes which were developed further with the intensification of the globalization process. In other words, it is possible to affirm that, just like in the case of the transnational fraction of the capitalist class and the alterglobalist movement, the material basis for the emergence of transnational terrorism can be found in the intensification of globalization processes.

Such transnational terrorism, also in opposition to the globalist historical bloc (even though in a completely distinct way from the alterglobalist movement), can also be seen as one of the aspects of the globalization of resistance. Nevertheless, as the movements of the extreme right show (e.g. Pat Buchanan in the US, Joerg Haider in Austria, and Jean-Marie le Pen in France) transnational terrorism presents an extreme reactionary aspect. This aspect is in complete opposition to the values of emancipation, liberty, and solidarity that are present in the movements, groups, and organizations who participate in the “movement of movements”. In fact, such reactionary movements, organizations, and groups present characteristics that are clearly xenophobic and defend the adoption of protection policies of the national culture against immigrants and oppose regional integration treaties, arguing that such treaties erode national sovereignty. Hence, in a different way from the alterglobalist movement, those movements, groups, and organizations who participate in reactionary resistance do not seek to promote an alternative form of globalization, but the end of it.

In sum, it is possible to argue that resistance to neo-liberal globalization is much more complex than appears at a first glance. The classification of diverse social movements, groups, and organizations acting in world politics is not easy; in fact, such actors have a set of divisions and particularities and maintain diverse and distinct relations with each other, making it difficult to present a taxonomy of such resistance as a whole (Tarrow, 2002). In this sense, the above-mentioned classification does not seek to exhaust such movements. From a Neo-Gramscian perspective, it tries to demonstrate that civil society is an arena where social forces – movements, groups, and organizations from distinct and contradictory ideological and political fields – are in a constant struggle between themselves and with political society in distinct ways.

In this age of globalization we are witnessing an exponential increase in the complexity of the process of construction, maintenance, and contention of hegemony, with the question of hegemony being posed from the global political economy all the way to the local ambit. The strategy of co-optation, for example, is one type of relationship between the social forces that have profound consequences in the construction process of an alterglobalist historical bloc.

The problem of passive revolution and obstacles to global counter-hegemony

This paper argues that there are many challenges which movements and social groups belonging to the movement of movements have to face. Such groups seek an alternative form of globalization which would be fairer, more sympathetic to their cause, ecologically sustainable, and more humane. Aside from these challenges, there is also another issue of extreme relevance to the alterglobalist movement as a whole: the attempt by the globalist historical bloc to capture the movement (or parts of it). Passive revolution can be seen as a state of affairs in which potentially progressive aspects of a deep historical change are undermined by a spectrum of strategies driven by a certain logic that has the intention to contribute to the reconstruction of relations of domination and subordination. Such relations subvert the possibilities of progressist transformations (Sassoon, 2000). In this sense, passive revolution is seen as the hegemony's counterpart, as it describes the conditions of a non-hegemonic relation, that is, a social relation in which the dominant class is not capable of establishing a Gramscian hegemony.

It is possible to argue that the contemporary context favors such a strategy. As production gets more complex, so do social relations, and this leads to certain heterogeneity in labor sectors (Harvey, 2003). In fact, what occurs is fragmentation amongst workers. Conversely, in times of crisis capital's dominant fraction tends to strengthen its offensive against weaker capitals and labor, trying to restructure its hegemonic base. In other words, it is exactly in times of crisis (i.e. times of overproduction and overaccumulation related to capital, and unemployment and underconsumption related to labor) that the dominant class, faced with declining profits, increases surplus value exploitation (aiming at reducing labor rights and the general obstacles to accumulation). In addition to this, the exploited sectors tend to be concerned with keeping historically acquired rights, rather than with seeking an alternate project. In this sense, such movements and groups tend to favor the crisis *status quo*, instead of societal projects, and this:

“(...) redirects the content of their claims to the field of practical ideologies, characterized by their immediate needs (...), reducing their proposals to the field of conquests preservation or, only, of the possibilities established by the crisis conjuncture” (Mota apud Montaña, 2002:28).

This is one of the consequences of decades of neoliberal globalization: an implacable offensive by the globalist historical bloc against previously conquered rights (Houtart, 2001a) led its targets to focus on their immediate needs. As a result, one can notice today one of the great problems that has affected the alterglobalist movement; that is the difficulty to depart from criticism to the proposal of viable alternatives to the hegemonic form of globalization. This is of utmost importance for the absence of such projects can significantly contribute to some progressivist groups and movements being ‘captured’. On the one hand, they do not have a clear alternative path to follow in light of the influence of sectors and ideologies related to the globalist historical bloc and, on the other hand the dominant bloc is given space and time to restructure itself by developing new ideologies and strategies, contributing this way to its perpetuation in power.

Three examples are worth mentioning. Firstly, mainly after the Asian crisis (1997/98) and the following legitimacy crisis of neoliberal globalization after 1998 one can notice the dominant bloc’s engagement in ideological struggle aiming at the appropriation of some of alterglobalist claims, specifically those related to the environment and labor. As the American President Clinton said in a WTO meeting, “*working people will only assume the risks of a free international market if they have the confidence that this system will work for them*” (Clinton *apud* Rupert, 2000:144). In this sense, trying to develop such ‘confidence’, Clinton proposed the creation of a WTO forum that would engage in dialogue with various social groups and movements. Moreover, in 1999 Clinton reaffirmed the importance of this initiative by defending a more intimate relationship between the WLO, the IMF, and the WTO, aiming this way to “*put a human face on the global economy*” (*ibid*). Such a strategy was defended not only by Clinton, but also by other members of the globalist historical bloc, for instance, attendants to the World Economic Forum (WEF) and also the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Both the WEF and the UNDP tried to show by different means how global capitalism can be good for most of the population and not only investors and corporations.

Secondly, it is worth highlighting the strategies adopted by transnational corporations themselves. As Lipschutz points out (forthcoming), the ‘corporate responsibility’, promoted by huge corporations is much more a self-protection strategy against aggressive moves by civil society actors, rather than a response to Clinton’s above-mentioned requests. Thus, fearing that acceptable codes of conduct might be imposed by public authorities because of the increase in some actors’ demands (e.g. the “boomerang effect”²³) an increasing number of corporations has been reformulating its codes of conduct. This aside, such codes have been supplemented by

23 According to Keck and Sikkink, the ‘boomerang effect’ describes the process through which civil society groups separate from their states and directly contact transnational networks of civil action,

various types of standardization put forth by private agencies, as the International Standards Organization (ISO), by some 'corporate citizenship' notions proposed by governments and private groups and also by UN participants in this process with the Global Compact (a program and list of principles whose objective is to invite capital to take part in global governance and in public financing).

Lastly, there is also the question of activities by NGOs and how these connect to issue of the passive revolution. NGOs are diverse and hard to classify. They may be seen by some as promoters of global justice and equity and by others as agents in service of imperialism. A considerable number of NGOs is afflicted by representation and accountability problems which may reproduce the very discrimination hierarchies and structures against which they turn their criticism (Gómez, 2004a). Moreover, some of them are heavily dependent upon state or corporate financing. This puts NGOs in a delicate position regarding substantial political action aiming at social transformation. NGOs' relationships with states and corporations unquestionably contribute to their own capture by these pro-establishment forces and this represents a clear example of transformism. To summarize, it can be argued, based on the statements above, that the "humane face globalization" discourse, connected to the strategies of action of big corporations and their 'corporate responsibility', and the capture of certain NGOs by the historical globalist bloc characterize a 'global passive revolution' strategy by this dominant bloc.

Passive revolution which breeds some room for the politicization and democratization of the global economy because it foments dialogue among a fraction of the dominant class and representatives of social opposition forces cannot be seen as a political program in favor of an alterglobalist movement. Actually, passive revolution is seen by Gramsci as the relationship between marginal possibilities for the development of a given social formation and the possibilities to create something completely new. That is, open spaces for passive revolution strategies are not ends in themselves but, rather, potential possibilities for the expansion of a new kind of progressist policy.

Transformism is one of the facets of passive revolution and refers to a method of implementing a limited reform program by drawing potential leaders from subordinated social groups (Gramsci, 2002a:286-287; 2002b:396). Therefore, transformism can work as a strategy for assimilation and domestication of potentially dangerous ideas, through their incorporation into the policies of the dominant coalition (Cox, 1994a). Thereby, one can notice the risk and dilemma set by a global passive revolution strategy against the alterglobalist movement. Through ideological struggle the formation of an organized opposition that would seek social transformation can be obstructed. Whether such strategy will prosper or not can only be known

international organizations, and even other states, so that their states pay attention to their demands

by evaluating relations among social forces within the scope of civil society which is increasingly influenced and transformed by globalization processes.

Conclusion: between dilemmas and opportunities to construct an alterglobalist historical bloc

The transformation of the material basis of human society generates important repercussions in the process of class formation. In their actions, different classes promote such transformations contributing to the intensification of globalization processes. Such questions reflect directly in the configurations of civil and political societies. According to Williams, “*a new theory of socialism must now centrally involve place*” (Williams *apud* Harvey, 2000:21). Hence, it is necessary to take into account the particular interests evident in the articulation and construction of a counter-hegemonic historical bloc. Such interests are often linked to the question of space; hence, the importance to take place into account in this process. Here, an important point of the present perspective is revealed: contrary to other approaches to (global/international) civil society (e.g. Anheier, Glasius, & Kaldor, 2001; Falk, 1995; Kaldor, 2000, 2003; Keane, 2003a, 2003b; Kenny, 2003; Lipschutz, 1992, forthcoming; Shaw, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 2003; and Vieira, 2001), there is no such a thing as a “global civil society” where the spatial and territorial questions do not have importance. Territory and space are both important in the articulation of hegemony and counter-hegemony. The local, national, regional, and global are all intimately connected in the articulation and expression of hegemony and counter-hegemony (Cox, 1999; Gills, 2000).²⁴

Neo-liberal globalization has generated serious social consequences that the precariousness of the transnational apparatus of regulation and coercion and the limited neo-liberal states are unable to resolve (Robinson, 2004a; Ramos, 2005). From this derive the complexities of the present crisis which on the one hand have deleterious social consequences and yet on the other hand open a range of opportunities for political action to social movements which aim to overcome neo-liberal globalization in favour of an alternative form of globalization.

However, even if the advances gained cannot be denied (as seen with the realization of five editions of the WSF and two more expected editions), various difficulties still need to be resolved by the alterglobalist movement. Despite the unprecedented expansion, the movement represents still a minority and suffers from serious problems of representativeness (i.e. in terms of countries, region, class, gender, race, and creed), from tensions between the local, regional, national, and global ambits of action, and between the affirmation of particular identities *vis-à-*

following international and transnational pressure. See Keck and Sikkink, 1998.

²⁴ As affirmed by Mittelman, “*resistance is localized, regionalized, and globalized at the same time that economic globalization slices across geopolitical borders*” (2000:177).

vis the necessity to construct broad alliances for the success of the movement (Santos, 2003). In addition, there are divergences of interests between movements and groups from the South and those from the North (Smith, 2004) and critiques about the reproduction of inequalities and hierarchies inside the NGOs and about the often ambiguous relations between some NGOs and movements with transnational corporations, states, and international institutions (Lipschutz, forthcoming; MacDonald, 1994 and Bob, 2002). Consequently, on the one hand the contemporary importance of the alterglobalist movement cannot be denied and on the other hand it is not possible to over-estimate the dilemmas faced by the movement. Hence, it is necessary to engage all participants in order to overcome such dilemmas towards the construction of a historical bloc that will be both globalist and counter-hegemonic – in other words, an alterglobalist historical bloc.

As mentioned above, the political priorities must be seen in a conjunctural way. Without neglecting the need to overcome neo-liberal globalization toward an alternative globalization, it is possible to conceive that two battle fronts²⁵ come face to face with the alterglobalist movement in this ‘conjunctural engagement’: on the one hand, there is transnational terrorism and on the other hand the ‘imperial war’ which seeks the defense of human security, human rights, social justice, and democracy on a broad scale. Furthermore, in periods of hegemonic crisis the perils of a global passive revolution are still present. This calls for the close scrutiny and study of the alterglobalist movement and the co-optation strategies during its conjunctural engagement.

The search for counter-hegemony and for the construction of the alterglobalist historical bloc should take into account the task of elaborating responses to the ideological questions faced by potential allies. Therefore, the battle of ideas, the dialogue and the cultural confrontation assume a decisive importance in the struggle over hegemony. Also, it is possible to argue that the role of the nation state is still relevant in the process of maintenance of popular support; thus, the state must not be disregarded as a *locus* of struggle by the alterglobalist movement. In fact, the fight occurs “(...) *everywhere*” (Harvey, 2000:31). In other words, social movements have to find alternative forms to be as flexible in space – theoretically and practically – as the capitalist class.

In this context, it can also be argued that there is no region of the world where it is not possible to find manifestations of dissatisfaction with neo-liberal globalization (Amin & Houtart, 2004), be it in the center (as seen with the 1995 strike in France) (Gómez, 1995), or in

²⁵ It is important to note that such battle on “two fronts” corresponds, in fact, to a one struggle over the transformation of reality:“(…) *terrorism just reinforces imperial domination, it promotes military expenses and new inventions (...), does not increase the confidence of people, classes or groups oppressed in their proper emancipation force and accentuates or introduces the germs of division and polarization (patriots vs. anti-patriots; anti-North-Americans vs. anti-empire; radicals vs. moderates) at the center of*

the periphery (e.g. MST, ZLN, and HAS) (Harvey, 2000). Nevertheless, to affirm the existence of anti-capitalist movements does not absolutely imply the existence of an alternative project to capitalism (not even to its contemporary neo-liberal expression). The anti-capitalist movement is very broad and does not display coherence nor a concrete vision outlining the key tenets of the anti-capitalist movement.

There is a lack of direction: the different interests of this group often collide. In fact, the organized power of the transnational fraction of the capitalist class contrasts radically with the power of the classes and groups excluded from the predominant mode of global accumulation; these are still fragmented and weak and do not constitute a transnational class in the strict sense. The question to be resolved here is how to overcome the corporative level of conscience in order to go beyond the particularities and embody various particular interests (e.g. ecological, economic, class, gender, race, etc.) in such universal construction.²⁶ In this task social forums are extremely important: the five editions of the WSF, the various continental forums (e.g. the African Social Forum, the European Social Forum, and the Social Forum of the Americas), national forums (e.g. Brazilian Social Forum), and thematic (e.g. Thematic World Social Forum) have contributed to deeper and deeper convergence (Houtart & Amin, 2004). The debates which occur in these forums are some of the best forms of managing the divergences that exist between the social movements and groups that share similar general objectives but have a specific conception of political action. Hence, these relationships are extremely important to the political maturation of such convergences, making it possible for the movements and groups to “*distinguish what separates and unites them, to articulate in a better way the diverse struggles over a different world*” (Polet, 2004:13). However, in spite of these advances and the important role of the forums in this process there is much more to be done (Santos, 2003).

In this sense, the progressive forces have to reconsider their criteria of political action and agency in order to reach new forms to synthesize and channel the potential for resistance in a creative political project. In the same form that the political party was the agent for a transformative collective will in the specific historical context of Gramsci – in other words, it was an organism “(...) *given by the historical development (...)*” (Gramsci, 2002b:16) - with the intensification of globalization processes and transformation of the material basis of human

the movement against capitalist globalization and rising during the Seattle-Genoa phase” (Gómez, 2004a:335). Author’s own translation from Portuguese.

²⁶ This issue is extremely important for the incorporation of social movements and groups from the US into the alterglobalist movement. As noted by Rupert, the integration of such movements is fundamental in light of the strategic and structural importance of the US in the contemporary global political economy (forthcoming). Thus, more dilemmas are posed to the alterglobalist movement by the 9/11 events and the consequent “War on Terror”. What transnational activists are confronted with is the need to struggle inside the North American civil society/state complex, deal with the attempt of co-optation of North American movements by the ideologies and patriotic speeches developed by the sectors linked to the dominant historical bloc or the reactionary right (e.g. Pat Buchanan).

society what is necessary is the emergence of a new form of objectivization of the cathartic moment that symbolizes the collective will. However, if on the one hand “(...) *a party never complete and forms itself (...)*” (Gramsci, 2002b:316), is in a constant process of intersubjective relations through what is constituted, in a constant organic interaction with the explored, on the other hand how the party belongs to the contemporary historical context remains an open question – as expressed in the idea of a “post-modern prince” (Gill, 2003). In short, in what sense is the idea of party able to cope with the new global configuration of resistance? In what sense is such an idea compatible with the non-hierarchical strategies of action of the alterglobalist movement? These questions underline the fact that the construction of an alterglobalist historical bloc is something very complex and organic intellectuals have an extremely relevant role to play in this process of intersubjective construction of the counter-hegemony.

In accordance with Gramsci,

“at the moment when the dominant social group exhaust its function, the ideological bloc tends to fragment and, in this sense, ‘coercion’ can substitute ‘spontaneity’ under forms less and less masked and indirect, (...)” (Gramsci, 2002a:64).

This statement is profoundly suggestive, especially today with the intensification of the use of force on a global scale by dominant social group which has its epicenter in the US (Rupert, forthcoming; Robinson, 2004a and 2004b). Fundamental changes in the social order are possible in periods of organic crisis – a period in which the system confronts a structural crisis (objective) and crisis of legitimacy or of hegemony (subjective). In this sense, if such intensification of the use of force represents an exhaustion on the part of such groups and if that is an indication of an organic crisis, this represents an important question that demands greater attention and a larger engagement by the alterglobalist movement. In short, it is necessary that the participants of such movement always bear in mind Gramsci’s formula: “(...) *it is necessary (...) to drive the attention (...) to the present as it is, if one want to transform it. Pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will*” (Gramsci, 2002b:295).

To summarize, changes in the current order demand more than mere resistance; real changes presuppose an intensification of the political pressure and new forms of political organization starting from the base, in order to alter the structures of inadequate and unequal representation that emerged in the era of neo-liberal globalization. It entails a change of vision among the participants of the alterglobalist movement, from mere resistance to the creation of real and practical alternative politics. Finally, such alternatives should also seek the transformation of the logic of consumption pattern and of contemporary lifestyle, looking for the adoption of a new long-term perspective different from the neo-liberal civilization model.

Increasing supraterritorial and transplanetary mobilization by the dominant sectors (transnational fraction of the capitalist class) and the excluded sectors (alterglobalist movement and transnationalized terrorism) has serious implications for both political society and civil society. If it is possible to observe a certain transnationalization of political society – see for example the “internationalization/transnationalization of the state” thesis (Cox, 1987 and Gill, 1990) – it is also the case that other transformations of the material basis of society generate transformations in contemporary civil society. Hence, this paper identifies the emergence of a “global” civil society; however, the particular dynamics of local civil societies do not disappear and neither do those of the nation state. On the contrary, the diverse civil society/state complexes continue to be of extreme relevance. In this sense, it is possible to notice a qualitative transformation of relationships of power and of the fluid and complex processes of consensus formation – in short, a transnationalization of the state seen in its extended sense. In other words, the question of hegemony is posed from within the local, national, and regional levels as well as from the global political economy ambit. It is in this context that civil society must be understood in an age of intensifying globalization processes.

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