

Chapitre 23/Chapter 23

Résistances populaires à la mondialisation/Popular Resistance to Globalization

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We anti-globalists oppose imperial trade arrangements. We reject that the rich get richer. We repudiate that the poor get poorer. We laugh at pundits claiming that globalization positively entwines world centers via new modes of communication and travel. We guffaw at the claim that globalization expands democracy and participation. We live and breathe that globalization is another name for rewriting international norms of commerce, power, and culture. We see that it further elevates U.S. and European elites. We feel that it weakens national governments and populations. We know that it strengthens elite conclaves of corporate bosses. In short, for us globalization is twenty-first century imperialism. It's got to be stopped.

But given that we are against international inequity and injustice, mustn't we also oppose domestic inequity and injustice? As central institutions of international impoverishment, the WTO, IMF, and World Bank provide obvious targets. What about the White House? What about Wall Street? What about local Chambers of Commerce? What about major corporations themselves? What about the information managers that trumpet globalization from NBC and CBS to local talk radio, and from the NY Times and Washington Post to local tabloids? And what about the presidential palaces, stock exchanges, corporations, and mainstream media from Britain to Thailand, Peru to Australia, Canada to Japan, and Brazil to India?

More, if we are against profit-seeking, authoritarian usurping of power, and media manipulation of information, mustn't we be for just allocations of resources and wealth, decision-making that gives each actor a say over their lives and circumstances, and information and culture that respects truth and addresses the needs of large populations?

Against profit and competition, we advocate equity and cooperation. Against exclusion and authority, we advocate participation and self-management. Against lies and manipulation, we advocate truth and honest exchange.

Our anti-globalization activism is an international phenomenon, a very serious business. At stake are not only critical proximate institutions like the IMF and World Bank, but also the capitalist markets and ownership relations that engender "globalization" in the first place.

To attain the size, comprehension, and commitment to not only stir up awareness, but galvanize it into sustained activism and to then parlay that sustained activism into increasing social costs that elites succumb to, we need to design movement agendas that inspire widespread interest and provide means for widespread on-going participation. We need movement focuses that are diverse and multiple, that are local, national, and international, and that are continuous and not once or twice yearly.

So which way for anti-globalization? Some suggestions:

1. The anti-globalization movement needs to highlight what it is aiming for. We need to clarify our alternatives for international relations and also for what we mean by a cooperative and just economy able to improve people's lives domestically as well as

internationally. We need to crystallize our rejection of authoritarian trade institutions, of course, but as a foundation for that also our attitude to corporations and markets and our vision of replacements for each. Of course, attaining shared goals won't happen by magic hand-waving. We won't conquer the vision problem unless we address such matters together, debate them, explore them, begin to attain some useful agreements about them, and then put the results forth as widely as we can.

The media and more importantly our potential political allies repeatedly ask us "what do you want?" Making headway requires that we answer intelligently, convincingly, and passionately.

2. We also need to re-emphasize reaching out as widely as possible and providing means of participation for as many new people as we can interest. We need to unequivocally understand that our strategic goal isn't to have a small army of courageous, creative, insightful, and bold dissidents. We need many in motion, not few, no matter how good the few may be. And for our goals, thousands and even tens of thousands are still few. To attain needed size and scope, we have to correct the appearance that anti-globalization requires traveling to distant cities and demonstrating in the midst of clubs and tear gas, much less hurling paving stones and dodging rubber bullets. First, few people will jump from no involvement to such confrontation in one vast leap, even if they may become highly militant at some point in their future experience. Second, few people are in position to do that kind of thing regardless of their desires. They don't have the time, the freedom, or the funds. They aren't physically, emotionally, familially, or occupationally in a position to act thusly. Or they doubt the efficacy. So the facts are simple.

(i) A movement that can win change in international trade relations needs millions and even tens of millions and certainly not merely thousands of participants.

(ii) People aren't really movement participants unless they are doing things in a sustained, on-going way within the movement.

So (iii) it follows that to grow sufficiently to win, our movement needs to offer things for people to do where they live and in accord with their dispositions and possibilities.

3. Indymedia is an amazing and glorious outgrowth of the anti-globalization project. But what if these new organizations located all around the world, were to take up a second agenda? They are now committed and should remain committed to finding new ways to convey dissenting information to local audiences. That priority should not stop nor diminish. But what about also becoming the nuclei around which activism against mainstream media can gel? What about indymedia organizations sponsoring regional gatherings that set up organizing projects to raise consciousness about mainstream media and to then plan and carry out mass rallies and other demonstrations directed at mainstream media? Wouldn't that add a new dimension, a new set of focuses, and a whole new tone and dynamic to our movement?

4. To win we need to generate a trajectory of activism that elites cannot repress away or manipulatively derail, and which they also can't calmly abide. That is the logic of social change in the near and even middle term. But what is it that threatens elites, that can't be repressed away, and that can't be manipulated off course? The only answer I know of is rapidly growing numbers of dissidents, varied diversifying focuses of their dissent, and steadily escalating commitment and militancy of their tactics. To succeed, we need not just one of these, nor even two, but all three.

(i) Our movements need to be multi-tactical in ways that help each constituency manifest its aims without the efforts of a few trumping all visibility, tone, and content of the rest.

(ii) Our movements need to be multi-issue, enabling each constituency to mount its priority claims and aspirations, with none drowning out the others and each finding means to support the rest. For example, can't globalization activists mobilize on behalf of the work of living wage activists, of unionists striking their employers, of solidarity workers trying to find international space for East Timor, of anti-war activists bracing to aid Colombia, and with people of color organizing against police repression, racist violence, and impoverishment?

(iii) Our movements need to have a militant edge that graphically displays a rising tide of anger and commitment, but which also remains in close touch with the main body, operating to propel its growth. In other words, if aggressive civil disobedience is the largest manifestation of our dissent at the targets we pick, it will have little power. On the other hand, if aggressive civil disobedience grows naturally from and resides comfortably atop a growing mountain of broader dissent, with hundreds of thousands and then millions of people in country after country involved below but no less visibly than those who are most confrontational—then we will be on the road to serious social change.

All this has been getting steadily better in many respects in recent months, and we need to keep these aims in the forefront as we proceed.

5. Finally, we also need some clarity about violence. It's simple. The state has a monopoly of it. What that means is that there is no way for the public, most particularly in developed first world societies, to compete on the field of violence with their governments. That ought to be utterly and blatantly obvious. Our strong suit is information, facts, justice, disobedience, and especially numbers. In sum: politics. Their strong suit is lying and especially exerting military power. A contest of escalating violence is a contest we are doomed to lose. A contest in which numbers and commitment and increasingly militant non-violent activism confronts state power is a contest we can win. Yes, the impetus to manifest anger is powerful. But there is nothing courageous or strategic about charting a path directly into the lion's mouth. Our tactical sense must couple to strategic plans aimed at winning. We can have teach-ins. We can have rallies. We can have marches. We can have strikes. We can build our own blockades. We can utilize all manner of creativity and playfulness amidst our dissent. We can go out and talk to people. We can obstruct. We can destroy property when doing so sends a clear and coherent message. We can hurl back tear gas canisters in self defense and tear down walls and other obstacles to remain mobile. But to attack the police with the intent of doing bodily harm, whether with stones or Molotov cocktails, simply invites further escalation of their violence. It does nothing to hinder elite agendas but instead propels and legitimates them. Anger-fed violence is hard avoid in some situations, I well know. But avoid it we must.