



**the commoner**



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## Value Strata, Migration and "Other Values"

*In the beginning there is the doing, the social flow of human interaction and creativity, and the doing is imprisoned by the deed, and the deed wants to dominate the doing and life, and the doing is turned into work, and people into things. Thus the world is crazy, and revolts are also practices of hope.*

*This journal is about living in a world in which the doing is separated from the deed, in which this separation is extended in an increasing numbers of spheres of life, in which the revolt about this separation is ubiquitous. It is not easy to keep deed and doing separated. Struggles are everywhere, because everywhere is the realm of the commoner, and the commoners have just a simple idea in mind: end the enclosures, end the separation between the deeds and the doers, the means of existence must be free for all!*

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# Introduction

Massimo De Angelis

This issue proposes some lines of enquiry around three interrelated themes: the migratory flows of people in today global factory, the dynamics and hierarchies underpinning the production of value for capital, and the production of values other than those for capital. The search for the connection among these themes is what allows us to weave together these papers so much different in style and subject matter.

Devi Sacchetto's article focuses on people and capital flows in the case on the South-Eastern and Central Eastern Europe. Here migration is understood as a flow of social subjects between areas of different values. The production of these value differences is brought about by wars, migrations, direct investment and the patterns and direction of enlargement of the EU. As a result of economic disparities and cultural differences, social actors from Maghreb to the Ural Mountains have *different* degrees of freedom of movement and of political initiative. Migrants, investors, professional people in charge of humanitarian aid, smugglers of undocumented migrants, traders, mercenaries, seamen define and play out their strategies within this value-segmented context. Furthermore, from the fall of the Berlin Wall, the EU has set a trend in social and economic policies, not only for members states, but also for some countries of the Mediterranean southern rim. The EU norms and policies have promoted trends of migration and flows of commodities and information that rise or fall for different regions, depending on the institutional and economic changes in the peripheral countries. These trends on the other hand, are associated to patterns of international economic and humanitarian cooperation as some of the

main instruments assuring the hegemony of transnational elites. Here Sacchetto draws a crucial link between EU's policies of immigration and asylum and the foreign policy and the international cooperation through NGOs of member countries. The EU elites have today the increasing opportunity to act freely in both European and non-European territories where they operate. A neo colonial freedom emerging from the submission of the sovereignty of local states to request by new local and transnational power breakers seeking to rewrite and re-interpret legislation according to their will. Thus export-processing areas are established in which labour has few rights and environmental legislation are laxer, giving raise to a re-stratification of value areas and the formulation of new disciplinary instruments to face persistent threats to their articulation. Finally, the new power breakers overseeing these dynamics who flow back and forth from the home countries to the "neo-colonial" posts — whether business investors, EU officials or humanitarian agencies — develop a new colonial mentality based on the stigmatization of the local populace for the molecular resistance they are putting against this new form of capitalist neo colonialism. How this stigmatization contribute to the development of racism in the home country is an open question.

Massimiliano Tomba addresses the question of value segmentation along global production networks by re-reading Marx's theory of absolute and relative surplus value. The starting point of the article is the critique of Marxist stage theory that sees the evolution of capitalism as moving from lower to higher levels of developments. In different ways this "stage" stance has plaid a role in both mainstream XXth Century Marxism and some of its critiques, such as Italian post-operaismo. Echoing a problematic raised by other interventions in previous issues of *The Commoner*, Tomba instead argues that "the first, second and third worlds" are levels that are reciprocally interpenetrated giving rise to the co-existence – even in spatial proximity – of high tech and absolute forms of extraction of surplus value. This way we cannot talk about a *tendency* of the "old" forms of labour and exploitation to develop into new form, say of "mass workers" to develop into "immaterial labourers". To avoid the problems associated to these historicists stance, Tomba finds it necessary to "re-descend" with Marx of *Capital* into the "laboratories of production", showing how absolute and relative surplus-value should not be conceived in a diachronic succession, "but synchronically in an historical-temporal *multiversum*". We can follow the chains of valorization that crosses the boundaries of the factory gates and of the national frontiers. A chain that gives rise to the wage hierarchy. This mapping of delocalisation is than read through the vivid colours of the

subjects of living labour, the migrant workers who in affirming their freedom of movement, clash with the capitalist interest to construct and preserve wage hierarchy within and outside Europe.

The uncritical reliance on social “tendencies”, is also Ferruccio Gambino’s object of critique in this 1990s article on fordism and post-fordism. Gambino contribution expose to historical scrutiny the very early literature that has coined the concept of “post-fordism” in the 1980s, that one associated to the regulation school. Today this term is often taken for granted and used to capture all sort of transformations that the literature posit as element of novelty in relation to “fordism”: an atomised, flexibilised and non union worker, a state that no longer guarantee the material cost of reproduction of labour power. In its Toyotist variant post-fordism is seen as the result of a “tendency” to new forms of rationalization as well as of new and more advanced relations of production, giving rise to new sociality that might well prefigure new forms of democracy. To a certain extent, the contemporary conceptions of cognitive capitalism and immaterial labour have perhaps their roots in these early post-fordist constructs.

Gambino argues that this approach does not really analyze social relations of production, but rather the economic/state institutions that oversee them. In this way, the regulation school “stresses the permanence of structures, and tend to overlook human subjects, their changes and what is happening to them with the disorganization and reorganization of social relations.” For Gambino, not only the very formation and dynamic of “preunion fordism”, “fordism” and global “post-fordism” is centered on struggles of concrete waged and unwaged workers. Also, what is seen as a passage from one “ism” to another is the effect of changing capital’s strategies at a rhythm imposed by the constraints and ruptures of various struggles. For the Regulation School instead, fordism and post-fordism appear both as stable tendencies waiting to be fulfilled. Against the appearance of stable structure and predictable social “tendencies”, the experience of fordism in the 1950s and 1960s shows that what appeared as a stable system began soon to fall apart ripped from the inside. At the end of the 1960s the class struggle, “overturned capital’s solid certainties as regards the wage, the organization of the labour process, the relationship between development and underdevelopment, and patriarchy”. Without understanding the radicality of this challenge and, we would add, the ways this radicalism has been outflanked by capital planetary re-organisation, what is called today “post-fordism” assumes the character of “a crystal ball, in which . . . it is possible to read some signs of the future”. Such a chrystal-ball approach makes it impossible to grasp the elements of crisis and uncertainty in capital’s domination,

with the political consequence of being unable to problematise the issue of class political re-composition.

This is a point also stressed in the two articles that follow, one a joint work by Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis, and the other by Massimo De Angelis. Both articles were recently circulated in the the "edu-factory" list ([www.edu-factory.org](http://www.edu-factory.org)) as part of a debate on "cognitive capitalism". We invite the reader to explore the many contributions in this important forum to follow this debate and that on other related themes. There are two main lines of Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis argument against theoretically de-centering the problematic of class hierarchy and dynamics of stratification. First, an empirical/theoretical one, in which they claim that the history of capitalism demonstrates that capital's subsumption of all forms of production is not predicated on the extension of the "highest" level of science and technology to all workers contributing to the accumulation process. Cases such as the capitalist organization of the plantation system and of housework suggests that work can be organized for capitalist accumulation with the laborer working at a level of technological/scientific knowledge below the average applied in the highest points of capitalist production. This also suggests that the "inner logic" of capitalist development can only be grasped if we look at the totality of its relations rather than only at the highest points of its scientific/technological achievements. Looking at this totality reveals that capitalism has always produced disparities along the international and sexual/racial division of labor. These disparities are both the product of its inner workings and of clear strategies which give rise to the "underdevelopment" of particular sectors and are amplified by the increasing integration of science and technology in the production process. From this theoretical/empirical point follows, second, their political argument. There is in fact a political consequence in using constructs such as "cognitive capitalism" and "cognitive labor" in such a way as to overshadow the continuing importance of other forms of work as contributors to the accumulation process. And this is the development of a discourse that precludes *class recomposition*. There is in fact the danger that by privileging one kind of capital (and therefore one kind of worker) as being the most "exemplary of the contemporary paradigm" we contribute to create a new hierarchy of struggles, thus engaging in forms of activism that "precludes a re-composition of the working class." To become possible, this political re-composition must be predicated on the awareness of the continuity of our struggle across the international division of labor and wage hierarchy, which mean that we need to "articulate our demands and strategies in accordance to these differences and the need to overcome them."

Massimo De Angelis contribution builds on this twofold argument around the problematic of the wage hierarchy and articulates it to other themes debated in the edu-factory forum such as "labour abstraction", "translation" and "excess". The processes responsible for the ongoing creation of value stratification can be grasped theoretically and empirically though Marx's classic texts reinterpreted in lights of the issues raised by the struggles of those subjects that in that text were mostly invisible and yet are and have always been so fundamental to capitalism (women, the unwaged reproduction workers, the slaves, the peasants). The two main coordinates of these processes are the systematic and continuous "enclosure" strategies and the process going on "behind the back of the producers", the process of the formation of "socially necessary labour time". The former continuously re-stratify the hierarchy with a variety of violent means, but also through the use of technology and knowledge products developed at the highest levels as instrument of these enclosures. The latter is what Marx labels the process going on "behind the back of the producers", the process of the formation of "socially necessary labour time" which is referred here as "disciplinary integration", since market processes act as disciplinary mechanisms that allocate rewards and punishments and hence contribute again to produce hierarchy. This "inner logic" of capitalism is predicated on a way of *measuring* life activity which subordinates concrete specific humans to the quantitative imperative of balance sheets. This subordination means that the sensuous *and* cognitive features of concrete labouring are subordinated to the drive for making money. It also implies that "an excess" which is not put to value by capital always exist. This "excess" is the outcome of the struggles of situated workers facing the frontline and contesting the reduction of their life-activity to abstract labour. Yet, we must be cautious that the dynamism of capitalism is based on the ongoing attempt to recuperate and subsume these excesses and turn them into moments of capital accumulation. Thus, in contrast with the view that sees cognitive labour as commons across a stratified class, here the argument is that in so far as capital production is concerned what is really common across the "multitude" is that social production occurs through the subjection of multiplicity to a common alien measure of doing, of giving value to things, of ranking and dividing the social body on the basis of this measure. Through this valorisation process, human powers are transmuted into commodities, and social doing is transmuted into work, into abstract labour. In this sense, abstract labour is not so much the result of a "translation" as some claim, although processes of translation are always occurring. It is the result of a real abstraction, i.e. a transmutation, as a transmutation of one species into another, one

species of humans into another one. Hence, despite being a crucial issue, the central question for political recomposition is not “translation”, but the *transformation of our interconnected lives*. And this transformation cannot avoid posing the question of the overcoming of existing divisions as the *central* problematic of our organisational efforts.

The problematic, difficulties and contradictions of political recomposition across value chains and constitution of political subjectivity founded on “other” values is faced up by Patrick Cunningham paper on the Zapatista’s “Other Campaign” (so-called in mock reference to the 2006 presidential electoral campaigns). This was catalysed by the Zapatistas call for a renewed anti-capitalist resistance movement “from below and to the left” against neoliberal capitalism in Mexico and internationally, in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle (the Sixth) in July 2005 and in the broader socio-political context is framed by the events surrounding the July 2006 presidential elections, which proved to be particularly “dirty” and fraudulent. Here attempts have been made of “horizontal coordination of autonomists, anarchists, Zapatistas, socialists, indigenous and peasant movements” as well as independent trade unions and the more radical NGO campaigns. The paper also discusses the problems faced by the organisation and mobilization of the Other Campaign in the trans-border region of Chihuahua-Texas-New Mexico in Northern Mexico-Southern USA. The mobilisations were against “the femicide of some 450 working class women and girls in Ciudad Juarez since 1993, as well as other issues based around migration, the US-Mexico border, the hegemonic maquiladora (corporate assembly plant for export) hyper-exploitation model and the social violence and urban degradation produced by “savage capitalism”.” This “other” organizational paradigm, also include the “Other on the other side” (of the border), and therefore attempts to connected with the May Day Latino boycott movement in the US against the criminalisation of undocumented migrants.

Finally, there are three interrelated short contributions by Mariarosa Dalla Costa, linking the making and remaking of the planetary value hierarchy through enclosures (which systematically reproduce its lower layers), with the political problematic of the production of food as common, and of new relations to land and agriculture. In “Renaturalising the world” she begins reflecting on the continuing expulsion of populations from the land accompanying development projects and the new enclosures. This is the eradication of a population that derived from the land the possibility for nutrition and settlement, and that instead adds to urban slums or takes the

route of migration. The outcome, similar to those following patterns of enclosures which occurred five centuries ago at the injection of capitalism, is the “expropriation from, and the accumulation of, land on the one hand, and the accumulation of immiserated individuals who could no longer reproduce themselves because they had been deprived of the fundamental means of production and reproduction, above all the land itself, on the other.” But crucially, this continuous replenishing the ranks of the eradicated and expropriated, “functional to a further expansion of capitalist relations and to the re-stratification of labour on a global level.”

This ongoing re-stratification of the “conditions of labour and of life of men and women across the world, regardless of where they live,” is based upon the expulsion from the land. It is here that “the condition for class is re-founded and labour within the global economy is re-stratified.” And there are really no solutions within the traditional remedies. On one hand, “it is unthinkable that jobs will multiply” in accordance with the number of those expelled. On the other hand, “nor is possible to fool oneself into hoping for a global guaranteed income of such vast proportions. Yet even if it arrived one day, replacing the bombs perhaps, could we really delimit the matter to one of money, money sufficient for the purchase of a farming product which, in its industrial and neoliberal formulation, increasingly pollutes our bodies, destroys small economies and their jobs, and devastates the environment? And, beyond this, how much freedom would we have when all of the earth’s inhabitants depended only and exclusively on money for their survival?”

This is the context in which Dalla Costa builds her analysis of the struggles around land, farming and nutrition by self-organising networks of the global movement of farmers that developed in the nineties. This analysis is furthered in her second piece, “Two Baskets”, in which she moves from the need of what she calls the “great reawakening”: “one that is being enacted by farmers and citizens (who are challenging their role as merely “producers” or “consumers”) against the great machine of industrial agriculture and the politics that bolster its delivery of noxious foods, environmental devastation.” Here she discusses the coordinates of a political project that aims at “re-localise development” and “re-ruralize the world”. An argument that fully open to the last paper on food as common, in which she argues that “food is only regained as a fundamental right in its fullest sense when it is regained as a common. It is regained as a common if, along the way, all its conditions are also regained as commons. This is what is already apparent from the ways in which networks of farmers,

fisherpeople, and citizens who are not only consumers organize themselves.”

# Offshore Outsourcing and Migrations

## The South-Eastern and Central-Eastern European Case

Devi Sacchetto<sup>1</sup>

In the last fifteen years the European and Mediterranean area has been marked by a series of changes concerning in particular the mobility of persons, capitals and commodities. These changes appear to be associated with a strong asymmetry of opportunities. Wars, migrations, direct investments abroad and the enlargement of the EU point to new scenarios with social actors such as migrants, investors, professional people in charge of humanitarian aid, smugglers of undocumented migrants, traders, mercenaries, seamen.

These actors are endowed with different degrees of freedom of movement and of political skills in an area extending from Maghreb to the Ural mountains. These differences are the result of wide economic disparities, and even more of cultural peculiarities. In the last fifteen years in South-Eastern and Central Eastern Europe a new social and geopolitical readjustment has made room for more autonomy in the individuals' way of living than in the past.

From the fall of the Berlin Wall, the EU seems to have changed from a facilitator of trade to a sophisticated trendsetter in social and economic policies, not only for all its present members and for those who are waiting for admission, but also for some countries of the Mediterranean southern rim. The norms that the EU has established have stimulated a circulation of people, commodities and information

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1 This paper is a revised version of the paper "The change in the relations between the actors of EU countries and the Euro-Mediterranean societies" that was presented at the Elise Meeting in Genoa, April 8, 2005.

that rises and falls according to the institutional and economic changes in the peripheral countries. On the other hand, the promotion of international economic and humanitarian cooperation is one of the main instruments assuring the hegemony of transnational elites. Both the foreign policy and the international cooperation through NGOs of member countries of the European Union are linked to the EU's policies of immigration and asylum.

A basic characteristic of the new relations between the actors of the EU and the societies of the Euro-Mediterranean area is the opportunity to act freely in the various European non-Eu territories where the former find themselves to operate. This freedom is not so much the armed colonialism of the past as the imposition of political and economic behaviour. The sovereignty of the State is submitted to the requests being advanced by new holders of power and of international elites, who are looking for areas where legislation can be easily rewritten or reinterpreted according to their will. During the last twenty years these areas have grown economically, in particular with the establishment of the so-called zones of export, where labour has few rights (Icftu 2004) or is deprived of legal frame. In this case they have become non-persons (Dal Lago 1999). The characteristic trait of these zones is the pre-arrangement of special legislations aiming to make the asymmetry of power and of freedom of action easier between dominant and inferior areas. In such redefinitions of the norms, new disciplinary instruments are formulated on the base of persistent threats. It is an updating of the old procedures pointing to ethnicization. Such process corresponds to the varied, discontinuous and irregular segmentation of the economic and political spheres.

## I Barriers and Landscapes

Borders in Europe have been modified several times in the last 100 years. While borders in the North American continent have been stable, they have been moving again in Europe. In spite of the commonplace of "Old Europe", Europe appears to be unable to stabilize its frontiers. While the North American continent had already defined its borders at the middle of the XIXth century (Zaccaria 2004), in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and after the concomitant institutional changes a deep economic and cultural inversion has involved not only the so-called former socialist countries, but also the Western ones.

Inequalities in the freedom to migrate have largely increased in Europe. A case in point is the fate of the inhabitants of former

Yugoslavia. In fact their ability to migrate has been widely differentiated: the Slovenians, nowadays members of EU, can move freely, while others suddenly have been degraded to the status of citizens of States or quasi-states that are not members of the EU. They cannot even cross the borders of the adjoining countries unless they have visas. This is the case of Bosnians and of Macedonians. It is on the ruins and on the building or rebuilding of new enclosures in Yugoslavia that the strategies of the unification of European States, of the enlargement of the EU and of the relations with the countries of Mediterranean southern rim are played. Now the heavy costs of political non-alignment, such as Yugoslavia pursued between 1948 and the early 1990's, appear clearly to all. In fact the Yugoslavia conflict has characterized the way and timing of the enlargement of the EU, as well as the planning of new systems of mobility and employment in most European and Mediterranean countries.

The expansion of the EU is a factor of strong correction of the economic policies of the candidate States and of the long-range and short-range mobility of people. The redefinition of the right of crossing borders shapes new dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. The process of extension produces new borders both visible, such as the one between Ukraine and Poland, and invisible, such as the ones resulting from new and long procedures to move from country to country (Ruspini 2004). The borders between Western and Eastern Europe have been repeatedly altered. This is the most evident case. However the procedures to move from Maghreb to Europe, have also changed substantially.

The new borders of the EU are heavily guarded not to prevent military aggression but to limit and control migrations and petty trade along the frontiers with non EU-countries. The new control system at EU borders tends to become a technologically equipped police surveillance on the informal economy and on migrations (Dietrich 2003), although, both phenomena may survive through daring and risky strategies.

As to the process of enlargement, candidate countries are requested to preliminarily enter into new relations with the adjoining countries; they must especially set more rigid norms of entrance for the non-EU citizens.<sup>2</sup> Central and Eastern Europe countries have to establish new frontiers that becomes the new border of EU: to build a border in order to move more easily inside, here's one of the main

2 Since 2000, Poland has demanded visas for the citizens of some republics of the Community of Independent States (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kurdistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan). Since July 1, 2003, Russians, Belarussians, and Ukrainians must carry proper visas with them when crossing Poland (Chomette 2003). Similar requirements are compulsory in countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, Libya that are even not candidates to EU membership.

paradox of our time (Diminescu 2003, p. 23). So the freedom of movement in the EU corresponds to an enclosure that have been built in order to keep out the people who do not belong to one of the included states. Ironically a new iron curtain arises a little to the East of the borders where the first one arose: it controls the peoples who continue to be strongly limited in their international mobility to the west.

Borders assign people to different social, political and legal spaces inside and outside national territories; and borders promote the proliferation of several kinds of activities that become illegal and subversive merely by moving from country to country by a few miles (Donnan, Wilson 1999). The transit of undocumented migrants is considered as a threat of subversion to sovereign states. As a matter of fact, migrants and smugglers do not aim neither to subvert the State, nor to eliminate borders. On the contrary, their roles and their lives are strictly connected to the very existence of a State and of its borders, without which it would be impossible for them to make a living out of those activities that are symbiotic with trade at borders. Migrants as well as investors abroad are such just thanks to zones that are differently valued (Sacchetto 2004); the existence of different values for different areas can partially explain migration and offshore outsourcing. The regulation of people's movements through borders is constantly selective, as borders are never rigidly closed or totally open. They remain usually porous. They are invisible lines dividing what they join, because they are the most militarised and racialized land strips in contemporary political maps (Papastergiadis 2000).

The Europeanization of the national legislations of the new member States and of the candidate ones such as Romania and Bulgaria<sup>3</sup> involves the introduction of new legal institutions, in particular the administrative detention of undocumented foreigners and more rigid controls of people's mobility. The enlargement of EU is becoming a main question on the international political arena because it redesigns the maps of international mobility. Nevertheless, the government of the non-EU Euro-Mediterranean area seem to have been quick in learning the ideological structure of the EU and its institutional practices of hospitality. The so-called centres of identification and detention of undocumented migrants is one of these practices.

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3 The enlargement of the EU with the candidate countries that entered the Eu in May 2004 (Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic Slovakia Republic, Slovenia, Hungary) has required their adjustment to 80 thousand pages of European legislation. This has provoked a very strong metamorphosis in their legal systems and in their administrative structures.

In spite of the relentless militarization of the borders of EU against irregular immigration and of restrictive policies on the visas, undocumented mobility of migrants without paper is far from being controlled. These measures increase both the migrants' expenses and the selection of those who can afford a travel. To some extent they restrain migrations. The mobility of people can be encouraged or discouraged in various ways. From the financial point of view, the imposition of expensive visas reduces migrants' resource and complicates their travelling trajectories (Stalker 2000; Düvell 2004). On the other hand, as it has been pointed out (Cohen 1987), some zones have been deliberately kept in underdevelopment by the so-called international community in order to increase the propensity of labour to migrate.

In June 2004, the introduction of a new tax for the citizens of 8 newly admitted countries who want to work in Great Britain is a new start in migration policies (Salt 2004, p.4). Both for the international elites and for the migrants borders are surmountable if they are prepared to pay more or less heavy admission taxes. Consequently the admission taxes systems must be considered as important components of the new European strategy, which aims to redirect the mobility of capitals and of migrants rather than reducing them. This strategy marks a shift from the control to the management of migrations and investments abroad.<sup>4</sup>

To the travellers who cross the countries of South-eastern Europe the EU borders are permeable places where the cases of bribery abound. The difference between the exasperating slowness of the practices of legal crossing and the speed of the transit of the migrants without documents is evident, as it is evident that elite investors can cross borders easily. While border inspectors probably try to defend their power, the smugglers of migrants exploit the differences in value, which are intrinsic to a border, by minimizing (or curtail) the time for its crossing: for the hullers who cross the channel of Otranto, or for the boats that arrive in Sicily from Libya, success in terms of profit and safety is connected to the speed of their operations. Among the migrants it is clear that travel documents, passports and visas are their basic elements in the case of both regular and irregular migration. However, for many of them only money is important, because "money is the documents". Trust in money and regular or counter-feited documents show the arbitrariness of the power that is exerted at the borders. The powerful passports and visas of the international elites put them on the fast track, while the documents of people coming from

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4 Regarding the management of migrations see among other Stalker 2002; Martin 2003; Düvell 2004.

countries with scarce power are easily stopped. Borders mark the different zones to which people can have access with "valid" documents.

In recent years, in particular after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, the issue of borders has become central and consequently the governments of many countries have hurried to prove that their borders are safe. In Europe too, as an aftermath of political changes that were introduced after 1989 and of the expansion of EU to other countries, the debate about borders has revived. For each year from 1998 to 2002 between 50 and 60 million euros have been allocated to build the new Eastern Polish curtain and to prevent illegal immigration. It is a 1200 kilometre long border through which in 2001 about 27 million of individual crossings have been recorded. This flow is much lower than the one at the border between the U.S. and Mexico, which records approximately 300 million of people a year (Pascucci 2003; Andreas 2003). As to the United States, Peter Andreas (2003, pp. 1-2) asserts that "North American relations are driven by the politics of border control... Rather than simply being dismantled in the face of intensifying pressures of economic integration, border controls are being re-tooled and redesigned as part of a new and expanding 'war on terrorism'" (Andreas 2003, p.1).

Although there are differences between the European Union and the US in their approaches to "war terrorism", a new Atlantic cooperation concerning home security has proven to be quite active (Bunyan 2002). The new model of mobility has led to significant changes in bilateral agreements and to a renewed focus on the concept of borders. In particular, since September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 controls and selections at the borders have been increasingly linked to security.<sup>5</sup> Institutionalised fear contributes to develop processes of hierarchization and of a new isolation in urban spaces; some areas become inaccessible for security's sake. In fact, the war on terrorism is far from being fought just against "rogue states"; a person who does not travel in business class is potentially dangerous.

## II The New Actors of the EU

Both locally and globally the new actors, who move from the EU to the countries of South-Eastern Europe and to the countries of the Mediterranean southern rim, are deeply inserted in to differentiated relations, as far as workplaces and social and political milieu are concerned. Their presence in the countries of South-Eastern Europe

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5 See Bigo (1998, 2004), Dal Lago (2003), Palidda (2000, 2003).

gives rise to a continuous imitation of Western patterns of life. This Westernisation can take place in a way both rigid especially inside factories and mild in everyday socialisation. The absorption of Western models are linked to the acceptance of new social hierarchies.

The mobility of social actors with a fair level of political skills produces a different mobility, the one of the transnational elites. This mobility holds a relatively important position in contemporary social sciences. Such cosmopolitan elites are able to sustain the processes of globalization and to develop new cultural and social practices (Sassen 1994; Hannerz 1996; Beaverstock and Boardwell 2000). Castells (2002) has pointed out the importance of such transnational elites for the attainment of globalization. To that effect these elites can rely on personal milieus existing through out the global metropolises.

Of less importance have been the research projects concerning social profiles such as small entrepreneurs or professional people and volunteers of humanitarian aid, who have predictably assumed behaviours both of pragmatic adaptation and of vigorous reform of local situations (Sacchetto 2004). In fact, in the shade of such elites some profiles persist, such as the new international entrepreneurs, who represent the main actors of the mobilization of cultural practices in large areas of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as of Mediterranean southern rim (mainly Tunisia and Morocco). It is obvious that these processes of mobility often but not always produce hegemonic policies of cultural and symbolic mimesis (Dezalay 2004, p.8).

The international elites represent a new political class which acts in European areas, from the Ural mountains to Maghreb. These elites are the bearers of a political and social power that was previously unknown. Local *power-brokers*, who are co-opted inside different political and productive strategies, very often co-operate with these actors. They are those who are already in charge of political and economic activities and who are expeditions, since they know their turf.

The mobility of elites represents the attempt to affirm their role in political and social contexts where they want to impose a new order in production as well as in society. It goes without saying that international elites, which move from the countries of EU to Eastern and to Southern Europe impose their culture and way of governing through their political and economic power.

These elites in their moving to the East or to the Mediterranean area need basic services that their backlines are supposed to provide. These backlines are social, industrial and political agencies that must build frameworks for transfers of resources and are of basic

importance in the mid-term; the backlines are constituted by services for enterprise and people, like restaurant, shops, tradesman.

In some Eastern European and Maghreb countries, local political parties have been financed by political organizations of the EU and international organizations. Some EU politicians are also working as advisors for local politicians<sup>6</sup>. In recent years, new strategies for transforming the social and political systems, with some international organizations supporting human rights and democracy have been launched by the NGOs. The Georgian “Rose Revolution” in 2003, the Ukrainian “Orange Revolution” in 2004 and the Lebanese “Spring Revolution” in 2005 are starting points for a non-violent shift towards market economies (Genté, Rouy 2005). The long-term policies that have been built by such international (mainly USA) and European organizations seem to offer an alternative to war intervention policies that were previously adopted in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The ability to alter the course of events becomes increasingly crucial, since in some countries the State lacks the power to thoroughly apply its national legislation. Those in charge of local administration are therefore more and more subject to the influence of investors and second-range officers working for powerful agencies. In addition to what happens in the world of business and politics, the role played by these new *power-brokers* in the above mentioned cultural domains has to be taken into consideration.

Thus the trend has been set to ignore the basic laws and social norms that were long established at a local level, because the political and economic forces boosted by the transformations that were undergone by institutions in the last 15 years cannot be constrained within a strict framework of prescriptions. Widespread attitudes and ways of thinking that have been expressed by some supporters of offshore outsourcing and professionals in the humanitarian field involve a relentless stigmatisation of the Other, according to what Sayad (2002) has called “State Thought”.

The spreading of this colonial mentality is also affecting European countries, because colonizers return to EU countries too: consequently, such stigmatisation is a continuous process. On the other hand, a significant cultural influence is being exerted by the migrants who have moved the other way round.

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6 For instance, one political co-founder of the Italian political party Forza Italia and deputy minister of Italian Home Affairs during the first Berlusconi administration, is also as an advisor for the president of the Romanian Great Romania Party (PRM). An Italian businessman, worked as a consultant for the president of the Romanian New Generation Party (PNG) during the electoral campaign in 2004.

### III Variable selection criteria

In the 1990's years Western European countries faced a new kind of migration flow: people from Eastern Europe could move freely. In recent years migrants have found a progressive regimentation that involves both the creation of an institutional framework for administrative aspects and the imposition of regulations of behaviour. On the other hand, the Western European countries promote *just-in-time* migration: migrants should arrive only on the basis of the needs of production system and should go back when they are unemployed (Düvell 2004).

In addition to "autonomous migrations", then, regulations aimed at a planned management of migration flows are set forth, though each of the strategies mentioned above involves factors of both constraint and freedom. In the last decade the development of recruiting systems in several Eastern European countries that are based on practices usually adopted in South-East Asia offers major evidence of the view of a totalitarian management of the migration flow. Therefore, sectors of production that cannot be easily relocated (such as building, agriculture, health and education) should benefit from these groups of workers temporarily moving from peripheral countries to the EU, since industries can gain high profits while offering low wages and poor guarantees.

The countries of Eastern Europe and those on the South rim of the Mediterranean Sea, which once promoted open-door policies towards citizens from brother countries, are now turning out to be the fiercest opponents of illegal immigration. For example, as a result of the influence of IOM and UNHCR, since its independence Ukraine has developed a new legislation on migration creating a migration service, by strengthening its own national laws through the signing of several treaties, and by promoting a certain degree of international co-operation within the context of migration and refugee policies. On the other hand, after years of open-door policies towards immigrants from West and Sub-Saharan Africa, Libya has recently showed a clearly stricter attitude by deporting and imprisoning hundreds of migrants who have been merely guilty of not possessing regular papers. Both the Ukrainian and the Libyan strategies are aimed to proving their efficiency in migration management in accordance with the EU institutions, in exchange for favourable economic agreements.

The countries on the South rim of the Mediterranean Sea and those on the Eastern borders of the EU, both of which are passageways for migrants, are turning into "trash zones"<sup>7</sup> since they work as a filter

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7 Cf. the interview made by Longo V., Sacchetto D., Vianello F. with the

on the migration flow, by blocking the persons allegedly unsuitable for their entry into the Schengen area. Migration and transit in these countries may last a few days to several years<sup>8</sup>: for citizens of the Eastern areas and of the Southern rim of the Mediterranean Sea, mobility is a never-ending conquest.

One in a variety of strategies adopted by migrants is to stay in belt countries for some years, where waiting for the right time and trying to earn enough money to make their European dream come true at last. Sometimes migrants also apply for asylum and then for nationality in countries just outside the EU, which is just another way to prepare themselves for an easier entry into the Schengen area. As a matter of fact, applying for a visa to Poland is definitely easier if one has a Ukrainian passport rather than an Afghan one<sup>9</sup>.

Conditions of legality or illegality may change quite quickly. In 1998, a staff of IOM experts was sent to Ukraine in order to formulate a set of rules aimed at controlling the illegal migrations through the country to the EU, but found out a surprising predicament made their task even harder: Seventy per cent of the transit migrants were absolutely legal. As a result of this situation, a new legislation regarding visa policies and procedures had to be set forth<sup>10</sup>. Today, international institutions working for the management of migrants and refugees are legion on the political scene (Düvell 2004). Among these organizations, the tasks of the IOM are by far wider than those of other agencies, in that IOM co-operates with the governments of the countries bordering the EU, providing by them with an extensive training in migration control and management. On their turn, state officers from border countries are sent to the EU in order to study the different law systems and the ways they are applied.

## Conclusions

The establishment of the EU exerts a major influence on mobility and on political and economic development both in member countries and in border ones. In countries issued from the socialist block, the

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philosopher and writer Irina Magdysh, for the magazine "Ji", Lviv (Ukraine), May 2004.

8 Migrants from West African countries are used to long stays in countries such as Libya, where 1-1,5 million migrants (many of whom do not have regular papers) are now being given shelter (Trentin 2004). On Morocco as a migration and transit country for migrants from SubSaharan Africa, cf. Barros et al. 2002. An exhaustive overview can be found in Palidda 2003a, who estimates Libya to have 2,5 millions migrants.

9 In Ukraine one can also buy counterfeit passports for 2.000-3.000 US\$.

10 Anonymous (2004), "From Arming the Borders to Recruitment of Labour", September 9, [www.thistuesday.org](http://www.thistuesday.org)

communitarian system does not seem to be strong enough to confront the action of international élites, whereas in countries characterized by a different tradition, such as Turkey and Morocco, local societies tenaciously oppose such “intrusions”.

The EU has incorporated ten new countries, while assuming the responsibility for doing the dirty work both within and outside their national borders. Being part of the EU may be an advantage for new members, even if the status they have obtained is not necessarily the same for all of them. Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic can afford manufacturing production at mid-low-to-middle level wages, thus reaching leading industrial positions in Europe, while Romania, Bulgaria and, in the longer run, Ukraine should be limited to the lowest wage range of the manufacturing industry. The broadening of the EU seems to cause a gradual marginalization of the Southern Mediterranean countries: this shift is already quite clear to the Moroccan and Tunisian agricultural workers of Spain, Italy and France, who have already been replaced by Polish and Romanian workers.

The building of a “Fortress Europe” is constantly forging new social hierarchies, both inside and outside the EU. Purely repressive immigration policies are now confronting the request for full operating freedom from European power-brokers: this request shows the striking difference between these two different actors (migrant and elite) who play the major roles on the current scenario. On the other hand, poor wages that foreign investors pay in non-EU countries often push wage earners to choose emigration. The rhetoric of human rights and democracy seems to leave little room for individual freedom of movement and for really equal opportunities in the broad Euro-Mediterranean area.

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# Differentials of Surplus-Value In The Contemporary Forms of Exploitation

Massimiliano Tomba<sup>1</sup>

In order to comprehend the contemporary forms of exploitation we need to free ourselves from a certain idea of historicism that has influenced Marxism. The crisis of Marxism, announced by Althusser as having *finally* arrived 30 years ago, or its contemporary death, announced by many after the fall of actually existing socialism, are the occasion for taking the opportunity to reckon accounts with that tradition. Not only with dogmatic Marxism seeking ineluctable historical laws, but also with more critical versions of Marxism, when they employ categories like 'pre-capitalist' or 'pre-political' in order to characterise cases that are certainly contemporary, but *not yet* completely capitalist or adequate to the political form of the modern state.

If there is a way of comprehending that which today goes under the name of globalisation, this certainly passes by way of the assumption of the overcoming of the distinction between the first, second and third worlds. These levels are reciprocally interpenetrated,

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1 This essay is the modified version of a paper presented in the section 'The Differential of Surplus-value: an indispensable feature of contemporary accumulation' (*Il differenziale di plusvalore: un tratto indispensabile dell'accumulazione contemporanea*) during the conference of 'Altreragioni', held in Bologna on the 1st and 2nd of May, 1998. After many years during which this article remained in the drawer, certain circumstances – above all, the intention to revivify a collective project on questions regarding contemporary forms of exploitation and the rethinking of a notion of historicity adequate to the problems of globalisation – have encouraged me to work on this old study again. I presented this text at the Conference of Historical Materialism "New Directions In Marxist Theory" held on 9 December 2006 in London. This text is the shorter and partial modified version of an essay that will be published in the next number of HM.

giving rise to the co-existence, in a striking spatial proximity, of high technological levels and absolute forms of extortion of surplus-value. The error would be to consider these forms of exploitation today as residual, or regressions to the 19th century. Rather, they must be understood as the forms most adequate to the current complex of capitalist relations of production. The inadequacy of a whole way of reasoning in terms of tendency and residue is now so obvious that one cannot disagree with the severe judgement of Chakrabarty when he affirms that to speak of a 'survival of an earlier mode of production' means to reason with 'stagist and elitist conceptions of history', and, in polemic with theories of 'uneven development', maintains that it is *historicist* to consider 'Marx's distinction between 'formal' and 'real' subsumption of labour [...] as a question of historical transition'.<sup>2</sup> But the same critique is also valid for a part of one of the most intelligent theoretical and political traditions of European Marxism: *l'operaismo* (workerism). Sooner or later it will be necessary to write the history of this tradition 'against the grain'. This tradition, after having begun from the perspective of the political centrality of the mass worker (*operaio massa*), went on to consider industrial labour as secondary and residual in as much, according to what Negri writes *today*, we live 'in a society characterised ever more strongly by the hegemony of immaterial labour'.<sup>3</sup> Before conducting any theoretical reflection it would be necessary to ask: to which fragment of the planet do these analyses refer? And why are material labour and the most brutal forms of extortion of absolute surplus-value *not* residual in four-fifths of the planet? It is certainly not a case of a lack of information regarding the global phenomenology of labour. The problem regards the unrigorous categories adopted in order to read and intervene in the social relations. The problems seem to arise when the workerist gesture chases after the subject of antagonism in the historical process, whose *tendency* is carved out by looking at a postage stamp of the world. Beginning from this, a historical-philosophical rhythm is then ascribed to the rest of the planet.

In order to avoid surrendering to these historicist equations, according to which the industrial working-class today would stand in the same relation to immaterial labour as the peasants did to the industrial working-class in the nineteenth century, it is necessary to re-descend into the laboratories of production. It is necessary to follow the chains of valorisation that, with delocalisation, exit not only from the factory but which also cross national frontiers, and thus also the salary differentials from which capital profits. But a mapping of

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2 Chakrabarty 2000, pp. 12-14 and note 37 on p. 261.

3 Negri 1998, p. 8.

delocalisation would be only a faded photograph in black and white without the vivid colours of living labour, of the migrant workers who, affirming their freedom of movement, clash with the capitalist interest to construct and preserve salary differentials within and outside Europe.

## I In Marx's Laboratory

It is necessary to rethink the conceptual structure that makes it possible for us to comprehend the contemporary capitalist forms of exploitation, to retrace Marx's movement from *the abstract to the concrete*. It is not a case of giving merely an objective representation of the processes currently underway. We have to understand the subjective insurgencies that disarticulate the process, because the political task is their rearticulation on new foundations.

In the celebrated 'Preface' of 1859 Marx delineates the progressive process of universal history according to definite stages. The Asiatic, classical, feudal and bourgeois modes of production are qualified as 'progressive epochs', with respect to which the bourgeois is 'the last antagonistic form of the process of production'. Marx liberated himself with difficulty from this historical-philosophical (*geschichtsphilosophisch*) legacy, perhaps only during the maturation of the conceptual structure of *Capital*. Directly confronting the Asiatic modes of production and the Russian populists<sup>4</sup>, he understood that there are not predetermined stages of capitalist development. In a letter at the end of 1877 to the Editor of *Otecestvennye Zapiski*, he wrote that his sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe could not be transformed 'into a historical-philosophical theory of universal development, predetermined by fate, for all peoples, regardless of the historical circumstances in which they find themselves'. He had learnt that one could never understand historical phenomena 'with the *passe-partout* of a philosophy of history whose supreme virtue is to be suprahistorical'.<sup>5</sup> Marx arrived at this acquisition by making an idea of the development of the forces of production interact with the concrete replies of history, that is to say, the *histories* of the struggles that, interacting with the atemporal historicity of capital, co-determine its history.

The hasty liquidation of the notion of value has not helped us to comprehend Marx's rethinking of this conceptual structure during the

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4 Marx overcomes his own Eurocentrism towards the end of the 60s, opening himself to the problematic of 'peripheral' Russia: cf. Dussel 1990, ch. VII.

5 Cf. Marx's reply to N.K. Michajlovskij in a letter to the editor of *Otecestvennye Zapiski* at the end of 1877 in *Marx Engels Collected Works (MECW)* 24, 201.

years of writing *Capital*.<sup>6</sup> For Marx, the notion of value constituted a problem. It was for this reason that he continually returned to it. In 1858, he still considered Ricardo's theory of value to be correct.<sup>7</sup> Four years later, however, it is presented as a bearer of a confusion between *values* and *prices*.<sup>8</sup> The year is significant, because, even if it does not signal the exact moment in which Marx completely abandoned the Ricardian theory, it at least indicates the context: the entire period between 1861 and 1863, during which Marx compiles a good 23 notebooks of economic writings. The problem troubles him not only during the preparation of *Capital*, but also after, forcing him to revise the diverse editions and even further, to intervene in the French translation. Marxian philology provides us today an enormous quantity of material for comprehending the sense of this *work in progress*. It is probably useful to seek, not some solution of Marx's to the question of value, but rather, to retrace Marx's gesture, that is, to pose once again the problem that is inside the question of value.

Continuing to reflect on the value-form, Marx emphasises always more forcefully both the *social* nature of the relation of value, and its historically determinate character. 'First, that which should be noted straight away: the general or abstract character of labour is, in the production of commodities, its *social* (*gesellschaftlich*) character, because it is the character of the *equality* (*Gleichheit*) of the labours incorporated in the different labour products. This determinant form of *social* labour (*Diese bestimmte Form der gesellschaftlichen Arbeit*) distinguishes commodity production from other modes of production'.<sup>9</sup> The abstract character of labour refers to the *social* character of the labour of the production of commodities, which is characterised as a form of production specifically capitalist and distinct from any other mode of production.

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6 The overvaluation of the *Grundrisse*, set against *Capital*, has also not helped, at least in Italy. Negri still invites us today to re-read the *Grundrisse* as a theoretical anticipation of the mature capitalist society, written by a Marx who 'tells us that capitalist development leads to a society in which industrial labour (in as much as it is immediate labour) is now only a *secondary* element in the organisation of capitalism'. (my italics) (Negri 1998: 7-8). Tronti, however, had already presented the *Grundrisse* as a 'more advanced book' in regard both to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and to *Capital* (Tronti 1966: 210). In the attempt to seek the action of the revolutionary subjectivity imprisoned, according to Negri, in the categorical objectivisation of *Capital*, Marx's rethinking of that conceptual structure has been entirely disregarded. However, it was a rethinking whose vital substance was instead constituted by the concreteness of class conflicts.

7 Marx to Lassalle, 11th March 1858: 'You yourself will have found in your economic studies that in the development of profit Ricardo falls into contradiction with his (correct) determination of value': *MECW* 40, 286-7.

8 Marx to Engels, 2nd August 1862 in *MECW* 41, 394-398.

9 K. Marx, *Ergänzungen und Veränderungen zum ersten Band des «Kapitals»* (Dezember 1871-Januar 1872), in *MEGA*<sup>2</sup>, II/6, pp. 28-9.

This passage is fully intelligible when reading the seventh chapter ('The Labour Process and the Process of Producing Surplus-Value') as simultaneously presupposed by and the result of that which precedes it<sup>10</sup>. Due to a 'will to a system', Marx developed abstract labour and value before the process of valorisation. This order has generated the illusion of being able to historicise simple commodity production, distinguishing it from capitalist production in the strict sense.<sup>11</sup> A reading of this type gives rise to a metahistorical theory of value. At the same time, it develops diachronically conceptual determinations that should instead be understood synchronically. This way of seeing has generated, as we will soon see, the misunderstanding of the paradigm in two stages and the extension of the commodity form to non-capitalist modes of production. For Marx, on the other hand, the commodity exists only in a specifically capitalist constellation of the mode and relations of production: 'What I proceed from is the simplest social form in which the product of labour presents itself in contemporary society, and this is the "commodity"'.<sup>12</sup> This acquisition allows us to understand the constitutive categories of capital as entirely operative from the origin of the capitalist mode of production. That means that when we speak of capital it is necessary to assume as given the entire conceptual constellation.

It was an error to read the development of capital in evolutionist terms: politically, this view has coincided with that of progress. Thus not only is any society denied the possibility of leaping over the 'natural phases' of its development, but forms of exploitation are laid out diachronically, when they are instead completely complementary. This is the case of absolute and relative surplus-value, that is, of the extortion of surplus-value by means of a lengthening of the working day and the intensification of labour through the introduction of machines. The passage from formal subsumption to real subsumption, from the extortion of absolute surplus-value to relative surplus-value, is not marked according to a paradigm of stages<sup>13</sup> in which the first

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10 Cf. Bellofiore 2004, pp. 170-210; Finelli 2005, pp. 211-23.

11 It was Engels who linked the category of "simple mercantile production" to the part on the commodity in *Capital*, thus giving an historicist interpretation of capitalist development: cf. Hecker 1997, pp. 119-126: 'Engels's explanation of simple commodity production as feudal production represents the attempt of the historicisation of social relations' (ibid, p. 122).

12 K. Marx, 'Marginal Notes on Adolph Wagner's *Lehrbuch der Politischer Oekonomie*' (1881-82), in *MEW*, Bd. 19, p. 369; *MECW* 24, 531-562.

13 It should be remembered that the term 'subsumption', regularly used until the end of the 1860s, became less frequent in *Capital*, even though never disappearing completely. Badaloni noted something significant in this regard, emphasising how the term 'Unterwerfung' (submission) takes the place of 'subsumption', 'with an analogous meaning to that of real subsumption and nevertheless without the historical reference to two stages that to a certain extent entangle the concept of subsumption' (Badaloni 1984, pp. 20-1). The

gives way to the second.<sup>14</sup> The passage from the third part ('The Production of Absolute Surplus-Value') to the fourth ('The Production of Relative Surplus-Value') is marked by the final lines of chapter ten, where the workers, 'as a class', succeeded in establishing a state law on the duration of the working day. If in fact 'the creation of a normal working-day is [...] the product of a protracted civil war, more or less dissembled, between the capitalist class and the working-class'<sup>15</sup>, capital responds to the war with an augmentation of the productive force of labour by means of machines. 'Progress' is measured by this intensification of exploitation. For this reason, it is unrealistic, even when not in bad faith, to prophesise the liberation of labour by means of machines within capitalist relations of production, when the use-value of labour remains intrinsically capitalist. *Innovation* is a response to the insurgency of living labour. That means that capital introduces new machinery because it is compelled to, both by the unruliness of the workers and the physiological limit reached in the exploitation of labour power.

Absolute and relative surplus-value are not to be thought in a diachronic succession, but synchronically in an historical-temporal *multiversum*. Relative surplus-value is such only *in relation* to absolute surplus-value: relative surplus-value not only does not replace absolute surplus-value, but necessitates, for its own realisation, an increase of the quantity of socially produced absolute surplus-value. The use of machines in production allows the exploitation of labour with a greater intensity with respect to the social average of exploitation, and it is precisely this *differential* quota that constitutes relative surplus-value. As we will see, this gap must necessarily be covered by a production of absolute surplus-value, which thus, far from being an archaic form of capitalist exploitation or a residue of the nineteenth century, is the form of extortion of surplus-value most adequate to our times.

The existence of conditions of labour where the working day is notably longer than 8 hours and the wages are below the conditions of survival - that is, high absolute surplus-value - is not to be attributed to past capitalist forms that live on only in economically depressed zones. Rather, it is a case of the result and the presupposition of the

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paradigm of two stages is still present in the so-called unedited sixth chapter, with respect to which, however, it should be noted that when Marx commenced the writing of the definitive text of the first book of *Capital*, in 1866, he eliminated the part of the manuscripts containing the sixth chapter, of which he left only a summary in the first edition. He eliminated even that in the second edition. Cf. Antonowa 1982, pp. 63-72.

14 This 'historicising' formulation is found in the writings of Negri from the 1970s to Negri and Hardt 2000, pp. 254-55: 'At a certain point, as capitalist expansion reaches its limit, the processes of formal subsumption can no longer play the central role'.

15 *MECW* 35, 305.

'progress' of capital. The more capital uses technology and thus machines, the more elevated therefore the mass of surplus-values that is produced, so much the more must the direct extortion of absolute surplus-value increase.

## II In the Laboratory of Production. On the Reciprocal Implication of Absolute and Relative Surplus-Value

Let us stay for a moment in Marx's laboratory. Here we discover that the distinction between value and exchange-value is a late acquisition of Marx. After the confusion of the *Grundrisse* follows the attempt to find a conceptual rigour in the writings of the 60s, until the formulation of the 'Randglossen zu Adolph Wagners *Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie*'. It is important to understand exchange-value, beyond some logical-conceptual shifts present even in the writings of the mature Marx, *not* as the objectification of labour immediately spent in the production of a determinate commodity, but as an expression of the quantity of social labour objectified in the commodity: 'that which determines the magnitude of the value of any article is the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour time socially necessary for its production'.<sup>16</sup> It is in *Capital* that we find the highest level of conceptual determination of social labour, and it is this determination that needs to be assumed in order to test Marx's entire theoretical edifice. That which needs to be clear, and which also contains a moment of real difficulty, is that the labour objectified in the *exchange-value* of a commodity does not correspond to the quantity of labour immediately spent in its production. Instead, it is the fruit of a mediation with socially allocated labour. In this sense, the expression individual value (*individueller Wert*) is a contradiction in itself: not only because, as Marx emphasizes in the *Marginal Notes on Wagner* in 1881-82 – the dates are important in this case – 'exchange-value in the singular does not exist'<sup>17</sup>, but because it presupposes a value determined quantitatively by labour individually employed in the production of this commodity, and not by social labour. This, on the other hand, is not a definite size once and for all. Rather, it is variable and its variability *retroacts* on the determination of the quantity of social labour contained in a commodity. If the general conditions inside which a certain quantity of commodities are produced change, then – Marx affirms – a reverse effect (*Rückwirkung*) takes place on them.<sup>18</sup> It

16 MECW 35, 48.

17 K. Marx, 'Marginal Notes on Adolph Wagner's *Lehrbuch der Politischer Oekonomie*' (1881-82), MECW 24, 531-562.

18 Cf. *Ökonomisches Manuskript 1861-1863*, Teil 1, in MEW, Bd. 43, p. 75.

is possible that a determinate quantity of labour time already objectified in a commodity changes due to a change in the social productivity of labour, which reacts on the exchange-value of the commodity itself.

The notion of retroaction (*Rückwirkung*) allows Marx to explain a change in value that has its origins 'outside (*außerhalb*)' of the process of production, and specifically following a change of the cost of raw materials or the introduction of a 'new invention'.<sup>19</sup> This important Marxian understanding is possible only within a constellation that is clear on the *social* character of the labour that valorises value: 'The value of a commodity is certainly determined by the quantity of labour contained in it, but this quantity is itself socially (*gesellschaftlich*) determined. If the amount of labour-time socially necessary for the production of any commodity alters...this reacts back on all the old commodities of the same type, because...their value at any given time is measured by the labour socially necessary to produce them, i.e., by the labour necessary under the social conditions existing at the time.'<sup>20</sup> In other words: the changes in the intensity of social labour react back on the commodities already produced, causing a change in the labour time objectified in them<sup>21</sup>.

If *Capital* represents the high point of categorical elaboration, it is here that we must find the most mature consequences of this way of understanding social labour and exchange-value. As already seen, "The real value of a commodity, however, is not its *individual*, but its *social* value; that is to say, its value is not measured by the labour-time that the article costs the producer in each individual case, but by the labour-time socially required for its production."<sup>22</sup> If therefore the value of a commodity depends upon the labour time objectified in it, it should be kept in mind that this labour time is not that effectively employed for the production of a given use-object, but can be either greater or smaller than that. The generic human labour time objectified in the substance of value must be adjusted to the time that social labour would need to carry out that same job. *Surplus value is not a quantifiable amount within the accounting of a single firm.*

The idea, recurring in numerous places in Marx's analysis and taken up by Kautsky<sup>23</sup>, according to which surplus-value would be

19 MECW 35, p. 318.

20 MECW 35, p. 318.

21 See M. De Angelis, Value(s), Measure(s) and Disciplinary Markets, in «The Commoner», n. 10 (2005), in <http://www.commoner.org.uk/10deangelispdf>.

22 MECW 35, p. 434.

23 In Kautsky the linear depiction of surplus-value is represented in the following schema: A——C——B; where AC represents the 'line of time of necessary labour' and CB the 'time of excess labour'. According to this schema, shortening the time of necessary labour (AC) gives an augmentation of excess labour: this would be *relative surplus-value*. The lengthening of the

determined by the labour time that exceeds that which would be necessary for the worker employed by an individual capital to produce his own wages, is a simplification. Let us suppose that the singular commodity value — and from this, surplus-value — can be calculated in a linear way, that is to say, based upon the time of labour that exceeds that which is necessary to replenish the wage. On the other hand, the value produced, which is an objectivation of *social* labour, is not deductible from the labour actually expended in a single productive process. If the productive force of the latter is below the productivity of social labour, it can happen that, despite wages in this particular sector are pushed downward and the labour time upward, the production of surplus labour remains very low<sup>24</sup>.

The case that can happen is that an hour of work of high intensity corresponds to two hours of social labour, in the places where the society as a whole still does not use technological innovation. This exchange, where one is equal to two, violates only the intellectual principles of whomever holds to grade-school mathematics; the value of commodities in general, and therefore also of those produced with technological innovation, is its social value, that is, the quantity of *social labour* objectified in it. This phenomenon imposes itself violently in the world market, where an increase in the productive power of labour through the introduction of a new machine counts as an increase in the intensity of labour if the capitalist can sell the commodities at a superior price, equivalent to the labour necessary to produce the same commodity on the part of other capitalists who still lack that technological innovation. The fact that the labour time effectively expended is inferior to that which is socially necessary changes nothing in the relationship, except that the capitalist, selling the commodity at its value, appropriates social surplus value, and therefore exchanges one hour of labour for two. "Hence the capitalist who applies the improved method of production appropriates and devotes to surplus labour a greater portion (*Extramehrwert*) of the working day than the other capitalists in the same business."<sup>25</sup> Beyond numbers, the *Extramehrwert* that is appropriated by the capitalist corresponds to the quantity of social surplus value that he can

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working day (AB) constitutes instead *absolute surplus-value*. Cf. Kautsky 1972, p. 102. Kautsky's error consists substantially in understanding the time of necessary labour as the time of labour necessary for the maintenance of the worker (pp. 78-9).

24 The segment AC of the linearschema (see previous note) can be shortened by reducing wages, but the value of labour-power and, therefore, the quantity of labour that this costs, must be calculated on the basis of the labour productivity which is socially necessary and *not* on the basis of that individual labour.

25 *MECW* 35, p. 436.

withdraw from the society to the extent that he is an extractor of relative surplus value.

In this way a greater number of hours of work concretely performed pass through the hands of the capitalist who utilizes a greater productive power of work without violating the law of equivalence. The *difference* between capitalists who exploit work of different productivity is *therefore necessary* so that it will be possible to extract relative surplus value from the advantage that springs from the technological innovation. This can be seen not only on a worldwide scale, where capital is continually in search of masses of absolute surplus value, but also within the western metropolises and even within the same corporation, broken up into apparently independent productive segments and in competition with each other: capital is in any case searching for the maximum gap possible between the intensity of labour in phases that, even if they are part of the same cycle, are recomposed through circulation.

The differential quota between a given intensity of labour and social labour is concretely realised through a transfer of value from production spheres in which the intensity of labour is lower relative to those in which capital exploits labour at an intensity that is higher than the social average. The immediate repercussion of a technological innovation is a *prolonging* of labour time wherever the innovation is not yet employed: "One of the first consequences of the introduction of new machinery, before it has become dominant in its branch of production, is the *prolongation* of the labour-time of the labourers who continue to work with the old and unimproved means of production."<sup>26</sup> The introduction of a new machine generates an increase in relative surplus value, an increase that, in order to be realised, must be sustained by a proportional increase in the extraction of *absolute surplus value*, where the innovation has not yet been employed. The relative surplus value is *relative* in this sense, because it, to be real, must be placed in *relation* to absolute surplus value. To the extent to which the capitalist that takes advantage of a technological innovation *realises* at least a part of the relative surplus value that is potentially his, this surplus value takes form through a social transfer of value from productive areas of high absolute surplus value towards those of high relative surplus value. The relative increase in the labour productivity and of the surplus value in some sectors of production leads to a de-valorisation of labour-power that could also manifest itself as growth of the exploitation of reproduction work — whether waged or unwaged. Indeed, we should always keep into consideration

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26 K. Marx, *Oekonomisches Manuskript 1861-1863*, Teil 1, in *MEW* 43, Berlin, 1990, p. 323.

the quantity of labour that is indirectly commanded by capital through a wage.

Only when Marx clarified further the nature of exchange-value, he was able to show that the machine not only does not create value, but it also *does not produce surplus value*: “As machinery comes into general use in a particular branch of production, the social value of the machine’s product sinks down to its individual value, and the following law asserts itself: surplus value does not arise from the labour-power that has been replaced by the machinery, but from the labour-power actually employed in working with the machinery.”<sup>27</sup> When a technological innovation becomes widespread, the growing intensity of labour obtained through its employment becomes socially dominant and there is less chance of extracting quotas of social surplus value from the means of production of relative surplus value.

The production of surplus value make use of machines in two ways: one, indirectly, through the devalorisation of labour-power following the expulsion of workers replaced by machines; second, relative surplus value *stricto sensu*, exploiting the sporadic introduction of machines. The latter circumstance is that which allows the exploitation of labour of a greater intensity than the social average, such that the individual labour objectified in *this* commodity is less than the quantity of socially average labour.<sup>28</sup> And we know by now that only the latter determines exchange-value.

When the intensity of labour obtained by a technical innovation becomes socially dominant, it unleashes “the most ruthless and excessive *prolongation of the working day*, in order that he may secure compensation for the decrease in the relative number of workers exploited by increasing not only relative but also absolute surplus labour.”<sup>29</sup> The extraction of relative surplus value generates, in those parts of the world where workers’ resistance is lower, a great mass of absolute exploitation. This means that the introduction of new machinery is not a pre-determined route in the history of all countries, but on the contrary different capitals in head-to-head competition with each other in the world market must seek out or create geographic areas with different labour powers having different wages and productive powers.<sup>30</sup> If the reciprocal implication of the various forms of surplus value are grasped, then it is only out of faith in some progressive and Eurocentric philosophy of history that it is possible to consider some forms of production as backward and wage labour, extended to the whole world, as residual.

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27 MECW 35, p. 530.

28 MECW 35, p. 530.

29 MECW 35, p. 531.

30 Interesting is the argument of Marini 1991, p. 8-10.

Formal subsumption is the basis of capitalist production as the production of surplus value in a process whose end is the production of commodities for the market; real subsumption presents itself instead as a specifically capitalist form because it doesn't allow the previous social relations to remain, but revolutionises the technical processes of production and the formation of social groups (*gesellschaftliche Gruppierungen*).<sup>31</sup> To these two forms should also be added a third form, rarely studied: that of the hybrid or intermediate forms (*Zwitterformen*) of subsumption.<sup>32</sup> Marx speaks of them for the first time in *Capital*. They are forms in which surplus labour is extracted by means of direct coercion (*direkter Zwang*), without there being formal subsumption of labour to capital. Marx observes how these forms can indeed be understood as forms of transition, but can also be reproduced in the background of large scale industry. The hybrid forms, though they are not formally subsumed to capital and though labour is not given in the form of wage labour, fall under the command of capital. That allows us to comprehend the contemporaneity of apparently anachronistic forms like *slavery*, which are not mere residues of past epochs, but forms that, though with an altered physiognomy, are produced and reproduced in the background of the *current* capitalist mode of production.

The exploitation of child labour in Asian countries and hours of work up to eighteen a day<sup>33</sup> are not cases of capitalist underdevelopment, but express the current levels of production of social surplus value.<sup>34</sup> If we assume all the way through the reciprocal co-penetration between absolute and relative surplus value, the distinction between North and South of the world, between first, second and third world, or if one prefers, between *core*, *semi-periphery* and *periphery* with 'advanced' and 'backward' capitalisms, lose a great part of their significance. It is no longer possible to reason in terms of *tendencies* and *residues*: the various forms of exploitation are to be understood in a historical-temporal *multiversum*, in which they interact within the contemporaneity of the present. This interlinking should be followed *materially* along the lines of the differences between national salaries. Analysis and practical intervention here should succeed in fusing together.

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31 *MEW* Bd. 23, p. 533, transl. *MECW* 35, p. 645.

32 A happy exception is the work of P. Murray, who recalled my attention to hybrid subsumption: Murray 2004; Murray 2000, p. 122.

33 On the conditions of labour in China see Chan and Xiaoyang 2003, pp. 559-584.

34 Globalization makes political command capitalistically productive that asserts itself along the border to conserve the valorizing potential of wage differentials. See the work of Sacchetto 2004. See also Gambino 2003. On the non-residual character of forced labour and the processes of enslavement of contemporary labour-power, see Zanin 2002.

Globalisation renders the political command that it exercises along the borders capitalistically productive in order to conserve the valorising potential of differential wages. This command is manifested over migrant workers without any niceties. Sovereignty, rights of citizenship and control of the borders operate economically in order to delineate different wage areas that can be preserved only by reducing to a minimum the movements of labour power from one area to the other.<sup>35</sup> The chains of valorisation cross a multiplicity of wage areas, national and intranational, using those differentials profitably. Delocalisation makes the difference of the intensity of labour and of wage levels capitalistically productive: that would not be possible without a political command over the migrant flows. These migrant flows therefore justly rank highly among the forms of workers' resistance to control and the forms of self-determination of the wage against capital. The migrant workers are not bare life but labour power that, violating the borders, tends to disrupt the division of labour and national differentials of wages. The policies of regulation of the migrant flows, on the other hand, are economic policies of segmentation of the labour market and of the demarcation of wage differentials. All the contemporary forms of the removal of wage differentials should thus be investigated as subjective insurgencies in tension with wage labour.

As if the assembly lines had exited from the factory in order to undertake a long world tour, the chains of valorisation cross the borders of states, profiting from the national differentials of wages. In this context, political command over the borders and capitalist command over labour power are fused. The spectral nature of this interweaving is manifested in the policies against migrants and in the detention centres for migrants, the so-called 'Centres of temporary stay' (*Centri di Permanenza Temporanea*). In order to comprehend these processes it is urgently necessary to go back down into the laboratories of production, in order to be able to comprehend the production process of valorisation in a snap shot. We must also, however, free ourselves from the comfort-blanket of a teleological philosophy of history not yet deactivated in the notion of 'tendency'. There aren't any short cuts.

*Translated by Peter Thomas and Steven Colatrella*

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35 There have been attempts of practical intervention in this direction in recent years. An element of these can be seen in Raimondi and Ricciardi 2004.

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# A Critique of the Fordism of the Regulation School

Ferruccio Gambino<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Some of the categories that people have used in recent years to describe the changes taking place in the world of production, such as Fordism, post-Fordism and immaterial production, have shown themselves to be rather blunt instruments.<sup>2</sup> Here I intend to deal with the use of the concepts “Fordism” and “post-Fordism” by the regulation school, which has given a particular twist to the former term, and which coined *ex novo* the latter. The aim of my article is to help break the conflict-excluding spell under which the regulation school has succeeded in casting Fordism and post-Fordism.

From midway through the 1970s, as a result of the writings of Michel Aglietta<sup>3</sup> and then of other exponents of the regulation school,

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- 1 The English version of this paper appeared in 1996 in *Common Sense* no. 19 and was subsequently published as a chapter in Werner Bonefeld (ed), *Revolutionary Writing: Common Sense Essays In Post-Political Politics Writing*, New York, Autonomedia, 2003.
  - 2 For a timely critique of the term “immaterial production”, see Sergio Bologna, “Problematiche del lavoro autonomo in Italia” (Part I), *Altreragioni*, no. 1 (1992), pp. 10-27.
  - 3 Michel Aglietta, (1974), *Accumulation et régulation du capitalisme en longue période. L'exemple des Etats Unis (1870-1970)*, Paris, INSEE, 1974; the second French edition has the title *Régulation et crises du capitalisme*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1976; English translation, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: the US Experience*, London and New York, Verso, 1979; in 1987 there followed a second English edition from the same publisher. The link between the category

including Boyer, Coriat and Lipietz, Fordism began to take on a neutral meaning, due in part to a degree of slipshod historiography, but also to the reduction of movements of social classes into mere abstraction.<sup>4</sup>

When they use the term Fordism, the regulation school are referring essentially to a system of production based on the assembly line, which is capable of relatively high industrial productivity.<sup>5</sup> The regulationists' attention is directed not so much to the well-documented inflexibility of the Fordist process of production, to the necessary deskilling of the workforce, to the rigidity of Fordism's structure of command and its productive and social hierarchy, nor to the forms and contents of industrial conflict generated within it, but to the regulation of relations of production by the state, operating as a locus of mediation and institutional reconciliation between social forces. *I shall call this interpretation "regulationist Fordism", and shall use "pre-trade union Fordism" to refer to the sense in which Fordism*

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of Fordism and that of post-Fordism may be considered the term "neo-Fordism", proposed by Christian Palloix two years after the publication of the first edition of Aglietta's book. Cf. Christian Palloix, "Le procès du travail. Du fordisme au neo-fordisme", *La Pensée* no. 185 (February 1976), pp. 37-60, according to whom neo-Fordism referred to the new capitalist practice of job enrichment and job recomposition as a response to new requirements in the management of workforces.

- 4 For the regulationist interpretation of Fordism prior to 1991, see the fundamental volume edited by Werner Bonefeld and John Holloway, *Post-Fordism and Social Form: A Marxist Debate on the Post-Fordist State*, London, Macmillan, 1991, which contains the principal bibliographical references for the debate. For the regulation school see, among others, the following works: Robert Boyer, *La théorie de la régulation: une analyse critique*, Paris, La Découverte, 1986; Robert Boyer (ed.), *Capitalismes fin de siècle*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1986; Alain Lipietz, "Towards Global Fordism?", *New Left Review* no. 132 (March-April 1982), pp. 33-47; Alain Lipietz, "Imperialism as the Beast of the Apocalypse", *Capital and Class*, no. 22 (Spring 1984), pp. 81-109; Alain Lipietz, "Behind the Crisis: the Exhaustion of a Regime of Accumulation. A 'Regulation School Perspective' on Some French Empirical Works", *Review of Radical Political Economy*, vol. 18, no. 1-2 (1986), pp. 13-32; Alain Lipietz, *Mirages and Miracles: the Crisis of Global Fordism*, London, Verso, 1987; Alain Lipietz, "Fordism and post-Fordism" in W. Outhwaite and Tom Bottomore (eds.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth Century Social Thought*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993, pp. 230-31; Benjamin Coriat, *Penser à l'envers. Travail et organisation dans l'entreprise japonaise*, Paris, Christian Bourgois, 1991; Italian translation, *Ripensare l'organizzazione del lavoro. Concetti e prassi del modello giapponese*, Bari, Dedalo, 1991, with introduction and translation by Mirella Giannini.
- 5 I say "relatively high productivity" because the assembly line has not always produced results. For example, the Soviet Fordism of the first two five-year plans (1928-32, 1933-37) was the object of some experimentation, particularly on the assembly lines of the Gorki auto factory (thanks in part to the technical support of Ford technicians), but productivity turned out to be about 50 per cent lower than that of Ford's US factory. Cf. John P. Hardt and George D. Holliday, "Technology Transfer and Change in the Soviet Economic System", in Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., *Technology and Communist Culture: the Socio-Cultural Impact of Technology under Socialism*, New York and London, Praeger, 1977, pp. 183-223.

was generally understood in Europe from the early 1920s to the 1960s.<sup>6</sup>

## Regulationist Fordism

In what follows I shall outline briefly the periodisation which the inventors of the regulationist notion of Fordism have given their idea, because this is crucial if we are to understand the ways in which it is semantically distinct from pre-trade union Fordism; I shall then sketch the basic characteristics of the latter.

According to the regulation school, Fordism penetrated the vital ganglia of the US engineering industry and became its catalysing force in a period that is undefined, but presumably in the 1920s, delivering high wages and acting as the cutting edge of the mass consumption of consumer durables. Having passed through the mill of the Great Depression and the Second World War, Fordism then provided the basis for the expansion of Keynesian effective demand in the United States, where it provided the underpinning for a “welfare” regime, and thus for a stable global social reproduction, presumably from the end

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6 In his “Fordism and post-Fordism”, op. cit., p. 230, Lipietz maintains incorrectly that the term “Fordism” “was coined in the 1930s by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and by the Belgian socialist Henri de Man”. Lipietz is obviously referring to “Americanismo e fordismo” (1934) in Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, vol. 3. ed. Valentino Gerratana, Torino, Einaudi, 1975, pp. 2137-81, a series of notes in which Gramsci takes account, among other things, of a book by de Man which does not directly discuss Fordism. The first edition of de Man’s work appeared in Germany in 1926: Hendrik de Man, *Zur psychologie des Sozialismus*, Jena, E. Diederichs, 1926 and, after a partial French translation which appeared in Brussels in 1927, a complete translation was published under the title of *Au delà du Marxisme*, Paris, Alcan, 1929, based on the second German edition published by Diederichs (1927). For his prison notes on “Americanism and Fordism”, Gramsci had the Italian translation of the French edition published by Alcan: Henri de Man, *Il superamento del marxismo*, Bari, Laterza, 1929. In Europe the term “Fordism” pre-dates de Man and Gramsci, and was already in use in the early 1920s; cf. in particular Friedrich von Gottl-Ottlilienfeld, *Fordismus? Paraphrasen über das Verhältnis von Wirtschaft und Technischer Vernunft bei Henry Ford und Frederick W. Taylor*, Jena, Gustav Fischer, 1924; H. Sinzheimer, “L’Europa e l’idea di democrazia economica” (1925), *Quaderni di azione sociale* XXXIX, no. 2 (1994), pp. 71-4, edited and translated by Sandro Mezzadra, whom I thank for this reference. In his article cited above, Lipietz states equally erroneously that “in the 1960s the term was rediscovered by a number of Italian Marxists (R. Panzieri, M. Tronti, A. Negri)”. In Italy the discussion of Fordism was addressed, taking a critical distance from Gramsci, in the volume of Romano Alquati’s writings, *Sulla FIAT e altri scritti*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1975, which brought together texts from the period 1961-1967, and in the volume by Sergio Bologna, George P. Rawick, Mauro Gobbini, Antonio Negri, Luciano Ferrari-Bravo and Ferruccio Gambino, *Operai e Stato: Lotte operaie e riforma dello stato capitalistico tra rivoluzione d’Ottobre e New Deal*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1972, which contained the proceedings of a conference held in Padova in 1967.

of the 1940s onwards. In the 1950s, this system of production is seen as reaching out from the United States towards the countries of Western Europe, and Japan. According to the regulationist periodisation, therefore, the high season of Fordism actually turns out to be rather brief, since it converges—albeit only on paper—with Keynesianism at about the end of the 1930s; then it becomes a concrete reality at the start of the 1950s, and lasts through to the end of the 1960s, when it goes into irreversible crisis. In their view, that point sees the opening of the period—through which we are still passing—of post-Fordism.

The regulation school can justifiably claim credit for the interpretation which associates transformations in the processes of valorisation with changes taking place in the socio-political sphere, and vice-versa. It was to make this position its own, and developed it with contributions on the state apparatus and its relations with modern and contemporary capital, in the writings of Hirsch and Roth in Germany and Jessop in Britain.<sup>7</sup> According to Jessop, the regulation school comprises four principal directions of research.<sup>8</sup>

The first direction, initiated by Aglietta, studies regimes of accumulation and models of growth according to their economic determinations, and it applied its first interpretative schema to the United States. Other studies looked at state economic formations—sometimes to examine the spread of Fordism in a given context, and sometimes to follow the particular circumstances of its development— independently from the question of the insertion or otherwise of those states within the international economic circuit.

The second direction concentrates on the international economic dimensions of regulation. It studies the various particular models of international regulation, as well as the form and extent of the complementarity between different national models of growth. This involves examining subjects such as the inclusion and/or exclusion of state and regional formations from the economic order, and the tendencies to autarchic closure and/or internationalistic openness of given countries.

The third direction analyses the overall models of the social structures of accumulation at national level. Reproduction of society depends on an ensemble of institutionally mediated practices which

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7 See in particular, in Werner Bonefeld and John Holloway (eds.) *Post-Fordism and Social Form*, op. cit., the essay by Joachim Hirsch, "Fordism and post-Fordism: The Present Social Crisis and its Consequences", pp. 8-34, and the two essays by Bob Jessop, "Regulation Theory, Post-Fordism and the State: More than a Reply to Werner Bonefeld", pp. 69-91; and "Polar Bears and Class Struggle: Much Less than a Self-Criticism", pp. 145-69, which contain further bibliographical references.

8 Bob Jessop, "Regulation Theory, Post-Fordism and the State", op. cit., pp. 87-8.

guarantee at least a degree of correspondence between different structures and a balance of compromise between social forces. This strand of regulationism devotes particular attention to the categories of state and hegemony, which it considers to be central elements of social regulation.

The fourth strand, the least developed of the four, studies the interdependences of emerging international structures, and various attempts to lay the basis of a world order through international institutions (which the regulationists call “regimes”) aimed at establishing or re-establishing an international order.

Now, even from this summary listing of the regulation school’s principal themes it becomes obvious that the centre of gravity of its interests lies in the analysis not so much of the social relations of production, but rather of the economic/state institutions which oversee them. *In short, the regulation school stresses the permanence of structures, and tends to overlook human subjects, their changes and what is happening to them with the disorganisation and reorganisation of social relations.*

From the start regulationism has been fascinated by the staying power of US capital post-1968, despite the United States’ defeat in Vietnam. According to the regulationists, in the period after World War II one has to grant the US “the dominant imperialist position”<sup>9</sup>: it therefore becomes necessary to understand how, *and thanks to what institutions* its structures and those of its allied industrial countries maintained their stability. Within this hypothesis there is an underlying assumption, in which Western institutions are seen as remaining solid (extremely solid in the case of the US), while not only the institutions of the labour movement, but also living labour power as a whole appear as inescapably subjugated to the unstoppable march of accumulation: in short, in the medium and long term capital’s stately progress is destined to continue, while its aporias melt on the horizon. Thus it becomes a question of studying the laws by which Western capital has succeeded in perpetuating itself. It was from within this framework that Michel Aglietta’s book<sup>10</sup> emerged, in the year following the first oil price shock, which was also the year of Washington’s political and military defeat in Vietnam.

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9 Joachim Hirsch, “Fordism and Post-Fordism: The Present Social Crisis and its Consequences”, op. cit., p. 15.

10 Michel Aglietta (1974), *Accumulation et régulation du capitalisme en longue période. Exemple des Etats Unis (1870-1970)*, Paris, INSEE, 1974.

## The Uncertain Contours of Regulationist Post-Fordism

For the regulation school, post-Fordism is like a crystal ball in which, “leaving aside the still not completely foreseeable consequences of molecular and genetic technology” it is possible to read some signs of the future. Particularly in the new information technology, in telecommunications and in data processing technologies, all of which could become the basis for a “hyperindustrialisation”, they see a potential for revolution in the world of production. Radically transforming work and fragmenting the “Taylorist mass worker”, the “electronic revolution” restratifies labour power and divides it into a relatively restricted upper level of the super-skilled, and a massive lower level of ordinary post-Fordist doers and executors. In short, it separates and divides labour power hierarchically and spatially and ends by breaking the framework of collective bargaining.<sup>11</sup> As a result the rhythm of accumulation becomes more intense, and there opens a perspective of a long period of capitalism without opposition—a *turbo-capitalism*—with a political stability that is preserved intact. The post-Fordist worker of the regulation school appears as an individual who is atomised, flexibilised, increasingly non-union, kept on low wages and inescapably in jobs that are always precarious. The state no longer guarantees to cover the material costs of reproduction of labour power, and oversees a contraction of workers’ consumption. In the opinion of the regulation school it would be hard to imagine a more complete overturning of so-called Fordist consumerism, within which, it is claimed, the workforce was allegedly put into conditions of wage employment which would enable them to buy the consumer durables that they created.

If we then look at the discontinuity between Fordism and post-Fordism, it seems to derive from the failure of two essential conditions: the mode of capitalist accumulation and the failure to adjust mass consumption to the increase in productivity generated by intense accumulation.<sup>12</sup> In the “golden years” following the Second World War, these two conditions had been satisfied. Fordism mobilised industrial capacities at both the extremes of high skilled and low skilled labour, without the system being destabilised by this polarisation; satisfactory profits were produced from mass consumption, which kept pace with growing investments.<sup>13</sup> As from the 1960s, these twin conditions were no longer given, because investments in the commodity-producing

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11 Joachim Hirsch, “Fordism and Post-Fordism: The Present Social Crisis and its Consequences”, pp. 25-6.

12 Alain Lipietz, “Towards Global Fordism”, *New Left Review*, no. 132 (March-April 1982), pp. 33-47.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

sector in the industrialised countries grew more than productivity, generating a crisis which capital then attempted to resolve by seeking out production options and market outlets in the Third World.

According to the regulationists the consequences at the social level are enormous. The influence of the state is reduced in society; the state is pared back; the majority sector of the non-privileged cuts back on its standard of living in order to organise its own survival; there is no sign of new aggregations arising out of the ashes of the old organisations and capable of expressing a collective solidarity. For the regulationists, strikes, campaigns and conflicts at the point of production are seen in terms of a pre-political spectrum which ranges between interesting curiosities (to which university research cannot be expected to pay attention) and residual phenomena.

## The Toyotophile Variant

The proponents of the advent of post-Fordism discovered Toyotism as a variant of post-Fordism towards the end of the 1980s.<sup>14</sup> In the 1960s, the West began belatedly to take account of the expansion of Japanese capitalism.<sup>15</sup> At that time it was understood as a phenomenon which combined shrewd commercial strategies with an endemic conformism and inadequate social policies.<sup>16</sup> On the Left there were some who—correctly, and before their time—saw in Japanese expansion new hegemonic temptations for Japan in East Asia.<sup>17</sup> Some years later, an admirer of the country's rate of economic growth drew attention to the regular increase in Japan's standard of living and the way in which the Japanese absorbed the oil price "shocks" of the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> There were also those who issued warnings about the regimentation of Japanese society, and about its incipient refusal of the rules dictated by the West.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile there was something of a fashion for Japanese

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14 On this development, cf. the review by Giuseppe Bonazzi, "La scoperta del modello giapponese nelle società occidentali", *Stato e Mercato*, no. 39 (December 1993), pp. 437-66, which discusses the variously critical reception of the Japanese model within Western sociology; more briefly and in more general terms, cf. Pierre-François Souyri, "Un nouveau paradigme?", *Annales*, vol. 49, no. 3 (May-June 1994), pp. 503-10.

15 Robert Guillaín, *Japon, troisième grand*, Paris, Seuil, 1969; Herman Kahn, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate*, Minneapolis, Minn., Hudson Institute, 1970.

16 Robert Brochier, *Le miracle économique japonais*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1970.

17 Jon Halliday and David McCormack, *Japanese Imperialism Today: Co-prosperity in Greater East Asia*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973.

18 Ezra Vogel, *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1979.

19 Karel Van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, New York, N.Y., Knopf, 1989.

authors who supplied the West with dubious but easy explanations of the rise of Japan on the basis of its cultural and religious ways of life.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1980s the debate entered the public domain with the publication of a number of important works on Japan's economic structures, despite the growing hostility of Western commercial interests and subsequent gratuitous attacks on the Japanese industrial system in the media.<sup>21</sup> However, still in the 1980s, a number of studies by Japanese economists and sociologists that had been translated into English went almost unobserved.<sup>22</sup> Even the book by the main inventor and propagator of the word "Toyotism", Tai'ichi Ohno,<sup>23</sup> was only translated and distributed in the West at the end of the 1980s, at a point when the world of Japanese industry was becoming one of the key focuses for discussions of industrial productivity.

In the early 1990s, thanks principally to the book by Coriat,<sup>24</sup> in continental Europe too the focus of the debate on Japanese industry shifted from cultural motivations to business strategies; other earlier and worthwhile contributions had aroused less interest. According to Coriat, the lessons emanating from the Toyota factories introduced a new paradigm of productivity, whose importance was comparable to those of Taylorism and Fordism in their time. *Thus Toyotism comes into the limelight in the guise of a post-Fordism that is complete and by now inevitable.* Toyotism is seen as the fulfilment of a tendency to a new form of rationalisation, a rationalisation which had certainly dawned with the category of post-Fordism, but which, in the West, had appeared vague, not yet taking concrete form in a specific form of production and a consolidated social space. In Toyotism however, we are told by Coriat, post-Fordism is realised not only as an ensemble of attempts to rationalise and reduce production costs, but also as a major experiment in new and more advanced relations of production—

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- 20 Chie Nakane, *Japanese Society*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1970; Italian translation, *La società giapponese*, Milan, Cortina. Michio Morishima, *Why Has Japan "Succeeded"?*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; Italian translation, *Cultura e tecnologia nel successo giapponese*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1984.
  - 21 Jean-Loup Lesage, *Les grands sociétés de commerce au Japon, les Shosha*, Paris, PUF; Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: the growth of industrial policy, 1925-75*, Tokyo, Tuttle, 1986.
  - 22 Masahiko Aoki, *The Economic Analysis of the Japanese Firm*, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1984; Kazuo Koike, *Understanding Industrial Relations in Modern Japan*, London, Macmillan, 1988.
  - 23 Tai'ichi Ohno, *Toyota Seisan Hoshiki* [The Toyota Production Method], Diamond Sha, 1978; English translation, *The Toyota Production System: Beyond Large-scale Production*, Productivity Press, Cambridge, Mass.; French translation, *L'esprit Toyota*, Paris, Masson, 1989; Italian translation, *Lo spirito toyota*, Torino, Einaudi, 1993.
  - 24 Benjamin Coriat, *Penser à l'envers. Travail et organisation dans l'entreprise japonaise*, Paris, Christian Bourgois, 1991; Italian translation, *Ripensare l'organizzazione del lavoro. Concetti e prassi del modello giapponese*, Bari, Dedalo, 1991.

in fact of a new sociality which might prefigure new forms of industrial democracy. In Coriat's book the West remains in the background, but if we transferred our attention from the delicate balance of productivity in Japan to its European variant, the diffuse factory, we would find an informal Toyotism already operating there, based on individual work contracts. For example, in the celebrated Italian industrial districts, we would find the employers in the "diffuse factory" attempting to set up individual relationships with their workers in order to break down systems of collective bargaining.

According to the Toyotist vulgate, the new system of productivity emerged principally as a result of endogenous demand factors during and after the boom of the Korean War (1950-53), as "just-in-time" production, and thus in large part as an attempt to reduce lead times and cut the workforce.<sup>25</sup>

What is new about Toyotism is essentially the elements of "just-in-time" production and prompt reaction to market requirements; the imposition of multi-jobbing on workers employed on several machines, either simultaneously or sequentially; quality control throughout the entire flow of production; real-time information on the progress of production in the factory; information which is both capillary and filtered in an authoritarian sense, in such a way as to create social embarrassment and drama in the event of incidents which are harmful to production. Production can be interrupted at any moment, thus calling to account a given work-team, or department, or even the whole factory. Any worker who shows a waged-worker's indifference to the company's productivity requirements, and therefore decides not to join "quality control" groups etc, is stigmatised and encouraged to leave. From Coriat we learn that in the interplay of "democracy" and "ostracism", the group may enjoy a measure of democracy, but the person stigmatised will certainly enjoy ostracism. In the interests of comprehensiveness, in his description of the wonders of Toyotism Coriat<sup>26</sup> devotes a laconic note to Satochi Kamata, the writer who went to work in Toyota in 1972 and whose experiences were reflected in the title of his book: *Toyota, the Factory of Despair*.<sup>27</sup>

Toyotism has a number of advantages for the regulation school as regards Western managerial perspectives, even though the Japanese advantage in productivity is showing itself to be tenuous, despite the propagandistic aura that has surrounded it in the West.<sup>28</sup>

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25 Benjamin Coriat, *Ripensare l'organizzazione del lavoro*, op. cit., pp. 32-3.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

27 Satochi Kamata, *Toyota, l'usine du désespoir*, Paris, Editions Ouvrières, 1976; English translation, *Japan in the Passing Lane: Insider's Account of Life in a Japanese Auto Factory*, New York, N.Y., Unwin Hyman, 1984. By the same author, *L'envers du Miracle*, Paris, Maspéro, 1980.

28 Ray and Cindelyn Eberts, *The Myths of Japanese Quality*, Upper Saddle, N.J.,

First of all, it is an experiment that is geographically remote and commercially successful, inasmuch as it defines a route to accumulation (albeit in conjunctures that are both pre-war and war-based, and not at all in conditions of peace, as the enthusiasts of Toyotism would like to have us believe). In the second place, Toyotist methods seem to contradict the growing process of individualisation, which is often given as the reason for the endemic resistance from Western workforces to massification and regimentation. Thirdly, Toyotism is the bearer of a programme of tertiarisation of the workforce, the so-called “whitening” of the blue-collar worker, which, while it actually only involves a rather limited minority of workers, nonetheless converges with the prognosis for a dualistic re-stratification of the workforce which the post-Fordists consider inevitable.

## Pre-Trade Union Fordism

What was the reality of Fordism for those workers who experienced it at first hand? Put briefly, Fordism is an authoritarian system of production imposed “objectively” by the assembly line, operating on wages and working conditions which the workforce is not in a position to negotiate collectively. Pre-trade union Fordism, with its use of speed-up, armed security guards, physical intimidation in the workplace and external propaganda, in the 1920s and 1930s was *one of the key elements in the slow construction of the world of concentration camps* which put out its claws initially in Stalin’s Soviet Union and which would soon put out claws in Nazi Germany too. By the opposite token, even during the Depression, the US witnessed a continued, and even strengthened, democratic grass-roots way of doing things which aimed at the building of the industrial union, and which laid siege to Fordism, and brought it down. In the twenty years preceding the unionisation of Ford in 1941, the company’s managers and goon squads conducted anti-worker repression, with beatings, sackings and public relations operations. One day perhaps we will be able to be more detailed than Irving Bernstein when, speaking of the main Ford plant of that period, he wrote: “The River Rouge... was a gigantic concentration camp founded on fear and physical assault”.<sup>29</sup> The fact is that the Fordist mania for breaking down the rhythms of human activity in order to crib and confine it within a rigid plan at the worldwide level was defeated in the United States, but in the meantime it had already made its way across to a Europe that was in

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Prentice Hall, 1994.

29 Irving Bernstein, *Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker 193-1941*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1969, p. 737.

flames. One could argue that in the twentieth century the assembly line is, together with totalitarian state systems and racist nationalism, one of the originating structures which broadly explain the concentration-camp crimes perpetrated on an industrial scale. By this I mean that in pre-trade union Fordism, and in Taylorism before it, there was not already contained in potentiality its opposite: not the superiority of work “to capital” as in Abraham Lincoln; nor the construction of the CIO industrial union; nor the fall of the racism and male dominated division of labour; nor even less the right to strike. Fascism and Nazism were not in their origins the losing versions of Fordism, but were forced to become such thanks to the social and working-class struggles of the 1930s in the United States—struggles which had already stopped a ruling class that was set on a course of corporatist solutions at the time of the formation of the first Roosevelt government in 1932-33.

As we know, in the United States the assembly line dates from way back. The process of series production of durable goods in the twentieth century was built on the American System of Manufactures, the method of production by interchangeable parts which was already operating in US industry in the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Ford’s experiment in his factories is a crucial moment in this series production, inasmuch as it applies it to a consumer durable, the motor car, which had been a luxury object in the early years of this century, even in the United States. By so doing, Ford structured an increasingly broad-based and pressing consumer demand, which in its turn legitimated among public opinion the authoritarian measures so typical of the Ford factories in the period stretching from the early part of the century to the eve of World War II.

I use the word “authoritarian” advisedly to describe the Ford experiment, because in its way it was both more authoritarian and—especially—more grounded than the proposals that had been advanced by F.W. Taylor twenty years previously. The worker who works for Ford is an individual who produces the means for a multiplication of the points of contact between individuals,<sup>31</sup> but paradoxically he produces it precisely thanks to his own imprisonment for hours on end at the point of production, where he is deprived of the right of movement to an extent hitherto unheard of, just as the woman employed on his daily reproduction is bound to the rhythms of industrial production while at the same time confined to the social twilight of domestic labour. The

30 David A. Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production (1800-1932)*, Baltimore and London, the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.

31 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973, p. 265: “Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand.”

worker is also deprived of the right of speech, because—in this respect Fordist disciplining goes one stage further than Taylorism—the rhythm of his working day is set not so much by direct verbal orders from a superior, as by a pre-ordained tempo set by the factory's machinery. Communication and contact with his peers was minimised and the worker was expected simply to respond automatically and monotonously to the pace set by a totalitarian productive system. By no means the least of these factors of isolation were the linguistic barriers which immigrant workers brought as a gift to Ford, and which the company maintained and deliberately exacerbated for four decades on end, fomenting bitter incomprehensions and divisions. These were lessened only with the passing of time, by daily contact between workers, by the effects of the Depression, and by the organisational efforts—apparently defeated from the start, but nevertheless unstinting—of the minority who fought for industrial unionism during the 1920s and 1930s.

As we know, right from its establishment in 1903, the Ford Motor Company would not tolerate the presence of trade unions: not only the craft unions or industrial unions, but even “yellow” or company unions. Trade unions remained outside the gates of Ford-USA right up till 1941. Wages became relatively high for a period with the famous “five-dollar day” in January 1914, but only for those workers whom Ford's Sociological Department approved after a minute inspection of the intimate details of their personal and family lives—and then only in boom periods, when Ford was pressurised by the urgent need to stabilise a workforce which was quitting its factories because of the murderous levels of speed-up.<sup>32</sup> The plan for total control of workers and their families went into crisis after America's entry into the war in 1917; thereupon surveillance began the more detailed use of spies on the shop floor. In the recession following on World War I, the wages of the other companies were tending to catch up with wages at Ford, and Ford set about dismantling the forms of welfare adopted in the 1910s. In February 1921, more than 30 per cent of Ford workers were sacked, and those who remained had to be content with an inflation-hit six dollars a day and further speed-ups.

Ford's supremacy in the auto sector began to crack halfway through the 1920s, when the managers at General Motors (in large part refugees from Ford and its authoritarian methods), definitively snatched primacy in the world of auto production. Rather than pursuing undifferentiated production for the “multitudes”, as Henry Ford called them, General Motors won the battle *in the name of*

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32 Stephen Meyer III, *The Five Dollar Day: Labor Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, 1908-1921*, Albany, N.Y., State University of New York Press, 1981, in particular pp. 96-202.

*distinctiveness and individuation*, broadening its range of products, diversifying, and introducing new models on a yearly basis. From the end of the 1920s, and up till unionisation in 1941, the Ford Motor Company was to be notorious for its wages, which were lower even than the already low wages in the auto sector in general.<sup>33</sup>

The fact of the company having been overtaken by General Motors, and Ford's financial difficulties, were not sufficient to break pre-trade union Fordism in the United States: it took, first, the working-class revolts and the factory sit-ins of the 1930s, and then the unionisation of heavy industry, to bring about the political encirclement of the other auto manufacturers, and, finally, of Ford, to the point where it eventually capitulated to the United Auto Workers union following the big strike in the Spring of 1941. Pre-trade union Fordism dissolved at the point when, faced with attacks by the company's armed security guards, the picketing strikers instead of backing down increased in numbers and saw them off. It was a moment worth recalling with the words of Emil Mazey, one of the main UAW organisers: "It was like seeing men who had been half-dead suddenly come to life".<sup>34</sup>

With the signing of the first union contract in 1941, not only did Ford line up with the other two majors in the auto industry, General Motors and Chrysler, but it even outdid them in concessions to the UAW. Ford was then saved from bankruptcy a second time only thanks to war orders from the government. Already in the course of the Second World War it had been attempting to strengthen the trade union apparatus in the factory, to bring it into line with the company's objectives. As from 1946, a new Ford management set about a long-term strategy to coopt the UAW and turn it into an instrument of company integration. Thus was Fordism buried. If, by Fordism, we mean an authoritarian system of series production based on the assembly line, with wages and conditions of work which the workforce is not in a position to negotiate by trade union means—Fordism as it was generally understood by labour sociologists in the 1920s and 1930s—then *Fordism was eliminated* thanks to the struggles for industrial unionism in the United States in the 1930s, which were crowned by the imposition of collective bargaining at Ford in 1941. As

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33 Joyce Shaw Peterson, *American Automobile Workers, 1900-1933*, Albany, N.Y., State University of New York, 1987. As Samuel Romer wrote in "The Detroit Strike", *The Nation* (vol. 136, no. 3528), 15 February 1933, pp. 167-8: "The automobile industry is a seasonal one. The factories slow down production during the fall months in order to prepare the new yearly models; and the automobile worker has to stretch the 'highwages' of eight months to cover the full twelve-month period." Cf. also M.W. La Fever (1929), "Instability of Employment in the Automobile Industry", *Monthly Labor Review*, vol. XXVIII, pp. 214-17.

34 Bernstein, *Turbulent Years*, op. cit., p. 744.

for the dictatorial tendency to deny the workforce discretionality in the setting of work speeds, and the imposition of work speeds incorporated into machinery, these were far from disappearing with the end of pre-trade union Fordism; if anything, by the late 1990s they become more pressing than ever, precisely in the face of the growth in the productive power of labour and the advent of computer-controlled machinery—but that now takes us a long way from pre-trade union Fordism.

We may or may not choose to see these tendencies as a chapter in a far broader movement of rationalisation which began with the American System of Manufactures and which has not yet fully run its course. In any event, the overall drive to command over worktimes through the “objectivity” of machinery<sup>35</sup> was incubated by other large companies before Ford, explodes with the diffusion of the Fordist assembly line, but is not at all extinguished with its temporary defeat at the end of the 1930s. In fact it seems to impose itself with renewed virulence even in the most remote corners where capitalism has penetrated.

## Global Post-Fordism and Toyotism

As for the category of post-Fordism, in its obscure formulation by the regulation school, it then opened the way to a number of positions which seemed to be grounded in two unproven axioms: the technological determinism of small-series production which, since the 1960s, is supposed to represent a major break with large series production in the manufacture of consumer durables; and the recent discovery of the productivity of communication between what they choose to call the “producers” in industry.<sup>36</sup>

The first axiom derives from the assertion that material production in general (even in engineering—which is more discontinuous than flow production) today proceeds by small series, because, thanks to the increasing flexibility of machine tools, beginning with the numerical control machinery of the 1950s, it has become easier to diversify products, in particular in the production of consumer durables. This diversification makes it possible to meet the needs of consumers seeking individuality, but also to mould people’s

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35 David Noble, “Social Choice in Machine Design”, in Andrew Zimbalist, *Case Studies on the Labor Process*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1979, pp. 18-50.

36 An updated synthesis of these positions is to be found in Marco Revelli’s essay, “Economia a modello sociale nel passaggio tra fordismo e toyotismo” in Pietro Ingrao and Rossana Rossanda, *Appunti di fine secolo*, Rome, Manifestolibri, 1995, pp. 161-224.

tastes and to offer them the little touches and personalising elements that pass for expensive innovations. In short, this tendency is merely a strengthening of the drive to diversification which General Motors had attempted and promoted right from the 1920s, and which enabled it to beat Ford at a time when Henry Ford was saying that his customers could have any colour of car that they wanted as long as it was black. Mass production had only in appearance moulded the mass-worker (a term which is used, but also abused, in identifying changing historical figures in class composition). In some departments of Ford's biggest factory, River Rouge, the Ford silence was broken by the "Ford whisper", or by "discourse by hand signals", one of the elements of working-class resistance up until the decisive confrontation of 1941.<sup>37</sup> Despite the fact that workers had to wear identical blue overalls, and despite the fact that they were not given permission even to think, it was plain that the "producers" had minds which aspired to *individuation, not to a universal levelling*. We were reaching the end of the levelling battle for an equality "which would have the permanence of a fixed popular opinion".<sup>38</sup> Towards the end of the 1920, Henry Ford found himself for the first time in serious financial difficulties, arising out of his insistence on the single-colour Model T. It is worth noting that in the Ford factories, even in the dark years of the 1930s, there were workers willing to risk the sack by buying a General Motors car.<sup>39</sup> Thus, within the auto industry, it was General Motors in the 1920s that invented and brought about a flexible production that matched the needs of the times.<sup>40</sup> Its diversified vehicles were produced by means of a "commonalisation" of machine tools and of the main components of the finished auto. The basis of economies of range was economies of scale. The advent of variety in production did not have to wait for Toyotism, as C. Wright Mills was well aware in the early 1950s, when he denounced the manipulating interplay between mass tastes and "personal touches" in the products of his time.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, it is taken as real that Toyotism had already broken with "Fordism" in the 1950s and 1960s, because it needed to be flexible in order for its auto production to cope with a demand that was

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37 Irving Bernstein, *Turbulent Years*, op. cit., p. 740.

38 Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol.1, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976, p. 152.

39 Irving Bernstein, *Turbulent Years*, op. cit., p. 740.

40 While not belonging to the regulation school, there are two admirers of the Italian industrial districts who presented flexible production as an innovation typical of the 1970s. Here the reference was not to Japan, but to the eastern part of the Po Valley plain: J. Michael Piore and Charles F. Sabel (1983), *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity*, New York, N.Y., Basic Books; Italian translation, *Le due vie dello sviluppo industriale. Produzioni di massa e produzione flessibile*, Torino, ISEDI, 1987.

41 Charles Wright Mills, "Commentary on Our Culture and Our Country", *Partisan Review*, vol. 19, no. 4 (July-August 1952), pp. 446-50, and in particular p. 447.

somewhat diversified. Even the prime advocate of Toyotism<sup>42</sup> makes this clear, and a number of Western researchers, including Coriat, have propagated its myth. The fact was that in the post-War period, Toyota, as was the case with Nissan, was relatively inexperienced as a producer of vehicles; it had begun production only in 1936, and had quickly learned to build itself an oligopolistic position which contributed to the dislodging of Ford and General Motors from Japan a bare three years later. After 1945, with the Toyoda family still at the helm, the company focused on large series production, which was exported, and then also produced abroad. The continuity not with regulationist Fordism but with the US auto sector turns out to be far stronger than the Toyotophile vulgate would be willing to admit.

After a difficult period of post-War reconversion, Toyota tried the path of the cheap run-about (the Toyotapet), and experienced major strikes in 1949 and 1953. It was saved principally by the intransigence of Nissan, when they destroyed the Zenji auto union, but also thanks to United States orders arising out of the Korean War. Subsequently, and for a further twenty years to come, Toyota's range of products, and those of the other Japanese auto companies, was restricted to a very limited number of models. Up until the 1960s the defective quality of these models meant that exports were not a great success. Faced with this lack of success, there began a phase of experimentation based on using multi-jobbing mobile workteams on machine tools with variable programming, and on attention to quality with a view to exports.<sup>43</sup> It was the success of one single model (the Corolla runabout) in the 1970s that laid the basis for a diversification of production, and not vice-versa; and it was a success that Toyota was able to build on abroad as well as at home, where the market was far less buoyant. Up until the 1980s, the variety of Toyota models was prudently limited, and only in the 1980s, when the domestic market experienced a standstill, did the company expand their range of production with a view to winning new markets overseas. *Thus it was not the need for a variety of models, but the mobilisation of the workforce after a historic working-class defeat that explains Mr Ohno's experiments at Toyota.* The principal novelty of his experiments was that whereas General Motors in the 1920s had been content to have several ranges of cars built on separate lines, Toyota created work teams that could be commanded where and when necessary, to multi-jobbed labour on the production of a variety of models along the same assembly line.

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42 Tai'ichi Ohno, *Toyota Seisan Hoshiki* [The Toyota Method of Production], op. Cit.

43 Marie-Claude Belis Bourguignan and Yannick Lung (1994), "Le Mythe de la variété originelle. L'internationalisation dans la trajectoire du modèle productif japonais", *Annales*, 49, 2 (May-June), pp. 541-67.

As for “just in time” production, this had already been experimented with, in its own way, by the auto industry in the United States in the 1920s, and even after the Depression. The layoffs without pay, which were so frequent in the 1920s, and even more so during the Depression, because of the seasonal nature of demand, was one of the battlefields that was decisive in the creation of the auto union in the United States.<sup>44</sup> In the 1936-37 showdown between the UAW and General Motors, the union was victorious on the planning of stocks and on the elimination of seasonal unemployment. Perhaps those who sing the praises of “just in time” production could take a page or two out of the history of Detroit in the 1930s, or maybe a page from the history of the recent recurring strikes in Europe and the US by the independent car-transporter drivers operating within the cycle of the auto industry, who are actually the extreme appendages of the big companies.

As regards the second thesis, the supporters of the notion of post-Fordism claim that production now requires, and will continue to require, ever-higher levels of communication between productive subjects, and that these levels in turn offer spaces of discretionality to the so-called “producers”, spaces which are relatively significant, compared with a past of non-communicating labour, of “the silent compulsion of economic relations”<sup>45</sup> of the modern world. This communication is supposed to create an increasingly intense connectivity between subjects, in contrast with the isolation, the separateness and the silence imposed on the worker by the first and second industrial revolutions. While it is certainly true that processes of learning in production (“learning by doing”) have required and still require a substantial degree of interaction, including verbal interaction, between individuals, it remains the case that from Taylorism onwards the saving of worktime is achieved to a large extent through reducing to a minimum contact and informal interaction between planners and doers. Taylorism tried, with scant results, to impose a planning in order to increase productivity, depriving foremen and workers of the time-discretionality which they assumed by negotiating informally and verbally on the shop floor. However, in the era of pre-trade union Fordism it should be remembered that in the periods of restructuring of the factory, of changes of models and of technological innovation, the “whispering” of restructuration was not only productive, but was actually essential to the successful outcome of the operation. Anyway, the silence imposed by authority and the deafening noise of development is what dominates the auto industry through to the mid-

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44 M.W. La Fever, “Instability of Employment in the Automobile Industry”, op cit., pp. 214-17. Cf. also note 31 above.

45 Karl Marx, *Capital*, op. cit., p. 899.

1930s.<sup>46</sup> *But the disciplining of silence and of the whisper within the channels of capital's productive communication—is this not perhaps also a constitutive characteristic of the modern factory?* On this point, one might note that industrial sociology, as a discipline, was built on the concealing of the communicative dimension and on the rejection of any analysis of the processes of verbal interaction in the workplace. It is not a mere distraction. Here we have only to remember the words of Harold Garfinkel:

“There exists a locally-produced order of work things; [...] They make up a massive domain of organizational phenomena; [...] classic studies of work, without remedy or alternative, depend upon the existence of these phenomena, make use of the domain, and ignore it.”<sup>47</sup>

As for the tendency to impose speed-up in totalitarian fashion, this certainly did not disappear with the demise of pre-union Fordism; if anything it is even more in evidence in this tail-end of the twentieth century, precisely in the face of the strengthening of the productive powers of labour. In fact the tendency now assumes some of the characteristics of the pre-union Fordism of the Roaring Twenties: a precariousness of people's jobs; the non-existence of health care schemes and unemployment benefits; cuts not only in the real wage but also in money wages; the shifting of lines of production to areas well away from industrially “mature” regions. Also working hours are becoming longer rather than shorter. In the whole of the West, and in the East too, people are working longer hours than twenty years ago, and in a social dimension from which the regulatory power of the state has been eclipsed. The fact that people are working longer hours, and more intensively, is also thanks to the allegedly obsolete Taylorist chronometer and the “outmoded” Fordist assembly line. Ironically, precisely for France, which is where the regulationist school first emerged, precious data, non-existent elsewhere, show that *work on assembly lines and subject to the constraint of an automated pace of production is on the increase*, in both percentage terms and absolute terms: 13.2 per cent of workers were subjected to it in 1984, and 16.7 per cent in 1991 (out of, respectively, 6,187,000 and 6,239,000 workers).<sup>48</sup>

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46 Joyce Shaw Peterson, *American Automobile Workers, 1900-1933*, op. cit., pp. 54-6; Irving Bernstein, *Turbulent Years*, op. cit., p. 740.

47 Harold Garfinkel (ed.), *Ethnomethodological Studies of Work*, London and New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986, p. 7.

48 Anon., *Alternatives Economiques*, May 1994, on the DARES data: *Enquêtes spécifiques Acemo: Enquêtessur l'activité et les conditions d'emploi de main —d'oeuvre*. My thanks to Alain Bihr for this reference.

In the 1950s and 1960s—the “golden years” of Fordism as Lipietz calls them—the international economy under the leadership of the United States pushed the demand for private investment, even more than the consumption of wage goods. *What had appeared to be a stable system began to come apart from the inside*, because at the end of the 1960s the class struggle, in its many different forms, overturned capital’s solid certainties as regards the wage, the organisation of the labour process, the relationship between development and underdevelopment, and patriarchy. *If one does not understand the radicality of this challenge, it becomes impossible to grasp the elements of crisis and uncertainty which characterised the prospects for capital’s dominion in the twenty years that followed.*<sup>49</sup> The dishomogeneity of the reactions—from the war of manoeuvre against blue collar workers in the industrialised countries, through to capitalism’s regionalisation into three large areas (NAFTA, European Union and Japan) and to the Gulf War—denote not the transition to a post-Fordist model, but a continuous recombination of old and new elements of domination in order to decompose labour power politically within a newly flexibilised system of production.

## Conclusions

The regulation school looks at the implications of this recombination from capital’s side, seeing capital as the centre and motor of the overall movement of society. Hirsch and Roth speak in the name of many when they state that “it is always capital itself and the structures which it imposes ‘objectively’, on the backs of the protagonists, that sets in motion the decisive conditions of class struggles and of processes of crisis”.<sup>50</sup> Thus it is not surprising that the conclusions that the regulationists draw from their position tend to go in the only direction which is not precluded for them: namely that conflict against the laws of capitalist development has no future, and also that there is no point in drawing attention to the cracks in the edifice of domination. Paraphrasing Mark Twain, one might say that if the regulationists have only a pan-Fordist hammer, they will see only post-Fordist nails to bang.

In taking up this position, not only do the regulationists deny themselves the possibility of analysis of conflictual processes both now

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49 See the indispensable “Contribution by Riccardo Bellofiore: On Pietro Ingrao and Rossana Rossanda, *Appunti di Fine Secolo*”, pub. Associazione dei Lavoratori e delle Lavoratrici Torinesi (ALLT), 24 November 1995.

50 Joachim Hirsch and Roland Roth, *Das neue Gesicht des Kapitalismus*, Hamburg, VSA, 1986, p. 37

and in the future, but they also exclude themselves from the multi-voiced debate which is today focussing on social subjects.<sup>51</sup> This is the only way in which one can explain the regulationists' reduction of the working class in the United States to a mere *Fordised object*,<sup>52</sup> even in its moments of greatest antagonistic projectuality as it was expressed between the Depression and the emergence of the Nazi-Fascist new order in Europe. And given the limits of its position, regulationism is then unable to understand how this working class contributed decisively in the placing of that selfsame United States capitalism onto a collision course with Nazism and fascism. Pre-union Fordism was transient, but not in the banal (but nonetheless significant) sense of Henry Ford financing Hitler on his route to power and decorating himself with Nazi medals right up until 1938, but because what overturned the silent compulsion of the Fordised workforce was the workforce itself, in one of its social movements of self-emancipation—a fact of which the regulationists are not structurally equipped to understand the vast implications at the world level, and for many years to come, well beyond the end of World War II.

As regards today's conditions, what is important is not the examination of the novelties following on the collapse of various certainties in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall, but the possibility or otherwise of avoiding the inevitability of the passage to a "post-Fordist" paradigm in which labour power figures once again as a mere object and inert mass. As Peláez and Holloway note, the insistence with which the regulationists invite their audience to look the future in the face arouses a certain perplexity.<sup>53</sup> After all, a belief in the marvels of technology within the organisations of the labour movement has led to epic defeats in the past. What is at stake here is not just the inevitability or otherwise of a system—the capitalist system—which has too many connotations of oppression and death to be acceptable, but even the possibility of any initiative, however tentative, on the part of social subjects. What is at stake here is the possibility of resisting a preconstituted subordination of labour power to the inexorable New Times that are imposed in part, certainly, by the computer chip, but also by powerful intra-imperialist hostilities, which for the moment are disguised behind slogans such as competition and free trade.

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51 On this theme see Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, "Production, Identity and Democracy", *Theory and Society*, vol. 24, no. 3 (June 1995), pp. 427-67.

52 During the first two five-year plans under Stalin, the workers on the assembly lines of the Gorky auto factory were referred to as "the Fordised" (*fordirovannye*) by the Soviet authorities.

53 Eloina Peláez and John Holloway, "Learning to Bow: Post-Fordism and Technological Determinism", in Werner Bonefeld and John Holloway (eds.), *Post-Fordism and Social Form*, op. cit., 1991, p. 137.

What the present leads us to defend is the indetermination of the boundaries of conflictual action. We shall thus have to re-examine a means or two, with a view to clearing the future at least of the more lamentable bleatings.

Up until now the decomposition and anatomisation of labour-power as a "human machine" has been a preparatory process of the various stages of mechanisation; it is a process which capitalist domination has constantly presented as necessary. The point is not whether post-Fordism is in our midst, but whether the sacrifice of "human machines" on the pyramids of accumulation can be halted.

*Translated by Ed Emery*

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# Notes on the Edu-Factory and Cognitive Capitalism

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Since February of 2007 we have been involved in discussions concerning university education with many comrades around the world on a list that dealt with the notion of the “edu-factory.” (For more on this effort go to the edu-factory website: <http://www.edu-factory.org>.) The following notes present some reflections on two concepts that have been central to this discussion: the edu-factory and cognitive capitalism.

First, we agree with the key point of the “edu-factory” discussion prospectus:

As was the factory, so now is the university. Where once the factory was a paradigmatic site of struggle between workers and capitalists, so now the university is a key space of conflict, where the ownership of knowledge, the reproduction of the labour force, and the creation of social and cultural stratifications are all at stake. This is to say the university is not just another institution subject to sovereign and governmental controls, but a crucial site in which wider social struggles are won and lost.

We are coordinators of the Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa (CAFA) and since 1991 our support for the struggles in African universities followed from the same analysis and logic. Universities are important places of class struggle, and not only in Europe and North

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America. We insisted on this point against the critics of the post-colonial university, who looked down on any effort to defend educational systems that they saw as modeled on colonial education. We argued that university struggles in Africa express a refusal to let international capital:

- decide the conditions of work;
- appropriate the wealth invested in these institutions which people have paid for.
- suppress the democratization and politicization of education that on African campuses had grown through the 1980s and '90s.

More generally, in the same way as we would oppose the shutting down of factories where workers have struggled to control work and wages—especially if these workers were determined to fight against the closure—so we agree that we should resist the dismantling of public education, even though schools are also instruments of class rule and alienation. This is a contradiction that we cannot wish away and is present in all our struggles. Whether we are struggling around education, health, housing, etc, it is illusory to think that we can place ourselves outside of capitalist relations whenever we wish and from there build a new society. As students' movements across the planet have shown, universities are not just nurseries for the leaders of a neo-liberal elite, they are also a terrain for debate, contestation of institutional politics, re-appropriation of resources.

It is through these debates, struggles and re-appropriations, and by connecting the struggles in the campuses to the struggles in other parts of the social factory, that we create alternative forms of education and alternative educational practices. In Italy, for instance, with the contract of 1974, metal-mechanic workers were able to win 150 hours of paid study leave per year in which, together with teachers, mostly from the student movement, they organized curricula that analyzed the capitalist organization of work, also in their own workplaces. In the US, since the '60s, the campuses have been among the centers of the anti-war movement, producing a wealth of analysis about the military-industrial complex and the role of the universities in its functioning and expansion. In Africa, the university campuses were centers of resistance to structural adjustment and analysis of its implications. This is certainly one of the reasons why the World Bank was so eager to dismantle them.

The struggle in the edu-factory is especially important today because of the strategic role of knowledge in the production system in

a context in which the “enclosure” of knowledge (its privatization, commodification, expropriation through the intellectual property regimes) is a pillar of economic restructuring. We are concerned, however, that we do not overestimate this importance, and/or use the concept of the edu-factory to set up new hierarchies with respect to labor and forms of capitalist accumulation.

This concern arises from our reading of the use that is made of the concept of “cognitive capitalism” as found in the statement circulated by Conricerca as well as in the work of some Italian autonomists. True, we need to identify the leading forms of capitalist accumulation in all its different phases, and recognize their “tendency” to hegemonize (though not to homogenize) other forms of capitalist production. But we should not dismiss the critiques of Marxian theory developed by the anti-colonial movement and the feminist movement, which have shown that capitalist accumulation has thrived precisely through its capacity to simultaneously organize development and underdevelopment, waged and un-waged labor, production at the highest levels of technological know-how and production at the lowest levels. In other words, we should not dismiss the argument that it is precisely through these disparities, the divisions built in the working class through them, and the capacity to transfer wealth/surplus from one pole to the other that capitalist accumulation has expanded in the face of so much struggle.

There are many issues involved that we can only touch upon in these notes. We want, above all, to concentrate here on the political implications of the use of the notion of “cognitive capitalism” But here are a few points for discussion.

First, the history of capitalism should demonstrate that the capitalist subsumption of all forms of production does not require the extension of the level of science and technology achieved at any particular point of capitalist development to all workers contributing to the accumulation process. It is now acknowledged, for instance, that the plantation system was organized along capitalist lines; in fact, it was a model for the factory. However, the cotton picking plantation slaves in the US South of 1850s were not working at the level of technological know-how available to workers in the textile mills of the US North of the time, though their product was a lifeline for these same mills. Does that mean that the Southern slaves were industrial workers or, vice versa, the Northern wageworkers were plantation workers? Similarly, to this day, capitalism has not mechanized housework despite the fact that the unpaid domestic work of women has been a key source of accumulation for capital. Again, why at the peak of an era of “cognitive capitalism” do we witness an expansion of labor in

slave-like conditions, at the lowest level of technological know-how—child labor, labor in sweatshops, labor in the new agricultural plantations and mining fields of Latin America, Africa, etc.? Can we say that workers in these conditions are “cognitive workers”? Are they and their struggles irrelevant to and/or outside the circuit of capitalist accumulation? Why has wage labor, once considered the defining form of capitalist work, still not been extended even to the majority of workers in capitalist society?

This example and these questions suggest that work can be organized for capitalist accumulation and along capitalist lines without the laborer working at the average level of technological/scientific knowledge applied in the highest points of capitalist production. They also suggest that the logic of capitalism can only be grasped by looking at the totality of its relations, and not only to the highest point of its scientific/technological achievement. Capitalism has systematically and strategically produced disparities through the international and sexual/racial division of labor and through the “underdevelopment” of particular sectors of its production, and these disparities have not been erased, but in fact have been deepened by the increasing integration of science and technology in the production process. For instance, in the era of cognitive labor, the majority of Africans do not have access to the Internet or for that matter even the telephone; even the miniscule minority who does, has access to it only for limited periods of time, because of the intermittent availability of electricity. Similarly, illiteracy, especially among women, has grown exponentially from the 1970s to present. In other words, a leap forward for many workers, has been accompanied by a leap backward by many others, who are now even more excluded from the “global discourse,” and certainly not in the position to participate in global cooperation networks based upon the Internet.

Second and most important are the political implications of an use of “cognitive capitalism” and “cognitive labor” that overshadows the continuing importance of other forms of work as contributors to the accumulation process.

There is the danger that by privileging one kind of capital (and therefore one kind of worker) as being the most productive, the most advanced, the most exemplary of the contemporary paradigm, etc., we create a new hierarchy of struggle, and we engage in form of activism that precludes a re-composition of the working class. Another danger is that we fail to anticipate the strategic moves by which capitalism can restructure the accumulation process by taking advantage of the inequalities within the global workforce. How the last globalization drive was achieved is exemplary in this case.

Concerning the danger of confirming in our activism the hierarchies of labor created by the extension of capitalist relations, there is much we can learn from the past. As the history of class struggle demonstrates, privileging one sector of the working class over the others is the surest road to defeat. Undoubtedly, certain types of workers have played a crucial role in certain historical phases of capitalist development. But the working class has paid a very high price to a revolutionary logic that established hierarchies of revolutionary subjects, patterned on the hierarchies of the capitalist organization of work. Marxist/socialist activists in Europe lost sight of the revolutionary power of the world's "peasantry." More than that, peasant movements have been destroyed (see the case of the ELAS in Greece) by communists who considered only the factory worker as organizable and "truly revolutionary." Socialists/Marxists also lost sight of the immense (house)work that was being done to produce and reproduce industrial worker. The huge "iceberg" of labor in capitalism (to use Maria Mies' metaphor) was made invisible by the tendency to look at the tip of the iceberg, industrial labor, while the labor involved in the reproduction of labor-power went unseen, with the result that the feminist movement was often fought against and seen as something outside the class struggle.

Ironically, under the regime of industrial capitalism and factory work, it was the peasant movements of Mexico, China, Cuba, Vietnam, and to a great extent Russia who made the revolutions of the 20th century. In the 1960s as well, the impetus for change at the global level came from the anti-colonial struggle, including the struggle against apartheid and for Black Power in the United States. Today, it is the indigenous people, the campesino, the unemployed of Mexico (Chiapas, Oaxaca), Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Venezuela, the farmers of India, the maquila workers of the US border, the immigrant workers of the US, etc. who are conducting the most "advanced" struggles against the global extension of capitalist relations.

Let us be very clear. We make these points not to minimize the importance of the struggles in the edu-factory and the ways in which the Internet has led to the creation of new kinds of commons that are crucial to our struggle, but because we fear we may repeat mistakes that may ultimately isolate those who work and struggle in these networks. From this viewpoint, we think that "the no-global" movement (for all its difficulties) was a step forward in its capacity to articulate demands and forms of activism that projected the struggle in a global way, creating a new type of internationalism, one bringing together computer programmers, artists, and other edu-workers with

farmers and industrial workers in one movement, each making its distinctive contribution.

For this political “re-composition” to become possible, however, we need to see the continuity of our struggle through the difference of our places in the international division of labor, and to articulate our demands and strategies in accordance to these differences and the need to overcome them. Assuming that a re-composition of the workforce is already occurring because work is becoming homogenized—through a process that some have defined as the “becoming common of labor”—will not do. We cannot cast the “cognitive” net so widely that almost every kind of work becomes “cognitive” labor, short of making arbitrary social equations and obfuscating our understanding of what is new about “cognitive labor” in the present phase of capitalism.

It is an arbitrary move (for instance) to assimilate, under the “cognitive” label, the work of a domestic worker—whether an immigrant or not, whether s/he is a wife/mother/sister or a paid laborer—to that of a computer programmer or computer artist and, on top of it, suggest that the cognitive aspect of domestic work is something new, owing to the dominance of a new type of capitalism.

Certainly domestic work, like every form of reproductive work, does have a strong cognitive component. To know how to adjust the pillows under the body of a sick person so that the skin does not blister and the bones do not hurt is a science and an art that require much attention, knowledge and experimentation. The same is true of the care for a child, and of most other aspects of “housework” whoever may be doing this work. But it is precisely when we look at the vast universe of practices that constitute reproductive work, especially when performed in the home, that we see the limits of the application of the type of computer-based, technological know-how on which “cognitive capitalism relies.” We see that the knowledge necessary for reproductive work can certainly benefit from the use of the internet (assuming there is time and money for it), but it is one type of knowledge that human beings, mostly women, have developed over a long period of time, in conformity with but also against the requirements of the capitalist organization of work.

We should add that nothing is gained by admitting housework into the new realm of cognitive labor, by redefining it as “affective labor” or, as some have done, “immaterial labor,” or again “care work.” For a start, we should avoid formulas that imply a body/mind, reason/emotion separation in any type of work and its products.

Moreover, does replacing the notion of “reproductive work,” as used by the feminist movement, with that of “affective labor” truly

serve to assimilate, under the “cognitive” label, the work of a domestic worker (whether immigrant or not, whether a wife/sister/mother or paid laborer) or the work of a sex worker to that of a computer programmer or computer artist? What is really “common” in their labor, taking into account all the complex of social relations sustaining their different forms of work? What is common, for instance, between a male computer programmer or artist or teacher and a female domestic worker who, in addition to having a paid job, must also spend many hours doing unpaid labor taking care of her family members (immigrant women too have often family members to care for also in the countries where they migrate, or must send part of their salary home to pay for those caring for their family members)?

Most crucial of all, if the labor involved in the reproduction of human beings—still an immense part of the labor expended in capitalist society—is “cognitive,” in the sense that it produces not things but “states of being,” then, what is new about “cognitive labor”? And, equally important, what is gained by assimilating all forms of work—even as a tendency—under one label, except that some kinds of work and the political problematic they generate again disappear?

Isn't it the case that by stating that domestic work is “cognitive work” we fail, once again, to address the question of the devaluation of this work in capitalist society—its largely unpaid status, the gender hierarchies that are built upon it—through the wage relation? Shouldn't we ask, instead, what kind of organizing can be done—so that domestic workers and computer programmers can come together—rather than assuming that we all becoming assimilated in the *mare magnum* of “cognitive labor”?

Taking reproductive work as a standard also serves to question the prevailing assumption that the cognitivization of work, in the sense of its computerization/ reorganization through the Internet—has an emancipatory effect. A voluminous feminist literature has challenged the idea that the industrialization of many aspects of housework has reduced housework time for women. In fact, many studies have shown that industrialization has increased the range of what is considered as socially necessary housework. The same is true with the infiltration of science and technology in domestic work, including childcare and sex work. For example, the spread of personal computers, for those houseworkers who can afford them and have time to use them, can help relieve the isolation and monotony of housework through chat rooms and social networks. But the creation of virtual communities does not alleviate the increasing problem of loneliness, nor does it help the struggle against the destruction of community bonds and the proliferation of “gated” worlds.

In conclusion, notions like “cognitive labor” and “cognitive capitalism” should be used with the understanding that they represent a part, though a leading one, of capitalist development and that different forms of knowledge and cognitive work exist that cannot be flattened under one label. Short of that, the very utility of such concepts in identifying what is new in capitalist accumulation and the struggle against it is lost. What is also lost is the fact that, far from communalizing labor, every new turn in capitalist development tends to deepen the divisions in the world proletariat, and that as long as these divisions exist they can be used to reorganize capital on a different basis and destroy the terrain on which movements have grown.

## Measure, Excess and Translation: Some Notes on “Cognitive Capitalism”

Massimo De Angelis

Since February of 2007 I have been involved in discussions concerning contemporary forms of knowledge production, education and the university as sites of struggle with many comrades around the world on a list called “edu-factory” (<http://www.edu-factory.org>). The following notes are a slightly edited version of one of my contributions to this debate. They build on Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis reflections published in this issue of *The Commoner* on two concepts that have been central to this discussion (the edu-factory and cognitive capitalism) and addresses three other concepts which have emerged in the debate: measure, excess and translation.

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I would like to follow up the contribution by Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis and develop further some implications of their critical stance on the question of “cognitive capitalism”. In doing so, I would like to draw the attention on the political importance of the arguments raised against the consequences of theoretically de-centering the problematic of class hierarchy and dynamics of stratification. For the sake of continuity and clarity my contribution will follow the two main lines of their argument, and attempt to engage with issues which have not been directly covered in their post, namely, the question of capital's measure, excess, and translation.

## I Wage Hierarchy, Measure, and Excess

The first argument proposed by Federici and Caffentzis is an empirical/theoretical one, in which they argue that the history of capitalism demonstrates that capital subsumption of all forms of production is not predicated on the extension of the “highest” level of science and technology to all workers contributing to the accumulation process. Cases such as the capitalist organization of the plantation system and of housework suggests that work can be organized for capitalist accumulation with the laborer working at a level of technological/scientific knowledge below the average applied in the highest points of capitalist production. This also suggests that the “inner logic” of capitalist development can only be grasped if we look at the *totality* of its relations rather than only at the highest points of its scientific/technological achievements. Looking at this totality reveals that capitalism has always produced disparities along the international and sexual/racial division of labor. These disparities are both the product of its inner workings and of clear strategies which give rise to the “underdevelopment” of particular sectors and are amplified by the increasing integration of science and technology in the production process.

Now, it is important to underline two interrelated things on this first point.

**A) Enclosures and disciplinary integration.** The wage hierarchy here is certainly not a “hypothesis to be verified” and is instead taken as a “paradigmatic” stand, made intelligible by a large theoretical and empirical literature, as well as any common sense observation of the modern horrors. There is a limit to the post-modern flights of imagination and academic conjecturing that we can take on this matter (and note, this does not take anything away to the opportunity to have both within limits). The processes overseeing the ongoing creation of this stratification can be grasped theoretically and empirically though Marx's classic texts reinterpreted in lights of the issues raised by the struggles of those subjects that in that text were mostly invisible and yet are and have always been so fundamental to capitalism (women, the unwaged reproduction workers, the slaves, the peasants, and so on).

The production of the totality of social relations under capitalism develops along two main co-ordinates (another one is what we can call “governmentality”, or “the class deal” but I cannot talk about this here). One is systematic and continuous “enclosure” strategies, as it has been observed in other posts. These certainly affects all levels in the hierarchy but they also have the effect of continuously re-

stratifying the hierarchy itself. This not only by hitting the bottom layers the hardest (through land/water enclosures, relocation, urban proletarianisation and so on), but also through the use of technology and knowledge products developed at the highest levels as instrument of these enclosures (terminator seeds, GMOs, and of course, remember the 1960s "green revolution"?).

The other one is what Marx labels the process going on "behind the back of the producers", the process of the formation of "socially necessary labour time", and that in order to appease any illusions that our epoch has moved away from the imposition of discipline, we can call "disciplinary integration." The process of competitive markets — despite all its impurities in relation to textbook models—act as disciplinary mechanism that allocate rewards and punishments. They give rise to concentration and centralisation tendencies, the latter understood not as an asymptotic future outcome described by a crystal ball, but as the emergent result of social processes rooted in struggle, *to the extent struggles are subsumed and pit one against another within the process itself*. And, finally, they contribute to ongoing the planetary re-stratification of social labour.

**B) Measure and excess.** We would not go much to the bottom of these two processes of enclosures and disciplinary integration—that bottom that interests us because of its radical implications—if we were not understanding that this "inner logic" of capitalism is predicated on a way of *measuring* life activity which subordinates concrete specific humans to the quantitative imperative of balance sheets, a process of giving meaning to action, of *acting* on this meaning, and shaping organisational forms suitable for this action that produces what capital *values* the most: its own self-preservation as capital (even in spite of the bankruptcy of individual capitals).

This subordination means that the sensuous *and* cognitive features of concrete labouring are—precisely—subordinated to the drive for making money. And the existence of this subordination implies that there is always and has always been "an excess" which is not put to value by capital, precisely because value for capital is "abstract labour", or "human labour power expended without regard to the form of its expenditure", as Marx put in the first chapter of *Capital*. This "excess" emerges in the contradictory nature of what is of value for capital and what is of value for waged and unwaged workers. This "excess" with respect to what is required by profit-driven production in given contexts, is often a way in which these "value struggles" manifest themselves in given forms and degrees. We can find it cutting through the noise of assembly lines in the jokes that workers shout to each other; or in the whispers of children hiding from the eyes of

terribly serious Victorian schoolmasters; or emerging from the regimented fields of slave plantations in the form of songs, chants and rhythms allowing communications to flow in avoidance of the whip of slave masters. In other words, the production of excess is not the prerogative of “cognitive labour” and therefore of contemporary forms of capitalism. The “excess” is the outcome of the struggle of situated workers facing the frontline and contesting the reduction of their life-activity to “human power expended without regard to the form of its expenditure” because subordinated to the priority of balance sheets. This excess is social form that is valued by the struggling subjects, it is human power expended with regard to the form of its expenditure. But let us not be fooled by these “excesses”. Capitalism is a dynamic system. If in given contexts, times and situations, an intellectual, artistic or “cognitive” product emerges as a means or result of struggle, in a different situation and temporal framework, the same “product” can act as a retro fashion item seeking valorisation in a niche market, hence subject to capital’s measure. What was before the result of the struggle at the frontline, it is now the condition from drawing a new frontline, a new clash among value practices, among modes of “measuring” life activity, out of which a new excess will certainly emerge.

Capital captures struggle and excess to a variety of degrees depending on contingent power relations. But the very fact that it does it and continuously seeks to do it through the imposition of its measure and hierarchy cannot be wished away: it is the condition we must face up to and overcome through class recomposition. But class recomposition is not a given. I disagree with the argument that “cognitive labour” points at what is common across the multitude. To posit cognitive labour as a common is to indulge into idealising commons in similar ways as those who romanticise the past. This because it removes rupture and struggle the center of the problematic of commons re-production.

“Cognitive labour” is an idealised common because it is neither what is common across the hierarchy, nor what *tends* to be common. In the first case, it is simply not the case —as it has been argued by Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis post. One cannot claim in any meaningful sense that the *different* concrete labours across the global factory have “cognitive labour” as common. The claim would be true only if we maintain it as a general platitude, that is the fact that subjects are engaged in processes of acquiring/formulating/producing knowledge and understanding through thought, experience and sense. This is obviously always the case in all modes of production, and in

capitalism—as pointed out by Silvia and George—in every layers of the wage hierarchy.

And the second case simply cannot be made, since one thing that the “tendencies” within capitalism reveal is only that the class struggle gets wider and richer in form, together with the associated deepening of the hierarchisation of waged and unwaged labour. And this implies that the problematic/puzzle of political recomposition ahead of us gets more challenging at the same time as the potentials for liberation that would be made possible by this recomposition get more plentiful.

What is really common across the “multitude” is that *in so far as capital production is concerned*, our production in common, occurs through the subjection of multiplicity to a common alien measure of doing, of giving value to things, of ranking and dividing the social body on the basis of this measure. Thus, the strategic emphasis on knowledge production that comes from various institutional bodies is not the evidence of a “tendency” to turn all work into “cognitive labour” announcing a new phase of capitalism (cognitive capitalism, precisely). Rather, we are faced here with the strategic attempt to launch a new wave of enclosures and disciplinary integration that recreate the “fucked up” commons that capital attempts to impose on all of us: that of its measure of life processes. The specific character of this new wave has *certainly* to be critically studied in *details*. But it is terribly dangerous to approach this study with the illusion that the current emphasis on knowledge production by the institutional agents of capital is anything else but to serve as instrument of competitiveness, capitalist growth, new modes of enclosures and commodification of life, and, *therefore*, planetary class stratification.

## II Political Recomposition and Translation

From their first theoretical/empirical point, Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis develop an important political argument. There is in fact a political consequence in using constructs such as “cognitive capitalism” and “cognitive labor” in such a way as to overshadow the continuing importance of other forms of work as contributors to the accumulation process. And this is the development of a discourse that precludes *class recomposition*. There is in fact the danger that by privileging one kind of capital (and therefore one kind of worker or one kind of labouring) as being the most “exemplary of the contemporary paradigm” we contribute to create a new hierarchy of struggles, thus engaging in forms of activism that “precludes a re-composition of the working class.” To become possible, this political re-composition must

be predicated on the awareness of the continuity of our struggle across the international division of labor and wage hierarchy, which means that we need to “articulate our demands and strategies in accordance to these differences and *the need to overcome* them” (my emphasis).

Now, this articulation is certainly dependent on processes of “translation”. But we would be fooling ourselves if this was the only thing required. Translation is of paramount importance for two things.

First, in understanding the development of capital's strategies in specific contexts. Hence in so far as the stratified class (“multitude”) relation to capital is concerned, capital has indeed to codify “labour” in its own grammar and code, which rises for us the problem of—precisely—translation of categories in terms relevant to us. And this certainly happens at the level of what used to be called “bourgeois” discourses which apprehends social processes grounded on social conflict with the discursive closure (but strategic focus) embedded in its premises, methods, “policy implications” and, nowadays, “governance recommendations”. At this level of critical engagement, translation is of paramount importance, as a way to map the “enemy” stance vis-a'-vis struggles.

Second—and more in tune with the theme of this section—“translation” is important in relation to communication among rebellious subjects who—precisely because are divided across the wage hierarchy—one way or another are actors in processes such as those that reproduce racism and patriarchy, or relate to the world moving from the life-worlds they inhabit, with their cultural norms, “imaginaries” and mythologies. Thus, we always need to engage in processes of “translation” so as not only to “talk” to each other, but to give meaning to words, speech-acts, texts. And this of course, with all the caution we need in such exercises: who translates and who speak? who hears and who listens, who holds the “dictionary”, so to say, what meanings are left out? and so on. In this sense, ongoing processes of translation are part and parcel of the constitution of commons.

A translation however is giving meanings to *words*, it is mapping meanings from a code to another. It is not yet to act upon these meanings, creating effects through these actions and giving meaning to both these actions and their results. It is not yet, to value in the full sense of the word, the sense in which to value becomes a social force of transformation! Yet, this is precisely what capital does in its process of labour abstraction. This is not—as claimed in some posts in the edufactory debate—simply a process of “translation” of human labour—as if the latter could exist in the form it does independently from the meaning given to it by capital (perhaps echoing some illusions that are circulating that today's cognitive labour has reached “communism”, a

form of labour cooperation that is largely independent from capital). Capital does not simply gives meaning to words, does not only map meanings from one code to another. It does so as moment of a process of valorization that must be conceived as much more than translation. The process of valorisation of capital is a process founded on giving meaning to action in a context in which this meaning can be to a variety of degrees enforced (through pervasive enclosures of various forms backed by state monopoly of violence—even if this is a “transnational” state—enforces a configuration of existing property rights and various degrees of exclusion from the commons) and with results that to a large extent give shape to social actions, and create consequences.

Through this valorisation process, human powers are transmuted into commodities, and social doing is transmuted into work, into abstract labour. In this sense, abstract labour is not so much the result of a “translation”. It is the result of a real abstraction, i.e. a transmutation, as a transmutation of one species into another, one species of humans into another one. A transmutation for example that still is largely responsible to fill evening commuting trains with drained bodies, whether of “cognitive labourers” or cleaners; one that rhythmically and cyclically accumulates the *detritus* of capital's measure into our competing and colliding bodies in the forms of fear, stress, excessive antibiotics, and anxieties; one that also operates linearly, for example when it turns farmers into reserve army of labour due to, say, the *detritus* accumulated in their land by virtue of being adjacent to an aquaculture pool producing shrimps for export; or one also that creates the condition for turning local mothers into migrant nannies, that transmutes the direction of their affects away from their communities into the children of their busy employers, mainly because, in given conditions within the planetary wage hierarchy, the former are less socially valued than the latter; or finally one that turns that brilliant team of creative workers that have come up with that brilliant innovative idea, into the competitive *means* to de-value some other cognitive labourers, threaten their livelihoods and push them to a “life-learning” process to discover always new forms of undermining an invisible “other”, to join a “friendly” team so as to organise a competitive retribution.

The task of political recomposition ahead of us, cannot be faced if we de-center the problematic of hierarchy and the measuring process of life-activity connected to it which re-create hierarchy and division. The task of recomposition passes certainly through the “one no” to the “fucked up” commons of capital. At the same time, it passes through the open problematic of how to produce other commons,

more meaningful to us, predicated on many “yesses”, that is on “valorising” processes other than those posited by capital. Hence, despite being a crucial issue, the central question is not “translation”, but the *transformation of our interconnected lives*. And this transformation cannot avoid to posit the question of the overcoming of existing divisions as the central problematic of our organisational efforts.

# Reinventing An/Other Anti-Capitalism in Mexico

## The Sixth Declaration of the EZLN and the “Other Campaign”

Patrick Cuninghame<sup>1</sup>

Well, then, in Mexico what we want to create is an agreement with people and organizations that are decidedly of the left, because we believe that it is on the political left where the idea of resisting against neoliberal globalisation really lives, and the struggle to make justice, democracy, and freedom in any country wherever it would be, where there is only freedom for big business and there is only democracy to put up election campaign signs. And because we believe that only the left can come up with a plan for struggle so that our country, Mexico, does not die. And, then, what we believe is that, with these people and organizations of the left, we will chart a course to go to every corner of Mexico where there are humble and simple people like ourselves.

*(The Sixth Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle, 2005)*

The struggles of dignity tear open the fabric of capitalist domination.

*(John Holloway, 2003)*

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## Preface

This paper seeks to draw some lessons at a global level from the ongoing “Other Campaign” (so-called in mock reference to the 2006 presidential electoral campaigns), catalysed by the Zapatistas with their call for a renewed anti-capitalist resistance movement “from below and to the left” against neoliberal capitalism in Mexico and internationally, in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle (the Sixth) in July 2005. The paper also focuses on how the organization and mobilization of the Other Campaign is evolving in the trans-border region of Chihuahua-Texas-New Mexico in Northern Mexico-Southern USA (where the author is based) around the attempted horizontal coordination of autonomists, anarchists, Zapatistas, socialists, indigenous and peasant movements, and the efforts to include independent trade unions and the more radical NGO campaigns against the femicide of some 450 working class women and girls in Ciudad Juarez since 1993, as well as other issues based around migration, the US-Mexico border, the hegemonic maquiladora (corporate assembly plant for export) hyper-exploitation model and the social violence and urban degradation produced by “savage capitalism”. This “other” organizational paradigm, which includes the “Other on the other side” (of the border), will be also be connected with the May Day Latino boycott movement in the US against the criminalisation of undocumented migrants. The broader socio-political context is framed by the events surrounding the July 2006 presidential elections, which proved to be particularly “dirty” and fraudulent, despite the consensus among the three candidates of the main parties on the need to consolidate through “institutional reforms” the neo-liberal model (constructed on the 1994 NAFTA agreement), which seeks to extend a deepened US economic hegemony over Latin America through the 2001 Puebla-Panama Plan, the 2005 Central Americas Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the recently shelved Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) proposal. The desperate, cynical capitulation of the “vertical” left<sup>2</sup>, both parliamentary and extra-

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2 By “vertical” Left I mean those organizational traditions within the historical Left that favour a centralist, hierarchical, organizational structure (a mirror image of the capitalist firm) and that practice dogmatic, vanguardist, statist and “top-down” politics, i.e. all their political initiatives either stem from or have to be approved by the leadership, while rigid discipline and obedience is enforced on the membership by threat of expulsion. Their political ideology is usually based on an orthodox “scientific socialist” interpretation of the Marxist-Leninist canon. Left political traditions considered to be “verticalist” would be social democrats, Leninists and Trotskyists, but in the context of alterglobalism would also include (ex-) national liberation movements like Sinn Fein. A Mexican example would be the Trotskyist PRT (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores/Workers Revolutionary Party), which split in the early 90s over

parliamentary (including some ex-Zapatista supporters and much of the post-1968 New Left) to the populist, demagogic presidential campaign of the centre-left PRD candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), some on the basis of keeping the corrupt mafia-linked PRI and Christian right-ultra neoliberal PAN out of power, others in the hope of benefiting personally from future presidential largesse, mirrors a deeper crisis as a divided global anti-capitalism seeks to intensify resistance against an increasingly fragmented and degenerate “global war capitalism”. This helps to explain why the EZLN and its global network, under the title of the “Zepta Internacional”, are also organizing a third “Intergalactic Encuentro” in late 2006-early 2007, faced with the perceived neo-reformist inefficacy of the now verticalist-controlled and Chavez-dependent World Social Forum (WSF)<sup>3</sup>. The paper also examines the impact of the particularly brutal repression of the Atenco movement, the Oaxaca teachers’ strike and APPO movement and AMLO’s orchestrated but massive anti-fraud movement on the Other, before reaching some conclusions on the present state of anti-capitalism (autonomist, Zapatista and other/wise) in Mexico, and the implications for “the slow and laborious process of consolidating the new Latin American revolutionary left” (Cuban Libertarian Movement/CLM 2005: 1) and global anti-capitalist and alterglobalist movements.

## Introduction

Mexico, as the USA’s southern neighbour, is the Latin American country most directly prone to North American influence and pressure, now being virtually hard-wired into its economy through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) since 1994. However, that year also saw the birth of the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas in

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entryism into the PRD, a path the majority chose to follow, while a minority became close allies of the EZLN and now edit the monthly magazine, *Rebeldia*, the main Zapatista publication. In fact, this is a simplification as there is a certain amount of “crossover” particularly between the leaderships of the two factions, which tends to muddy the waters of radical left politics in Mexico. An English example would be the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). In recent years the “verticalists” have increasingly clashed with the “horizontalists” (autonomists, anarchists, ecofeminists, environmentalists, independent social movements in general) over the control and future direction of the World and European Social Forums in particular and global anti-capitalism/alterglobalism in general. For a discussion of verticalist-horizontalist politics, see Levidow (2004).

- 3 “(...) what seems to be happening in Caracas – the apparent complete dependence by the local civil organisations (those who the WSF International Council has appointed to organise the particular edition of the world Forum) on Hugo Chávez and his government for organising the Forum - seems to directly contradict the spirit and soul of the Forum” (Jai Sen 2006).

opposition to NAFTA, neoliberalism and 500 years of the racist discrimination and exclusion of the Mexican indigenous population, composed of over 50 ethnic groups each with its own language and culture, accounting for about 15% of its 110 million population. Twelve years on and the remarkably resilient and unceasingly creative Zapatistas have bounced back yet again into the centre of national political life and international mobilisation through the Other Campaign, launched by the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle in July 2005, which marked a definitive rupture with the PRD and the liberal urban intelligentsia, once united in their opposition to the PRI dictatorship 10 years previously. The new “enemy” was identified as AMLO, the moderate PRD (Partido de la Revolucion Democratica/Party of the Democratic Revolution) presidential candidate, at that time clear favourite to win the 2006 elections. His party had betrayed the Zapatistas and the indigenous peoples in 2001 when they broke their word and supported the enactment of an unrecognisably diluted PAN (Partido de la Accion Nacional/National Action Party) government version of the San Andres Accord on Indigenous Autonomy, reached with the then PRI (Partido de la Revolucion Institucional/Party of the Institutional Revolution) government in 1996. Furthermore, as Mayor of Mexico City he had shown a preference for pharaonic building projects, zero-tolerance policing against the vendors of the “informal economy”, the main source of income for many of the city’s 18 million population, and attempts to expel rooted proletarian communities and gentrify the historic centre in association with Mexico’s richest entrepreneur Carlos Slim. The result has been a bitter division with the peasant and urban working class grassroots of the PRD, where some wanted to support both AMLO and the Other Campaign, while many, including some former Zapatista intellectual sympathisers, considered the Zapatistas to have become the unwitting stooges of the right, as part of its plot against AMLO. The suspicion of both technologically sophisticated cybernetic fraud and cruder old-fashioned ballot stuffing has hung over the elections of July 2, which favoured the ultra neoliberal, Christian right PAN candidate Felipe Calderon by 0.5% or just over 240,000 of the total vote of 41 million (Burbach 2006 & Palast 2006 for example). The brutal repression in May of the Peoples Front for the Defence of the Land (FPDT), and Other Campaign activists in Atenco caused a global wave of revulsion against the Fox “government of change”, as brutal and fraudulent as its PRI predecessors.

The Other Campaign - the first attempt in Mexican history to create a coordinated anti-capitalist network “below and to the left” among the splintered groups, movements and unaffiliated individuals to the left of the PRD - in the space of a few weeks in May transformed

itself from a support network for the caravan of "Delegate Zero" (Subcomandante Marcos) and the Sixth Commission into a cohesive national and transnational (thanks to the "Otra en el Otro Lado" [Other Campaign in the USA]) movement with strong links to the anti-capitalist alterglobal movements. Nevertheless, compared to AMLO's multitudinous marches of a million and a half on July 16 and over two million on the 30<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of thousands of whom still remain camped in Mexico City's main square, central avenues and business district in protest against the electoral fraud, the Other's national march against repression of 15,000 in late May and only 5,000 on July 2<sup>nd</sup> seem tiny in comparison. The AMLO anti-fraud movement allegedly is financed by the local construction industry that benefited so handsomely under his mayorship, as well as by the PRD through its various state governors, senators and deputies and is – at least for the moment – directly orchestrated by AMLO and the PRD leadership, who have promised the increasingly worried press, international investors and Mexican business class to send everyone home as soon as a total recount is agreed. The Other or "Otra" has established itself as a consolidated transnational movement in less than a year, while AMLO's chances of turning the tables on the neoliberal right and its support from Bush, thanks to an impressive popular mobilization which exceeds the electoral base of the PRD, seem however ever slimmer.

Since the publication of the Sixth last year, a feud has raged among left intellectuals as to whether the Other is part of a rightist plot to frustrate the centre-left yet again, as happened in 1988 when fraud permitted the PRI's Carlos Salinas, later the architect of NAFTA and still seen as the *eminence grise* of Mexican politics, to steal the election from Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, son of the PRI president and "national revolutionary" General Lazaro Cardenas who expropriated and nationalized the oil industry in the 1930s. Former Zapatista sympathisers like Araujo, Poniatowska and Monsivais are now part of AMLO's entourage, which has constantly attacked the Other in the press, accusing it of naivety and opportunism over Atenco and of complicity with the right. Others like Almeyra (2006a, b & c; Olivares Alonso 2006) and Ross (2006) have attempted to remain critically detached from both camps, claiming more sympathy with the broader Zapatista movement, while heavily criticising Marcos and the EZLN's "sectarianism", "voluntarism" and "disrespect" for the autonomy of the Zapatista communities which have been "forced" to cut themselves off from the outside world once again by the "red alert" since May. These accusations have led Marcos to criticise some intellectuals as fence-sitting cowards (Bellingshausen 2006c) and to a storm of disagreement with Ross in particular from the Other (Barrios

Cabrera 2006). Others like Lopez y Rivas (2006) and Gonzalez Casanova (Bellinghausen 2006) defend the Other Campaign, while seeking to reopen relations with AMLO and the PRD. In contrast, Subcomandante Marcos has been relentless in his criticism of AMLO and the PRD as the real enemy of both the OTRA and the Mexican working class, since their “alternative national project” will breathe new life and legitimacy into the notoriously corrupt Mexican political system and the orthodox neoliberal model it serves, and will inevitably break their promises to put “the poor first for the benefit of all” (AMLO’s electoral slogan). Other academics close to the Zapatista movement like Harvey (2005) and Holloway (2002b, 2003) seek to defend the Zapatistas from their detractors within the global revolutionary left, while analysing the EZLN’s paradoxical inability to capitalise on its enormous global political capital to help foment lasting social, economic and democratic change from below, as has happened in Ecuador and Bolivia where strong indigenous movements have helped to topple unpopular neoliberal governments.

Having established the political basis for the rupture of the EZLN with the institutional and much of the historical Mexican left as the backdrop to the Other Campaign, the following section will explore in greater detail the proposals outlined in the Sixth Declaration and how they have panned out in the trajectory of the Other and its international sister campaign, the “Zezta” or Intergalactic Commission of the EZLN.

### “The Sixth”, “The Other” and the “Zezta”

In common with the first five Declarations, the Sixth as event marks a turning point in the Zapatista struggle and as text communicates to national and international “civil society”<sup>4</sup> the decisions of the Zapatista assemblies through the EZLN and Marcos. The Sixth was initially greeted with positive statements by the Mexican political and intellectual classes as a sign of the EZLN’s further move away from armed struggle and towards non-violent democratic politics. In fact non-violence is stressed throughout the document as the basis for direct action, in common with most of the alterglobalist movement but

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4 I use inverted commas since there is so much disagreement over the term, although the Gramscian, more social movement-based interpretation tends to predominate within Zapatista and movement discourse, while the Hegelian version, based on all individuals and groups outside the state, including entrepreneurs, religious institutions and rightist interest groups, predominates in both NGO and academic discourse in Mexico. On the question of what is “civil” in “civil society” see Cleaver (in this volume) and Bonefeld(2006).

in continued rupture with the history, ideology and praxis of both Mexican and Latin American vanguardist guerrilla movements:

“The EZLN continues its commitment toward an offensive cease-fire and will not attack any governmental force nor carry out offensive military manoeuvres; the EZLN continues, still, its commitment to insisting on the path of political struggle with this peaceful proposal that we now make. As such, the EZLN will continue in its belief in not making any secret alliance with national politico-military organizations nor those of other countries; the EZLN reiterates its commitment to defend, support, and obey the Zapatista indigenous communities that create it and that are its supreme command, and, without interfering in their internal democratic processes and in the measurement of its possibilities, to contribute to the strengthening of their autonomy, good government, and improvement of living conditions. That is to say, what we are going to create in Mexico and in the world we will create without weapons, through a peaceful civil movement, yet without ignoring or abandoning our communities.” (EZLN 2005: 3-4)

The right was particularly happy about the severe criticisms made of AMLO and the PRD, which seemed to promise a divided “left”. The Zapatistas and the Other, however, do not consider the PRD to be any longer a party of the “left”, or at least only of the top-down variety. In fact, the Sixth has reinvigorated the debate over the meaning of this historically ambiguous political category and identity, born during the French Revolution of 1789, which anarchist, autonomist and libertarian groups in the Other generally reject as obsolete and meaningless, given the objectively pro-capitalist position of most of the historical left, whether social-democrat, institutional socialist or (ex-)communist. Another reflection on the meaning of “left” within the Sixth as “utopia” is provided by the Cuban Libertarian Movement (2005: 1-2):

“(…) left is the one that has not renounced utopia neither by word or deed, and that, in spite of everything, finds its main encouragement in a utopia that could be generally defined as a thick web of relationships among free, equal and mutually supportive beings; a utopia capable of identifying its distant and venerable beginnings and of reclaiming them for their much needed actualisation. (...) This is the left that has learned to recognize and look askance at the narrow, dry road left in the wake of the guerrilla vanguards later become some exclusive and excluding party, civil or military populism and social-democratic reformism; this is the left that doesn't feel represented by any authority and even questions the meaning of 'representation', that seeks itself among the cries of 'let them all go!' ["Que se vayan todos!"; the slogan of the December 2001 revolts in Argentina] and the whispering promise to “change the world without taking power” [Holloway 2002a]; the left that depends on the non-negotiable autonomy of grassroots social movements as the template for a new world and that in self-management and direct action

finds its truest expression. A left that surely the EZLN wants to belong to and that, in open reciprocity, finds in it one of its most visible manifestations.”

However, the initial enthusiasm of Fox et al for the Sixth added grist to the mill of the Zapatistas’ critics in academic left and PRD circles. Adopting a neo-Stalinist version of the theory of the “extremes that touch”, critics like Almeyra (op. cit.) have ranted against the Sixth and the Other in their columns in *La Jornada*, the only leftist national daily newspaper and close to the PRD, as evidence that the Other is, wittingly or not, part of the Fox-Salinas anti-AMLO plot, and therefore objectively a reactionary movement, unless it corrects itself and allies itself with AMLO. However, since the repression of the movement at Atenco in May, such conspiracy-theory charges have lost the illusory credence they may initially have had.

The organization of the Other campaign began in August 2005 with a series of meetings between the different sectors of what the Zapatistas continue to refer to as “civil society” convoked by the Sixth and the EZLN in the “Caracol” of La Realidad, the traditional meeting place, in the Lacandona jungle near to the border with Guatemala, of the EZLN and its allies. Through these meetings with core organizations and groups prepared to coordinate the Other throughout the various federal entities of Mexico, the Other’s strategy was discussed and decided through the direct democracy of the assembly. All groups, movements and individuals who accept the organizational principles of forming an anti-capitalist alliance “below and to the left” could become “adherents” to the Sixth and participants in the Other. “Below” implies bottom-up, grassroots self-organization among the rural and urban working class and poor, eschewing relations with more privileged strata like intellectuals, small entrepreneurs etc. whose support the EZLN once sought 10 years previously. “To the left” signifies that the Other is both theoretically and practically anti-capitalist, to distinguish it from the ambiguous and opportunist left, particularly the PRD, which in the past used an anti-capitalist discourse in the form of orthodox Marxism and socialist politics, mainly as a rhetorical window-dressing exercise and always subordinated to the discourses of “patriotism” and “national sovereignty”, i.e. the interests of those sectors of the national bourgeoisie opposed to global capitalism. As for the Other’s plan of action in Mexico, guidelines had already been set out in the Sexta:

“In Mexico...

1. We will continue fighting for the Indian peoples of Mexico but not only for them nor only with them, but, rather, for all the exploited and dispossessed in Mexico (...) And when we speak of all the exploited of Mexico we are also speaking of

the brothers and sisters who have had to go to the United States to seek work in order to survive.

2. We are going to listen to and speak directly, without middlemen nor mediations, to the simple and humble Mexican people, and depending on what we hear and learn, we will construct, together with these people who are like us, humble and simple, a national plan for struggle, but a plan that will, clearly, be of the left, which is to say anti-capitalist, or anti-neoliberal, or which is also to say in favour of justice, democracy and freedom for the Mexican people.

3. We will try to construct or reconstruct another way of practicing politics, in the spirit of serving others, without material interests, with sacrifice, with dedication, with honesty, a way that keeps it word, or, that is to say, in the same way that militants of the left – who were not stopped by violence, jail or death, and much less with offers of dollar bills – have done so.

4. We will also keep looking at ways to rise up; a fight to demand that we create a new Constitution, (...) new laws that take our demands, those of the Mexican people, into account, which are: housing, land, work, food, health, education, information, culture, independence, democracy, justice, freedom and peace. A new Constitution that recognizes the rights and liberties of the people, and that defends the weak against the powerful.” (EZLN 2005: 5)

Point four has been particularly controversial for the autonomist-anarchist-libertarian groups within or sympathetic to the Other, who reject constitutionalism as the gateway to institutional politics and the bourgeois “political game” of partial, retractable “human rights” and “individual liberties”, always dependent on the fundamental “duty” of obedience to the “democratic” capitalist state (CLM 2005). Nevertheless, perhaps this is too narrow a reading of the word “constitution”, which after all figures centrally in the thought of one of autonomism’s most important thinkers, Toni Negri (1992), whose theory of “constituent power” recognises how the counter-power of historical and actual movements tends to constitute a new set of social relations, which either breaks with previous ones or forces them to negotiate a new “constituted power”, following which the antagonistic force of the movement tends to be institutionalised and co-opted under the terms of the new “constitution” and its “institutions”, so catalysing a new cycle of antagonist movements to struggle against the former antagonists. One needs to look no further than the history of the incessant struggle between the revolutionary and reformist left during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the Other, if it becomes the hegemonic antagonist force in Mexican politics, will have to “constitute” new social relations and political balances as one of its unwritten tasks.

The organizational principles of the Other are assembleist, horizontal, anti-electoral, anti-delegatory and directly democratic, but to what extent these principles are consistently practiced, given the overwhelming prestige of the EZLN and Marcos within the Other, remains to be seen:

“We also announce that the EZLN will establish a policy of having alliances with non-electoral movements and organizations that define themselves, in theory and practice, as of the left, according to the following conditions:

- No making of agreements from above to impose upon those below, but rather, they should make agreements to advance together and to listen and to organize indignation;
- No to beginning movements that will be later negotiated away behind the backs of those who made them, but, rather, they should take into account, always, the opinions of those who participate in them;
- No to seeking little gifts, jobs, advantages, patronage, of Power or of those who aspire to it, but, rather, they should go farther than the electoral calendars allow;
- No to trying to resolve from above the problems of our Nation, but rather, they must construct FROM BELOW AND FOR BELOW an alternative to neoliberal destruction, an alternative of the left for Mexico.
- Yes to mutual respect for autonomy and independence of organizations, of their ways of fighting, of their way of organizing themselves, of their internal decision-making processes, of their legitimate representatives, of their aspirations and demands;
- And, yes, to mutual respect and autonomy and independence and yes to a clear commitment of mutual and coordinated defence of national sovereignty, and with intransigent opposition to the attempts to privatise electricity, oil, water and natural resources.” (Ibid.: 6-7)

It is evident that these conditions exclude the instrumental politics of the institutional left, but also of the “revolutionary left” that seeks state power. The second “no” is particularly topical, given the manipulation of popular outrage over the electoral fraud of July 2<sup>nd</sup> by the PRD leadership to create a “designer revolt” (Gibler 2006b), which now faces not only imminent violent repression by the protofascist Mexican state, but also the perpetual danger of betrayal through backroom negotiations by its “leaders”. At the same time these organisational conditions present problems for the left-wing of the Other, uncomfortable with traditional anti-imperialist politics and notions of “national sovereignty” that do not problematise its basis in the dominance of the national bourgeois classes and its use of nationalist ideology to manipulate and divide the global working class, even when nationalism may appear to have a “progressive”, “anti-Yankee” face in Mexico. It remains to be seen, therefore, to what extent the EZLN and other more historical left groups within the Other can go beyond the limitations of Guevarist “left nationalism”, still the dominant ideology within the Mexican and Latin American radical left, although increasingly criticised by the growth of autonomism and anarchism in recent years.

The Other also seeks to separate itself from the verticalist traditions of Marxist-Leninist vanguardism, rejecting both the pyramid model of organization and its historical objective, the seizing of state power as the means to constitute a socialist society, organized as a mirror image of hierarchical capitalist society. From the start the EZLN made it clear that it would not be forming the “leadership” of the Other, much to the chagrin of the verticalists, democratic centralists, propagators of the Marcos personality cult and believers in “charismatic leaders” among the orthodox left:

And we don't come to you to tell you what you should do nor to give you orders. Nor are we going to ask you to vote for a candidate, since we already know that the only candidates are neoliberals. Nor are we going to tell you to do what we do, nor that you should rise up in arms. What we are going to do is ask you how your lives are going, your struggles, your thoughts about how our country is doing and about what we can do so that they don't defeat us (...) And maybe (...) together, we will organize throughout the entire country and come to an agreement between our struggles that, right now, fight alone, separated from one another, and we will come up with a plan about how we will continue with this program that includes what we all want, and a plan for how we are going to achieve this program, that is named 'the national plan for struggle' (...) (EZLN 2005: 2-3)

Nevertheless, Delegate Zero is without doubt the *primus inter pares* of the Other, as could be observed at the First National Assembly on May

29, when he informed the Assembly, supposedly the highest decisionary body of the Other, of the EZLN's "National Plan for Struggle" up to and including election day on July 2<sup>nd</sup> to free the Atenco prisoners, leaving the Assembly to rubberstamp it, rather than debate, discuss and if necessary criticise and amend it, given the lack of time to do so (only 15 minutes of discussion time remained for each set of state and regional delegates to give their opinion on the proposal as the independent cinema where the Assembly was held was about to shut for the night).

In keeping with most of the global anti-capitalist movement, many within the Other are diffident about such "grand narratives" as socialism, communism, autonomism and anarchism or any preordained blueprint to change society "from above", although within its ranks are some of the most dogmatic Marxist-Leninists in Mexico, the Maoist "Communist Party of Mexico (Marxist Leninist)" whose huge banners of Marx, Lenin, Engels, Stalin and Mao have adorned every meeting and march of the Other's caravan, to the consternation of many within the Other and the derision of its critics (Almeyra 2006a; Sanchez Ramirez 2006)<sup>5</sup>. In probably unintentional accordance with the autonomist theory of "multitude" (Hardt & Negri: 2000, 2004; Virno: 2004), these archaic images, once the icons of organized working class centrality, are accepted along with the hammer and sickle, anarchist and autonomist symbols, images of Zapata, Villa, Magon and Che Guevara, and perhaps even the Virgin of Guadalupe, a religious image used in the past by Zapatista indigenous women on their International Women's Day marches through San Cristobal, Chiapas, and an integral part of revived popular Latino identity in the US, as one more part of the Other's baggage, which above all contains the history of class struggle in Mexico.

The Zapatista slogan of "walking by asking" (*caminando preguntando*), i.e. moving forward in the struggle against and beyond capitalism by constantly questioning and criticizing both our own ideological and organizational assumptions, and the constantly changing and amorphous political and social environment produced by the clash between capitalist high-tech and human globalisations, has returned to Mexico in the cycles of global struggle to reinfuse the Other, via the absorption of that slogan by the alterglobalist movement since the "Battle of Seattle".

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5 These same banners are now to be seen in the Zocalo, Mexico City's huge central square, adorning AMLO's bi-weekly "report assemblies", a sign that part of the Other is involved in the PRD-controlled anti-fraud movement, while the rest of the Other focuses on the increasingly violent repression of the teachers and APPO movements in Oaxaca and continuing efforts to free the 27 Atenco prisoners.

The Other Campaign officially began on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2006, exactly 12 years after the uprising against NAFTA, when Delegate Zero left La Realidad, Chiapas, on the back of a motorbike headed for the first of four months of daily meetings, speeches, protests and marches as he, the Sixth Commission and the Other Campaign caravan, made up of the groups in the Other and the Zetza close to the EZLN, like the “Disobedient” (ex-White Overalls) now global movement for example, wound their way through the southern and central states of Mexico. The Other has catalysed the organization of previously non-existent anti-capitalist movement networks, involving previously disparate struggles and rival groups, and the intensification of those already in place. It has also provoked a growing chorus of criticisms from pro-AMLO quarters, although AMLO himself has been careful to abstain from directly criticising Delegate Zero or the Other. However, the general tone of the Other had been intentionally low-key and focused on organization rather than propaganda, with Delegate Zero refusing to give interviews and the Other barring the mainstream press from its meetings and events, ignoring the total media coverage of the choreographed presidential campaigns<sup>6</sup>. The events of May 3 and 4 in and around Atenco, a small town near Mexico City where in 2002 the local population had mobilized to defend their communally-owned “ejido”<sup>7</sup> land and prevent the construction of a multi-billion dollar international airport, inflicting a stinging defeat on Fox and his international backers, pushed both Marcos and the Other back into the national and international limelight. By that time the Other had already reached Mexico City, its stronghold outside Chiapas due to the presence of the UNAM students’ movement and the dozens of social movements and grassroots organizations spawned by the daily struggles of life in the “Monster”. Since those events, Delegate Zero has remained in Mexico City to coordinate the Other’s efforts to free the political prisoners remaining from the Atenco mass arrests, declared “red alert” in the Chiapas Zapatista communities and

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6 The Other caravan was accompanied however by members of the “Other journalism”, including Hermann Bellinghausen of *La Jornada*, Indymedia, Narco News, ZNet and NACLA among others.

7 The ejidos were established throughout Mexico under the 1917 Constitution to formalize the widespread squatting by landless peasants that took place during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) and as a means of land redistribution, one of the principle demands of the Revolution, on the principle of common ownership. The revocation by the Salinas government in 1992 of the Constitution’s Article 27, which forbade the breaking up of ejidos into private lots or their sale to landowners, was both a forerunner of NAFTA and the spark for a series of land disputes and peasant uprisings, including that of the EZLN, as corporate agribusiness, Mexican landowners and tourism projects have conducted illegal land grabs and enforced sales, with the instigation and support of the state and federal governments. This kind of struggle forms the backbone of the Other in the rural areas of Southern Mexico (Ballvé 2006).

suspended indefinitely the rest of the Other Campaign's tour around northern Mexico, where both the institutional left and grassroots movements are fewer and weaker.

The organization of the "Zezta Internacional" (in mock reference, perhaps, to both Inter Milan's acceptance of Marcos' invitation last year to play a series of matches with the Zapatista football team, and to the idea of forming a "Sixth International", the "Fifth" being the centralist tendency within the WSF), also called for in the Sixth, has been conducted through meetings in Latin American and European countries, especially Spain, where the Second Intercontinental Gathering for Humanity and against Neoliberalism, or "Encuentro Intergalactico", happened in 1997, the first having been organized by the EZLN in Chiapas the year before. Both "encuentros" can be seen as among the most important steps in setting up Peoples Global Action, a global alliance of autonomous movements, in 1997 and the global justice "movement of movements" since 1999.

The final part of the Sixth Declaration begins by identifying the Zapatista movement, more as students who listen than teachers who talk, with the popular, socialist and autonomous movements of contemporary Latin America in particular, but also with the global anti-war movement:

And we want to say to you, to the Latin American peoples, that, for us, we are proud to be part of you, although we are a small part. We remember well when years ago the continent was lit up by a light named Che Guevara, just as that light was named Bolívar beforehand, because, at times, the peoples take up a name in order to show that they carry a flag. And we want to say to the people of Cuba, who already have spent years in your path of resistance, that you are not alone and that we do not agree with the blockade against you and that we are going to look for the way to send you something, even if it is just corn, to support your resistance. And we want to say to the people of the United States that we don't confuse you with the evil governments that you have and that harm the whole world, and that we know that there are North Americans who fight in your country and work in solidarity with the struggles of other peoples. And we want to say to our Mapuche brothers and sisters in Chile that we see and we learn from your struggles. And to the Venezuelan people, that we watch very carefully your way of defending your sovereignty and your right to be a nation and to decide where you will go. And to the indigenous brothers and sisters of Ecuador and Bolivia we say to you that you are giving an excellent history lesson to all of Latin America because right now you are putting a stop to neoliberal globalisation. And to the piqueteros and the youth of Argentina we want to say that we love you. And to those in Uruguay who want a better country, we admire you. And to the landless of Brazil we respect you. And to all the youths of Latin America, it's so great that you are doing what you are doing and you give us great hope. And we want to say to the brothers and sisters of

Social Europe, that is to say the Europe that is rebellious and has dignity, that you are not alone. Your large movements against neoliberal wars make us very happy. We watch, attentively, your ways of organizing yourselves and your styles of fighting so that perhaps we can learn something.” (EZLN 2005: 1)

As for the programme of the Zezta, the Sixth, perhaps to distinguish the horizontalism of the Zezta from the incipient verticalism of the WSF, proposed through characteristically tongue-in-check language that:

“In the world...

1. We will build more relationships of respect and mutual aid with people and organizations that resist and fight against neoliberalism and for humankind.

2. In accordance with our abilities we will send material support such as food and crafts to those brothers and sisters who struggle throughout the world. (...)

3. And to everyone throughout the world who resists we say that there have to be other intercontinental gatherings (...) We don't want to give an exact date, or place, or decide who comes or how it is done, because this is about making horizontal agreements among us all. But we don't want it with a stage from where just a few speak and everyone else listens, but, rather, that there not be a stage, that it all be at ground-level, but well ordered because if not well organized there will just be a lot of noise and no one will understand the word. And with a good organization, everyone can listen, and they can write down in their notebooks the words of resistance that others tell so that later each participant can talk it over with their colleagues in their worlds. And we think that it ought to be in a place where there is a very big prison, because it could be that they repress us and jail us, and that way we will not all be piled one on top of another but, rather, well organized though we be prisoners. And from there in jail we can continue the intercontinental gathering for humankind and against neoliberalism.” (EZLN2005: 4-5)

The Zezta's participants are from horizontalist movements, probably disillusioned by their experience in the now verticalist-controlled WSF, from which the EZLN as an armed organization was constitutionally excluded, and the hijacking of the European Social Forum by the old orthodox left and its anti-democratic methods and obsolete political style. The Zezta is due to take place by January 2007 and the decision to organize the Zezta globally in tandem with the Other is a sign both of the continuing strength of Zapatista-instigated “new

internationalism" (Dinerstein 2002) and of the presently fractured state of the alterglobalist movement<sup>8</sup>.

## Atenco, Oaxaca and the Other

On the morning of May 3 in the town of Texcoco, a few miles from Atenco and about 15 miles north-west of Mexico City, the PRD local mayor sent riot police to evict a group of flower sellers, typical members of the informal economy, from their established pitch. The scuffle that followed quickly developed into a major conflict as members of the Peoples Front in Defence of the Land (Frente de Pueblos en Defensa de la Tierra / FPDT) from Atenco, also known as the "macheteros", (they carry machetes on demonstrations as a symbol of the peasantry in struggle) came to the flower sellers aid and blocked the main highway to Mexico City for the rest of the day, repelling various charges by riot police. During the arrest of the leader of the FPDT that day a 14-year-old boy was shot dead at close range by a police officer. Hundreds of Other activists, human rights observers, doctors, media activists and others immediately gathered in Atenco to support the people of Atenco and Texcoco. The rightist Televisa and Teleazteca media duopoly bayed for protestor blood, repeatedly showing images of a riot policeman being kicked, while filtering out images of police brutality. Early in the morning of the next day, 3,000 armed riot police from various local, state and federal forces invaded the town of Atenco in retaliation for their defeat the day before and for the political humiliation inflicted on the Fox government four years earlier over the new Mexico City airport. The centre of the town was smothered in tear gas as gangs of riot police viciously attacked, clubbed and kicked men and women, the elderly and the young, FPDT, Other activists and bystanders, photographers and human rights observers, all were badly beaten before being dragged to jeeps where the beatings continued and the sexual abuse of the arrested women began. One 50-year-old woman out shopping was forced to have oral sex with three riot policemen in the street, under threat of beating and arrest (Ballinas 2006). A UNAM student activist Alexis Benumea was shot in the head with a tear gas canister and died a month later from his wounds. Some 20 houses, identified by an informer as belonging to FPDT activists, were broken into without warrants and the occupants and others who had taken shelter there beaten and arrested and their belongings stolen or destroyed. 280 were arrested and taken by bus to

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8 See for example the recent split within ATTAC France along verticalist-horizontalist lines (Callinicos 2006).

a high security prison in the State of Mexico. During the 8-hour journey most of the women, including three foreigners, and some of the men were sexually tortured and 30 women and at least one man were raped by the police. At present, 27 people remain imprisoned in a high security jail reserved for terrorists and drug traffickers on charges of obstructing the highway and kidnapping police officers (eight police were captured – a common practice in social conflicts in Mexico - during the clashes of May 3, and were well treated before being discovered in a safe house by their colleagues during the police operation of the following day). There have been two hunger strikes by the imprisoned. Some are not members of the FPDT or from Atenco, while others are human rights observers and doctors who were voluntarily aiding the injured from the day before. A permanent vigil was established outside the prison where they are being held to demand their release. At the Other's first national assembly on May 29<sup>th</sup>, Marcos formalized the decision to suspend the caravan until all the remaining imprisoned are released. He proposed a campaign of artistic and political actions, including a demonstration for the release of *all* political prisoners and the presentation of the disappeared from the Seventies, as well as a second National Assembly, until and including election day on July 2<sup>nd</sup> which the assembly unanimously approved. As a result of the national and international outcry over the exceptional police brutality, the Other's profile was raised significantly, a 15,000 strong national demonstration against the repression in Atenco and for the release of the prisoners took place in Mexico City on May 30<sup>th</sup>, with smaller marches, pickets and protest actions throughout the country, in the USA and internationally during May and June. Marcos broke his boycott of the mainstream media and gave press and television interviews in which he intensified his attack on AMLO, whose response to the Atenco events was a studied silence, and on the destruction of any notion of legal order and human rights in Mexico by the political class, since all three of the main parties were involved in the repression.<sup>9</sup> The repression of the Atenco and Other movements in May launched the other Campaign into the Mexican and international public realms, dramatically intensifying the organization and networking of struggles. However, since election day on July 2, the decision to remain in Mexico City until the liberation of the imprisoned

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9 The data and incidents mentioned here were taken from reports in *La Jornada* and *Indymedia Mexico*, and have since been confirmed by the *preliminary report of the ongoing investigation by the International Civil Commission on the Observance of Human Rights* (Comisión Civil Internacional de Observación por los Derechos Humanos) into the events in Atenco and Texcoco on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> this year: <http://cciodh.pangea.org>; accessed 11th August 2006.

and suspend the rest of the Other Campaign's tour of Mexico, while humanly and ethically unquestionable, have nevertheless led to the Other's perceived stagnation and "swamping" by the media coverage given to AMLO's anti-fraud movement.

Since July 2<sup>nd</sup>, the focus of the movement has switched to the teachers and popular movements in Oaxaca City, the capital of Oaxaca state, one of the most impoverished and historically combative regions of Mexico, along with Chiapas, Guerrero and Puebla, the states with the main concentrations of autochthonous peoples, among the most antagonist social subjects in recent years in Mexico and Latin America. The Oaxaca movement started on May 22 as the annual strike and occupation of the city's main square for a meaningful salary raise by the dissident section of the SNTE (National Educational Workers Union), Latin America's largest union and the fiefdom of Elba Esther Gordillo, the pro-Fox PRI leader widely suspected of using her union members to carry out the more traditional fraudulent activities on July 2. The movement rapidly spread throughout the middle and working classes of Oaxaca, disgusted by the despotic style of the PRI governor, Ulisses Ruiz, whose removal from power became the movement's minimum demand. The crude attempts to baton the teachers off the street on June 14<sup>th</sup> led to a battle in the city centre resulting in the main square being retaken by the striking teachers, now supported actively by ample sections of the general population, and the formation of APPO (Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca). The occupation of the main square has spread to the building of barricades throughout the city and the occupation of most of the public and government buildings in the city, as well as all the TV and radio stations, rendering the state ungovernable. Ruiz survives only due to the pro-fraud post-electoral PRI-PAN pact against the anti-fraud and Oaxaca movements. The use of "state terrorist" tactics by the repressive apparatus, reminiscent of the "dirty war" fought against the guerrilla movements of the 70s, includes the murder of 5 APPO activists, the wounding of several others and the kidnapping of four APPO leaders by plain clothes police and paramilitary gunmen, who now launch nightly armed attacks against the pickets outside government buildings and radio stations (Gibler 2006a). The violence of the now totally discredited governor's response and the non-intervention of the Fox government has only increased the growing sense of political vacuum, destabilization and polarization evident throughout the country, but most notable in Mexico City and Oaxaca, as the lines for a generalised conflict begin to harden.

## The “Other on the Border” and the “Other on the Other Side”

One of the most innovative aspects of the Other has been the attempt to depart from national Mexican politics and transcend the crumbling boundaries of the nation state to include those (non-)Mexicans who live and struggle in one of the most extreme borderlands, where “First” and “Third” Worlds meet, clash and intermingle, creating a transnational space, sometimes called “Amexica”. This is the land of *maquiladoras* (corporate assembly plants for export, compared by Bowden [1998] with Nazi slave factories for their salaries, too low to permit worker reproduction, guaranteed instead by a constant stream of internal migrants, and for appalling work and health and safety conditions), *narco* executions (drug trafficker cartels, now the most powerful in Latin America, engaged in an increasingly deadly turf war), *coyotes* (immigrant traffickers, who will be among the main beneficiaries of the Sensenbrenner anti-immigration bill), Mara Salvatrucha/MS13 (a counter-cultural gang movement and organised crime cartel from El Salvador now present throughout the US), the *Migra* (US Border Patrol), child sex tourism and the black on pink crosses to remember the femicides (some 450 mainly working class-indigenous-internal migrant women and girls murdered in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua City since 1993, 130 of whom were raped, tortured and mutilated, over 1,000 “disappeared”, only 30 cases investigated to the victims’ families’ satisfaction<sup>10</sup>), but also of neofascist Minutemen militia and the militarisation of “America’s” soft underbelly in the “war against terrorism”. Ciudad Juarez is the region’s most emblematic city and is about to host the first Border Social Forum in October, being strategically positioned in the very centre of the 1,500-mile long border and the twin city of El Paso, Texas, containing the CIA’s headquarters for the border and global south. Bowden (1998) despairingly calls Juarez “a laboratory of our future”, a place where the now relatively low level of worker resistance allows capital to create a “posthuman” society (Berardi 2003). Beyond the borderlands lies “Atzlan”, the Chicano term for “occupied Mexico” (the south-western states of the US ceded by Mexico after the 1847 invasion), where the Latino population has grown vertiginously in the last 25 years, as some 30 million Mexicans and Central Americans have crossed the border, most without documents, one of the great exoduses of recent history. Hundreds have perished from heat exhaustion in the Arizona desert,

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10 See the constantly updated bilingual website of Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (Our daughters back home), the most radical NGO working on the femicides in Juarez and Chihuahua:

one of the hottest places on earth and where US anti-immigration policies deliberately funnel migrants with walls, border patrols, pilotless spy planes and now with armed militias and the armoured vehicles of the National Guard. But Aztlan now also includes Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, which have become dependent on the cheap labour of Mexican migrants, whose remittances to their home communities are now Mexico's third largest source of foreign exchange after oil sales and tourism, making organized migrant communities in Chicago and elsewhere among the most significant investors in Mexican rural communities, so much so that the Bush government now wants to tax them. The growing dependence of the US economy on migrant "prosumers" was laid bare by the May Day "Si se puede" movement's huge demonstrations and boycott of US businesses against the proposed criminalization of undocumented migrants as "potential terrorists" by the Sensenbrenner bill. This mass movement of millions of previously subordinated migrants, together with the increasingly powerful social movements of Latin America, which have forced their national oligarchies to abandon or modify their slavish obedience of the Washington Consensus, has been described as the most important generalised anti-capitalist struggle in the Americas since the Civil Rights, black nationalist, students, counter-cultural and anti-war movements of the 60s (Midnight Noters 2006).

So where and how has the Other tried to connect with these movements both in the US and on its borders? Starting with the "Other on the Border", an attempted transnational zonification and networking of struggles in Chihuahua in Mexico, with west Texas and New Mexico, activists from the autonomist Kasa de la Cultura para Tod@s (House of Culture for All), the Trotskyist LUS (United Socialist League), ejiditarios from the Valle de Juarez (the last remaining agricultural area near the Juarez-El Paso border), the indigenous movement of the Raramuri people, the FAT (Authentic Labour Front, the only independent trade union active among maquiladora workers), students, teachers and NGOs campaigning for justice for the victims of the femicides, have met weekly with a Chicano rural farmworkers union in El Paso campaigning to save their homes in the Segundo Barrio in the downtown from gentrification as part of the San Jeronimo Project, which will lead to the diversion of water, the construction of social housing and other scarce resources away from the fast growing but almost completely unplanned and unserved urban sprawl of Juarez, and with trade unionists, migrant rights activists and teachers from El Paso and Las Cruces in the US; altogether some 50 groups as well as many unaffiliated individuals. However, the Other on the Border has been dogged from the start by a sectarian war of words carried out

on its email list and aimed at the Kasa, the core movement, which had bilateral meetings with the EZLN in Chiapas at the beginning of the Other and is responsible for coordinating the Other on the Border: yet another example of the horizontal-vertical conflict within global anti-capitalism, which has resulted in a considerable waste of time, energy and motivation. As a result the actions taken in solidarity with the Atenco movement in May were very limited compared to south and central Mexico, where sizeable demonstrations and roadblocks were organized throughout May. When the Kasa was attacked by armed, masked "state terrorists" the same month and for the second time in six months (an example of the now commonplace state intimidation tactics used against the Other throughout Mexico), its computers destroyed and a member kidnapped for several hours, the response by the rest of the Other in Juarez was well below what the Kasa had hoped for in terms of solidarity and support. Once the decision was taken by Marcos, who was due to visit the borderlands in June, to suspend the rest of the Other Campaign until the Atenco imprisoned were freed, enthusiasm has gradually dropped off and the once packed weekly organizational meetings have now ceased. Even though the focus in the Other on the visits of Marcos was criticised in some quarters as reinforcing his de facto leadership, nevertheless the "Zapatour" had important organizational and mobilisational impacts, especially on areas of relatively low militant activism such as Juarez where intermovement relations were minimal or non-existent. While some voluntaristically welcome this as a necessary self-depuration of the less committed members of the Other, others have criticised Marcos' decision to "imprison" himself in Mexico City, which has led to a sense of stagnation since the July 2 elections, concomitant with the spectacular (in all senses of that word) rise of the AMLO anti-fraud movement. Nevertheless, the Zapatistas credibility as a core movement, not only in Mexico but globally, depends on their insistence on political coherence. Thus their commitment to the Atenco imprisoned will be kept even if the remainder of the Other Campaign has to be postponed to next year and the opportunity to "shadow" the presidential campaigns in order to reveal the falsities of official politics has been lost for another six years. This is also a sign of the Zapatistas patience and different conception of political time from the more urgent, but perhaps more opportunist and capitalistically integrated political rhythms of some urban social movement activists.

The Other on the Other Side participated in the "Si se puede" movement and has coordinated with the local struggles of the Latino community, for example the attempt to save a community urban farm and park in South Central Los Angeles from being repossessed for

development. This struggle brought together activists from all the communities in LA in defence of an occupied green space, one of the few left in a highly polluted and alienated urban environment. It has also organised “free radio” workshops and alternative media skill sharing with the less-resourced Tijuana and Juarez Others. The Other on the Other Side is a vital conduit between the Other Campaign in Mexico and the increasingly powerful struggles of the Latino migrant communities in the US.

## Old Lefts and New Foes: AMLO, the PRD and the Other after the July 2nd Electoral Fraud

It should be apparent by now that the contemporary political cleavages in Mexico are not only left-right, as personified by the bitter personal feud between Fox and AMLO, but also the growing conflict between the revolutionary/anti-capitalist left represented by the Other Campaign and the substantially pro-capitalist/ “reformist” (in reality, “reformism without reforms”, typical of the Latin American post-insurreccional institutional left) PRD. Taking both the political elites and the broader left parties and movements by surprise, the EZLN first attacked the presidential aspirations of AMLO and the PRD, the main centre-left party, as neoliberal and even “fascist”, causing considerable consternation among the PRD’s generally pro-Zapatista base. The confused resentment and outrage expressed in the letters that flooded into *La Jornada* in July and August 2005, following the publication of the Sixth, were born of the fact that most within the party view AMLO as a messianic figure, the PRD’s best chance to win the presidency since its foundation in 1989, following the electoral fraud of 1988. AMLO’s elevation to virtual political sainthood has been greatly aided by the clumsy conspiracy of Fox and Salinas to remove him from contention through spurious legal actions and media vilification. AMLO’s right-hand man when Mayor of Mexico City, Rene Bejerano, was caught on video in 2004 receiving bribes in return for city contracts from a businessman subsequently linked to Salinas, so provoking a far-reaching scandal which showed that the PRD was very much part of the endemically corrupt, clientalist political class, although AMLO’s reputation as an “honest” politician remained unscathed. The conspiracy was momentarily frustrated by a huge demonstration of over one million mainly but not exclusively PRD supporters in April 2005, forcing Fox to back down and reinstate AMLO’s legal immunity

as Mayor, so permitting him to continue as the PRD's presidential candidate<sup>11</sup>.

Marcos has since clarified the reasons for the now intense antagonism between the Zapatistas and the PRD, which in many ways had been simmering since 1994:

- the 2001 betrayal by the PRD of the 1996 San Andres Accords on indigenous autonomy and rights, signed by the EZLN and the then PRI Mexican government as well as various independent indigenous organizations and which the PRD had always verbally supported (and the enactment of which AMLO made the first of the "51 promises" in his 2006 electoral manifesto), but which it unexpectedly dropped when the majority of its senators supported a diluted PAN counterproposal which substantially maintains the racist status quo and denies autonomy.
- The armed attack in April 2004 by PRD members on a Zapatista march in Zinacantán, a community in Chiapas where the local PRD government had cut off water and electricity to Zapatista families in an attempt to force them to join the PRD. Nearby Zapatistas organized a march to reconnect the services, which local PRD members then ambushed with gunfire, wounding several of the marchers. Although the PRD national leadership promised a full investigation into the incident, it has yet to happen and the local PRD leader responsible for the attack is now one of the main organizers of AMLO's non-party "Citizens Support Network" in Chiapas.

Other reasons for the breakdown of relations between the EZLN and the PRD would be:

- The EZLN's unconditional support for the UNAM students movement's strike and occupation in 1999-2000 against the hiking of fees as the first step in the privatisation of Latin America's largest state university, was a watershed in the radicalisation of the Zapatista movement, leading to rupture with Cardenas, the then PRD Mayor of Mexico City, and the radical liberal urban intelligentsia, led by Carlos Monsivais and Elena Poniatowska, once so fascinated by the EZLN. Relations also became tense with *La Jornada*, which reported the

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11 Under Mexican law, a person accused of a crime or involved in a court case cannot stand for election as president.

occupation objectively but whose cartoonists and editorialists joined the general media demonization of the autonomous students' movement as violent, anachronistic "Stalinist monsters", after they expelled the PRD "colonels" (official student leaders) to stop them manipulating the movement. The CGH (General Strike Council) movement was repressed in February 2000 when the Zedillo government sent riot police onto the campus of an autonomous university and hundreds of students were imprisoned or expelled, although UNAM dropped the fee hike and the movement's nerve centre, the Aula Magna Che Guevara, remains occupied and is now one of the Other's main organizational hubs.

- The Chiapas state government has been under PRD control since 2000, and while the army and PRI-linked paramilitary groups no longer harass Zapatista communities to the same extent (although no action has been taken against those responsible for the 1997 Acteal massacre and hundreds of other extra judicial summary executions), the state's counter-insurgency effort has continued through discrimination against Zapatista families and communities over government aid, often administered through PRD-linked NGOs, forcing some to join the PRD and leading to conflicts over squatted land with the Zapatista autonomous "Caracoles" and "Good Government Councils"<sup>12</sup> in an attempt to divide and weaken the Zapatistas in their heartland. The Zapatistas ended relations with most Mexican NGOs, some of which are both PRD-linked and financed by the US State Department<sup>13</sup>, in 2003 when the "Aguascalientes" meeting places with "civil society" were shut down and replaced by the present "Caracoles" (seashell, an important symbol in Mayan culture and more defence-oriented), which maintain more guarded relations with a few carefully vetted NGOs and with "civil society" in general. The Zapatista autonomous communities, taking advantage of the probably only temporary lull in hostilities, have since embarked on a dual strategy of local consolidation and gradual inter/national expansion of the movement, of which the Sixth and the Other are the results.

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12 Juntas de Buen Gobierno, set up to self-govern the autonomous municipalities on collective leadership-revocable delegate principles and drawn from ordinary citizens, who then return to their former occupations, so avoiding the re-emergence of the corruption and clientalism characteristic of a professional political class with its own interests and agenda.

13 According to Eligio Calderon, an academic of the UAM-Xochimilco, Mexico City, and former advisor to the EZLN during its 1995-96 negotiations with the PRI government.

Relations with the PRD have worsened still with the choice of Juan Sabines, formerly of the PRI, as their candidate for the Chiapas governorship elections on August 20, which he seems to have won. Sabines has included in his team of advisors the ex-PRI governor Albores, responsible for the Acteal massacre and the 1998 military offensive against the Zapatista communities that left several dead, hundreds imprisoned and thousands displaced.

- The failure of AMLO's Mexico City government to properly investigate the 2001 assassination of Digna Ochoa, an indigenous woman and radical human rights lawyer close to the Zapatistas, and of the UNAM student activist Pavel Gonzalez in 2004. Many suspect the involvement of the *Yunque* (anvil), a semi-clandestine neofascist group linked to the PAN, some of whose main leaders are former members, and/or CISEN, the Mexican secret service. However, the judicial arm of AMLO's government, despite hard evidence to the contrary (both were shot more than once and Gonzalez' body was found crucified in a forest outside the city) persists with the "suicide" theorem, typical of one of the worst aspects of the PRI's 70-year dictatorship when political dissidents were regularly "suicided". Given the lack of judicial independence at any level, this would seem to indicate AMLO's reluctance, as a prospective presidential candidate, to confront the Mexican "secret state", which ill bodes any prospect of justice under his hypothetical presidency for the victims of the 1968 and 1971 massacres of students and teachers, the thousands of disappearances and summary executions of the "dirty war" in the 1970s, and of the more recent massacres of peasant and indigenous movements at Aguas Blancas (1995), Acteal (1997) and El Charco (1998), the full investigation and punishment of which are the main demands of Mexican social justice and human rights movements, supported by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.
- A disturbing tendency by both AMLO, a former member of the PRI, and of the PRD to accept into their ranks and leadership, and now in leading positions in the presidential electoral team, some of the worst PRI authoritarian "dinosaurs" such as Manuel Bartlett, one of the architects of the 1988 fraud, Leonel Cota, formerly an orthodox neoliberal on the right-wing of the PRI and now PRD party secretary, Adolfo Uribe and Socorro Diaz, close advisors to former President Zedillo and implicated in the Acteal massacre, as well as opportunists like

Munoz Ledo and Camacho Solis, both former PRI leaders who have flirted with the PAN, and are now among AMLO's closest advisors.

- AMLO's close relationship with top Mexican capitalists like Carlos Slim, the third richest man on the planet according to Forbes Magazine (2006), with whom he shares a project to gentrify the historical centre of Mexico City, involving the expulsion of its working class population and the repression of the street vendors of the "informal economy", through the introduction of former New York mayor Giuliani's "zero tolerance" policy, while leaving organized crime rackets untouched. As Mayor (2000-2005) AMLO had a mixed, populist style, providing social security top up payments to impoverished pensioners and single mothers and founding a much-needed new state university with an adult education mission, the UACM, while favouring the middle class consumerist, car and construction lobbies by building the pharaonic "Second Floor" of the city's heavily congested ring road, instead of investing in improved public transport, housing and social services, all desperate needs in one of the world's most socially polarized, congested and polluted cities.
- The PRD, a coalition of competing "political tribes" brought together by PRI "democratisers", the reformed ex-Stalinists of the Mexican Communist Party and the defeated remnants of the New Left vanguardist parties in 1989, has made persistent attempts to co-opt the Zapatista movement since 1994, as part of its clientalist galaxy of ex-social movements now converted into internal party factions or NGOs, as happened to the more traditionally socialist Asamblea de Barrios of Superbarrio fame and much of the once autonomous "Colono" (community squatters) movement, enticed by the offer of parliamentary seats and organizational funding, thanks to the PRD's enhanced finances following its historical victory in 1997 when Cardenas became the first elected Mayor of Mexico City, now the party's electoral stronghold.

So gone are the days back in 1996 when Marcos, Cardenas and AMLO met in San Cristobal to discuss common strategy in the "transition to democracy", as part of the Peace Dialogue between the PRI regime and the EZLN. The EZLN's evolution as an autonomous movement has led it to break with most of its broad left and democratic allies, including the small "liberation theology" component, represented by

the ex-bishop of San Cristobal Samuel Ruiz, of the otherwise deeply traditional and hard right Mexican Catholic Church.

The evidence for electoral fraud against AMLO and the PRD on the July 2<sup>nd</sup> presidential, congressional and senate elections is accumulating by the day, despite the right's pretence that nothing untoward happened and that everything is the product of AMLO's feverish imagination. The growing body of evidence for both cybernetic and traditional fraud shows that the foreign observers provided by the European Union and other organizations singularly failed in their task and that Bush, Blair and Zapatero rubberstamped fraud in one of the most important "emerging democracies" by precipitously recognising Calderon, the PAN candidate, as the winner. Although the fabulously paid judges of the TEPJF, the final court for electoral disputes, are about to make their unappealable ruling, predictably, that the elections were fair, AMLO and his "Planton" (picket) tent city, which has covered much of the city centre since July 30<sup>th</sup>, completely disrupting traffic flows and tourism (Mexico's second source of foreign revenue), will continue at least until September 15<sup>th</sup>. Under the pretext of needing to clear the central square for an army Independence Day parade, the "planton" may well be violently dislodged, given President Fox's threatening language and the creation of a militarised no-go area around the Congress building, reminiscent of the "red zone" at the G8 Summit in Genoa in 2001, in preparation for his final September 1<sup>st</sup> "Report to the nation". Such repressive action will only worsen the already profound systemic crisis caused by the fraud and the Oaxaca conflict, possibly precipitating generalised conflict throughout Mexico.

## Conclusions: An/Other Anti-Capitalism is Possible?

The Sixth and the Other represent the constitution of a potentially revolutionary autonomous "left", organized for the first time in Mexican history as an officially "leaderless", (although Marcos is for the moment at least its unofficial leader and spokesperson) and transnational (since it includes the "Otra en el otro lado" in the USA) grassroots network of social movements, extra-parliamentary political parties, independent trade union branches, community groups, radical NGOs and unaffiliated individuals, all linked to the networks of the anti-capitalist alterglobalist "movement of movements". However, at the present conjuncture the Other and indeed the Zapatista communities in Chiapas find themselves facing repression by an authoritarian ultra-neoliberal president, imposed through an electoral fraud which is tantamount to a fascist coup d'etat and which slams Mexico's 18-year-

old “transition to democracy” into reverse. The challenge to build a mass autonomous anti-capitalist alternative “below and to the left” at this moment seems huge and much will depend on developing close ties with the global networks of anti-capitalism both to defend the new movement from repression and to increase its counter-power within the Mexican political scenario. It will also be important for the Other to avoid the pitfalls that allowed President Kirchner to co-opt important elements of the Piquetero movement in Argentina (see Dinerstein in this volume), a similar fate befalling parts of the indigenous movements in Ecuador and Bolivia, although the Sem Terra landless peasants movement (Latin America’s largest and one of its most autonomous) has successfully resisted Lula’s attempts to divide and co-opt it (Fernandes 2006). So along with avoiding cooption by the greatly expanded PRD, which won 35% of the senate and congress seats and is only slightly smaller than the PAN, with the PRI facing major internal splits and possible disintegration, the Other will need to build strong links with Latin America’s growing number of autonomous anti-capitalist movements. It will also be necessary for the Other to strengthen its links with the Oaxaca and Atenco movements and join forces with those potentially autonomous elements within the anti-fraud movement, disillusioned with the prospects for radical change through electoral politics and prepared to continue the struggle for participative democracy “from below and for below” long after AMLO and the PRD have made their peace with Fox and Calderon. All these movements will need to go beyond the region’s historical tendency towards left nationalism and “popular patriotism”, which view all forms of globalisation as a calamity, not just the neoliberal economic variety: an ideology which finally only legitimates the return to power of the national bourgeoisie vis-à-vis transnational capital. For the first time an autonomous, alterglobal, anti-capitalist movement is emerging in Mexico, aided by the eclipse of neoliberalism in the region and the depth of the systemic political crisis, but its immediate fate now hangs in the balance.

*Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, 28 August 2006.*

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# Reruralizing the World

Mariarosa Dalla Costa<sup>1</sup>

I began to pose to myself the issue of the land as a crucial question at the end of the eighties, on the heels of a trajectory which, during the end of the sixties and the seventies, had as its crux the factory as the space of waged labour and then the home as the space of unwaged labour within which the former finds its roots. The labour, therefore, involved in the production of commodities and that of the reproduction of labour power, the labour of the factory worker and the labour of the housewife within the Fordist organization of society. At that time we said that the employer with one paycheck in reality bought two people, the worker and the woman behind him. Agricultural labour, or the labour of the land, which reproduced life for everybody, remained in shadows however.

The question that was always subtended to that path of mine, as to that of so many others, was of where the Achilles heel of capitalism, that profoundly unequal system we wanted to transform, could be found. Workers, students and women were in movement, but at that time, within the marxist culture that permeated rebellious society within developed countries, the agricultural labour of the farmer was seen as anachronistic.

The eighties, in which state politics formulated themselves as a response to the cycle of struggles of the sixties and seventies, are the years in which neoliberalism takes off, in which there are applied in a

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1 This paper is a translated version of "Riruralizzare il mondo... per recuperare lo spirito e la vita," a paper delivered at the Terra e Libertà/ CriticalWine convention held at the CentroSociale La Chimica, Verona, April 11-13th, 2003. It is published in Italian in M. Angelini et al. (Eds.). 2004.*Terra e Libertà/Critical Wine*. Rome: DeriveApprodi.

systematic and increasingly drastic manner in many countries the politics of structural adjustment, which cause in the world an unprecedented poverty. During those years in fact, there multiply struggles for bread, against the increase of the cost of living, from Latin America to Africa to Asia.

Yet strongly influencing the direction of domestic governments was the recommendation on the part of the International Monetary Fund that where land was free or subject to forms of local community-based usage that a price be fixed for it, in other words that it be subjected to a regime of private property. A result of this is that whomever wants to work it must first of all have enough money to buy it. It is no coincidence that those years become ones in which there multiply struggles surrounding the expropriation of land and the water that runs through its veins.

It is in this context that the issue of the land became central for me, considering the levels of poverty and the impossibility of subsistence that its expropriation (together with neoliberal policies and other measures typical of structural adjustment) determined. Naturally the expropriation of the land had already been since the sixties a particularly widespread practice characterizing the Green Revolution, which demanded that the bigger and better allotments of land be destined for export crops at the expense of public financing for subsistence farming.

The expropriation of the land was accompanied by the expulsion of populations that derived from it the possibility for nutrition and settlement. Eradicated from their land, they added themselves to urban slums or they took the route of migration. Yet the expropriation of the land and the eradication/expulsion of its populations also characterized many of the World Bank's development projects, beginning with the construction of large dams or roads or particularly with the transferring of populations, projects that complemented the policies of structural adjustment inasmuch as if the latter had increasingly lowered the quality of life, the former had maximized profit thanks to the large-scale demolition of factors at the base of social reproduction in those settings. Therefore I found as crucial constants of the development phase that took off in those years those macro-operations upon the land and its populations that had allowed the launch of the capitalist system five centuries ago: the expropriation from, and the accumulation of, land on the one hand, and the accumulation of immiserated individuals who could no longer reproduce themselves because they had been deprived of the fundamental means of production and reproduction, above all the land itself, on the other. These operations were now functional to a further

expansion of capitalist relations and to the re-stratification of labour on a global level.

Yet if the expropriation of the land remains a crucial element of that process of primitive accumulation that is reproduced again and again, generating ever-higher levels of poverty and famine, this makes the urgency of the question relevant not only to those who risk expulsion from the land, but to humanity in its entirety. The conditions of labour and of life of men and women across the world, regardless of where they live, are implicated, because it is upon the expulsion from the land that the condition for class is re-founded and labour within the global economy is re-stratified. As far as those expelled from the land are concerned, it is unthinkable that jobs will multiply in accordance with their number. Instead we are witnessing the decimation of such positions by various means. Nor is it possible to fool oneself into hoping for a global guaranteed income of such vast proportions. Yet even if it arrived one day, replacing the bombs perhaps, could we really delimit the matter to one of money, money sufficient for the purchase of a farming product which, in its industrial and neoliberal formulation, increasingly pollutes our bodies, destroys small economies and their jobs, and devastates the environment? And, beyond this, how much freedom would we have when all of the earth's inhabitants depended only and exclusively on money for their survival?

It is through posing questions such as these that, already in the eighties, beginning from the Global South, and more importantly, gaining greater visibility and formalization in the nineties, that there was formed a series of networks, many of which became connected through the best-known one, the Via Campesina, which make of the issues of farming and nutrition their clarion call. New networks and subjects, ones that are fundamental components of the movement of movements. It can therefore be said that, in the decade that just ended, yet with its roots in the struggles for bread, land and water of the eighties, a planetary movement for the defense of the access to land, for the preservation of its reproductive powers, for access to fresh and genuine food, has been formed. I encountered the Via Campesina in 1996 in Rome when, with Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, Farida Akter and people of other circuits we put together the first alternative convention to that of the Food and Agriculture Organization, a convention in which that same network had a vital role in its ability to mobilize, to organize, and to fine-tune the themes that were brought to everyone's attention. It was also a crucial moment of the Zapatista insurrection, which had at its heart as with all indigenous struggles the issue of the land/Earth as a common good. In my view, given the resonance with which it came to the fore and the response

and support that it enjoyed on the part of the most diverse sectors within developed countries, that rebellion had built an ideal bridge, which for the first time had joined the struggle over the question of land expropriation with that of the post-Fordist expropriation of labour. Emblematic of this was the fact that at one pole there were the rebelling indigenous of Chiapas and on the other the workers/unemployed of developed Europe protesting in the streets carrying the banner of Zapata. In 1996 however agricultural issues were still paid scarce attention by rebel forms of activism in Italy. I still remember sensing a certain surprise surrounding the subject within a movement meeting I raised it at in March of that year. The attention paid to such themes today offers us a measure of the progress made since.

The networks that have been constructing themselves from the various global Souths and the Zapatista insurrection, as I was saying, returned to the developed world the concept of the land/Earth as a common good, and a many-sided concept at that. Let us consider the primary facets:

- a) The land/Earth above all as a source of life, of nourishment and therefore of plenty if preserved as a system capable of reproducing itself. Therefore the right of access to the land and to the resources it contains, above all water and seeds, against their continual privatization. The right of access to and the economic possibility of farming the land according to organic techniques, using all of the biodiversity that place can offer. Therefore a right to the variety of food as a universal right, not only for elites, and as a guarantee of better nutrition and greater health. The right to food freedom as the other face of food democracy. Food democracy as the basis for a different project of life, where farming, production and commercialization practices are sustainable from an economic, social, and environmental point of view. This against farming choices that condemn us to nutritional homogeneity (that is also the bearer of low nutrition and poor health), to the solely industrial production of food (possibly for import or export, but for many impossible to purchase), and to the specialization of crop cultivation imposed geographical areas within the neoliberal internationalization of markets;

- b) The land/Earth as the source of natural evolution. Therefore the right to protect the diversity and integrity of the different varieties against their destruction and genetic manipulation and the resulting immiseration and risks for the population. Networks that oppose themselves not only to the expropriation of the land but to its violation and to the commodification of its reproductive powers which constitute the crucial terrain of the current capitalist strategy of hunger, itself functional to stratifying labour and holding it ransom. On the other hand this terrain is crucial for the possibility, quality, and freedom of human reproduction. Therefore on such issues the political positions that are the bearers of the project of a different life, the most revolutionary ones, appear to be the most conservative.
- c) The land/Earth as territory on which to live against the continual eradication brought about by the industrial concept of agriculture and by war operations. Both of these take away land, polluting it in the former case with chemical products, and in the latter with explosives. War increasingly provokes via such pollution with lethal new explosives and toxic substances an infinite damage and an expulsion without a possibility of return.
- d) The land/Earth as a public space against its continual fencing off and privatization. From the increasingly numerous refugee camps to the increasingly numerous golf courses that alter the environment, taking away fields for farming or rice fields or public parkland. Already there have been bloody struggles around such elite projects from Vietnam to Mexico.

Yet even the construction of community that these networks represent, beginning from the land as a primary common good - in that they understand this to be the foundation of a different social construction - is articulated within a multifaceted approach. Above all women occupy an emerging role that corresponds to the crucial nature of their position within agricultural labour and the reproduction of the family. These networks, because they brought to the fore the fundamental role women have in the labour of agricultural subsistence, remind us of the fact that upon women and children fall the most dire consequences of the Green Revolution and the neoliberal project, and therefore ask that there be equal participation for women where planning for the farmers' movement is carried out. And, in bringing to the fore the issue of the

woman's condition, they above all raise the problem of the violence she is the victim of within the family, within the society, and particularly during the operations of land expropriations, such as women and children's right to education and health, to mention only some of the most important cases. Also symptomatic of an evolution in the relationship between the sexes, to give just one example, is that within the Karnataka Farmers Union (founded in 1980, counting around ten million members, and today a part of the Via Campesina) it was decided to abolish particularly expensive wedding rituals that, given their poverty, were impeding marriage for men and women. In other words what have been promoted are civil marriages of "reciprocal respect" without the intervention of the Brahmin in the place of the conventional marriages that often generated huge debts for families. The same union promotes programs and meetings for women, and a fixed percentage of seats on its committees are reserved for them.

Another equally significant fact is that networks for the recuperation of a different relationship with the earth, for the spread of organic agriculture, for access to fresh and genuine food, are being organized in the more developed capitalist countries. In the United States as far back as 1986 farmers resisting the dominant agricultural model founded the National Family Farm Coalition. Other examples, and significant ones, were created in the nineties in that country as well as in Canada, and of course in France there emerged the experience of "peasant-based farming" with José Bové. The Community Food Security Coalition formed in the United States in the past decade, involving producers, consumers and various other subjects, joined under the slogan of "food security for the community", a notion that gathered steam simultaneously from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific. The latter not only put in place an organic agriculture, but it assured the distribution of its products at a local level allowing for access, through various types of arrangements, to low-income citizens, building distribution points at low cost and providing the necessary transportation to reach them. Declaring their intent to install a "more democratic nutritional system," it gathers 125 groups that connect food banks, networks of family farms, anti-poverty organizations which rarely collaborated on such network's programs in the past, and obviously operates on the basis of the push tying people together, putting in contact small urban or rural farmers, food banks, and soup kitchens for the poor and low-income communities. Similarly, the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners, which self-organized around the same problem, then became key organizers in the struggle for more decent conditions for reproduction, from housing to public parks, by making available for the community capacities, work skills and

knowledges generated at a local level. The first thing to note here is that a different will regarding the relationship to the earth, one that plays itself out through farming, is in these examples the first step towards a different will regarding modalities of life in their entirety, a different food project for a different social project. This is particularly evident if we look at that broad movement of initiatives that goes by the name of “social ecology” or “bio-regionalism” or “community economic development” which tend to re-localize development in the sense of developing, alongside a different form of managing the land (for nutrition, for housing, for public space), a different management of work skills, professional abilities and knowledges geared towards the strengthening and defence of the roots of a social context against its destitution and the eradication of its citizen inhabitants decreed by the global economy.

In the same way, the fact that the earth can represent housing stability, beyond being a source of nutrition, has led to the development in the United States of Public Land Trusts, which are conceived also as a means by which to safeguard the environment. With such initiatives people put together funds to purchase land. The goal is to preserve it as a piece of untouched nature or to build housing upon it: the latter can be sold but not the land upon which they are built. In this way the price of the home is kept low and therefore accessible for low-income segments of the population.

Even in the French case of peasant-based agriculture the plan for a different social project, beginning from its declared principles, is abundantly obvious. Above all that of international farmer solidarity against the harshest and most destructive competition which neoliberal globalization wants to impose, and beyond this are the principles of the social and economic significance of labour and human activity; of the refusal of productivism that is clearly expressed by Bové when he says: our goal and our work are not those of production: we occupy a space, we manage it and participate in the social bond with the countryside”; of a management of the countryside that is respectful of people, of the environment and of animals that translates itself in not wanting to increase excessively one’s farm because the countryside must represent jobs for many people, in not wanting to have more animals than those which the earth can sustain, in assuming responsibility of the maintenance of vegetable and livestock varieties that characterize that area, and much more. Similarly, the fundamental theme of nutrition and of not wanting to run risks with respect to this has been key in allowing the political position and commitment to grow and envelop the commodification of health, education, and culture.

In sum we can say today that the land, farming and nutrition constitute the emerging theme of the self-organized networks that developed in particular in the nineties and which, with the global movement of farmers, has vigorously come to the fore as the missing subject, upon whose labour we all depend every day in the reproduction of our lives. If re-localizing development is particularly significant with respect to the agricultural question this only fuels the re-localization of other aspects of development and life. Global is the movement, global are the rights, and global are the struggles, above all for the universal right to a healthy diet, a varied one and not a standardized and not an estranged one with respect to one's own cultural traditions and the specificities that the land, worked by men and women rather than raped by humans, can generate. And if it is true that, as Columbian farmers that have self-organized around the cultivation of varieties at risk of extinction say, the spirit is within the nature surrounding us, in the trees and in the rivers, then reruralizing the world is necessary to recuperate the spirit as well as life.

*Translated by Enda Brophy*

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## “Two Baskets for Change”

Mariarosa Dalla Costa<sup>1</sup>

At the time of Fordist production I was particularly moved by a passage of Marx's, one which I read over and over. In it, he suggested that “as soon as the working class, stunned at first by the noise and turmoil of the new system of production, had recovered its senses to some extent, it began to offer resistance, first of all in England, the native land of large-scale industry.”<sup>2</sup> Reading it, I heard the roar of machines and felt the power of that great reawakening, that of a new chapter in the human story.

The passage returns to mind as I observe another great reawakening: one that is being enacted by farmers and citizens (who are challenging their role as merely “producers” or “consumers”) against the great machine of industrial agriculture and the politics that bolster its delivery of noxious foods, environmental devastation, economic crises, rural exodus, and above all its negation of the relationship between humans and the land. If it is true, as Marx suggested, that “the expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil is the whole basis of the process”<sup>3</sup> then these wills that have been set in motion *already contain the seeds of another possible world*. The forms of expropriation have obviously become more refined and diverse - these days one's relationship to the land can be subject to expropriation even without a physical expulsion having taken place.<sup>4</sup> The negation of such a relationship, in its multiple

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1 Transcript of a presentation delivered at the Terra e Libertà/ CriticalWine, Fiera dei particolari, held at the LeoncavalloSocial Centre in Milan, December 5-7, 2003. Published in Italian in Angelini, M. et al. 2004. *Terra e Libertà/Critical Wine*. Rome: DeriveApprodi.

2 Marx, Karl. 1990 [orig. 1867]. *Capital: Volume 1*. New York: Penguin: 390.

3 Marx, Karl. 1990 [orig. 1867]. *Capital: Volume 1*. New York: Penguin: 876.

4 I am alluding to when, while remaining on their land, farmers or live-stock

forms, remains to this day the basis for the process of capitalist accumulation. To reinstate this relationship is therefore a fundamental way to disrupt of a mode of production that has upended and commodified the very mechanisms of the reproduction of life.

At the heart of this rural and urban rebellion and its construction of networks and initiatives is the need, to use an agricultural term, for a *regrafting*. Amidst the fallen illusion of technology's abilities to provide solutions a discussion has reopened around care, care for the earth. Since people have begun to say enough to the *risks* involved in such (bio)technological leaps, but above all to the continuous interruption and upheaval that these inflict upon the forms and networks of life's spontaneous reproduction of itself.

J. Bové and F. Dufour<sup>5</sup> describe how their breeder comrades felt they had reached their lowest point when they became conscious of the economic and ecological aberration inherent in the practice of separating the calf from its mother who was supposed to feed it in order to administer feedings of regenerated milk. This product had been subsidized to the point that it was now more competitive than the natural variety. For them that moment was critical to sparking a reflection on the purpose of labour, one which brought them to the concept of peasant-based agriculture. In order to qualify as such, the farming must have a particular approach (made concrete through the adoption of ten principles) and it must have a perimeter, within which one can explore the observance of limits and test the principles.<sup>6</sup>

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raisers, in the global North or South of the world, in actuality become workers in large companies. The case of the agistment is typical. An agistment is a contract by which two partners agree to follow in the raising of livestock. While the farmer owns the land and any structures on it, the entrepreneur generally provides the livestock, the feed, the medicines, etc. According to this kind of agreement the farmer, for example, may raise chickens but cannot make any decisions with respect to their feeding, medical treatment, or any other aspect of the practice.

- 5 J. Bové e F. Dufour, 2001 (orig. 2000). *Il mondo non è in vendita*. Milan: Feltrinelli: 128. In English: Bové, Jose and Dufour, Francois. 2001. *The World is Not for Sale*. New York: Verso.
- 6 Bové and Dufour's work offers a better, if nonetheless partial, idea of the these binding principles: the perimeter, or space in which to explore the observance of limits refers to the verification of the limits such farming must abide by in order to adequately respond to the needs of the society – limits, for example, such as the maximum nitrogen level allowable per hectare, the maximum land size per farmer (so as to allow other farmers the possibility to work), the maximum quantity of animals the land can sustain and other measures that are needed in order to avoid falling into the trap of intensification and productivism. The approach, Bové suggests, is the manner, the direction, the compass, and the horizon towards which we need to be heading regardless of the particular situation of one's own company... in the document the approach is represented by ten principles of peasant-based agriculture (177)... this is a result of the contemplation of three dimensions: the social one above all, that is, that founded upon employment for and solidarity between farmers, across world regions, and the fact that it must also be economically efficient and respectful of both consumers and nature (176)... the triad of peasant-based

Here it is not as much the worry about health risks but indignation over the upending of the spontaneous forms of the reproduction of life that creates the conditions for reflection on the meaning and purpose of labour, that generates a desire to change one's direction. It is the same indignation that provoked a desire for the pursuit of other relationships in labour and in life for many other sectors of the world's population, that which provoked a response of "ya basta" towards this model of development and subsequently resulted in the opening up of communication aimed at experimenting with other paths. It is this indignation that has sparked the creation of concrete alternatives.

Yet the *Confédération Paysanne* is only one node, albeit one of the most significant amongst those in developed regions, of the vast *Via Campesina* network that links very diverse farming communities in the North and the South of the world. These communities are connected by a commonality of goals and approaches. First amongst these is the construction of food sovereignty in its various expressions (above all that of different kinds of relationships between producers) of which I spoke at the preceding conference in Verona.<sup>7</sup> There I suggested that, explicitly or implicitly, there is increasingly emerging from such situations the articulation of a need to re-localize development and re-ruralize the world. I will try to expand upon some aspects of this while attempting to allow for the greatest possible freedom to the reader's imaginary. This need for the re-localization of development, in conjunction with a series of other initiatives that I will not mention here for the sake of brevity, is not solely addressed to the thematic of agriculture, but in any case the latter has reacquired the centrality it used to enjoy, and because of that I will focus on it here. Re-localizing development is a need that, emerging in particular from the discontinuities provoked by neoliberal globalization in developed countries, has led to a series of efforts to retain and valorize at a local level money, professional skills and above all agricultural labour, against their continual de-localization and the resulting misery of citizen inhabitants of these settings.

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agriculture is to produce, provide work, and preserve (121) ... the development of peasant-based agriculture requires at least two conditions: a political context which instead of favouring industrialization and concentration must sustain farmers, as well as the personal choices of farmers in their own companies in order to have a space for initiative and responsibility (177-178).  
Translator's note: page references are to the Italian version.

- 7 This is a reference to Dalla Costa, M. "Riruralizzare il mondo... per recuperare lo spirito e la vita," a paper delivered at the *Terra e Libertà, CriticalWine* convention held at the *CentroSociale La Chimica*, Verona, April 11-13th, 2003, and published in Italian in M. Angelini et al., 2004. *Terra e Libertà/Critical Wine*. Rome: *DeriveApprodi*.

Now in the attempt to read these two needs by relating it to a context that is closer to our own, but not only this, I could say that if I had two baskets, one with which to re-localize development and the other with which to re-ruralize the world, in the first I would place four things: 1) the right of access to the land; 2) short-cycle farming and one that is sustainable in every respect; 3) the practice (one that is growing in numerous countries) of the recuperation of varieties that have fallen into disuse as well as of their modalities of cultivation and consumption; and 4) a focus on policies that contrast the extroversion of development. In the second basket I would put another four things: 1) the diffusion of an agriculture such as the one defined above; 2) the adequate remuneration of farming, including that practiced in more challenging areas; 3) the reintroduction of diffuse free-range livestock rearing; 4) the promotion of a culture, but above all of a politics, that gives pride of place once more to an agriculture redefined in this manner. Obviously these factors only provide a bottom layer for the baskets. Let us take a closer look at each of them.

1. The right of access to the land in the areas in which one lives: this is obviously a matter that needs to be articulated according to the geographical context in question. For areas in the global South it means above all the ability to have or maintain access to the land (through common rights or individual ones, for small and medium-sized farmers) against the continual expropriation practiced by large investors or the state. The availability of land where life is guaranteed by subsistence agriculture or via small-scale sustainable agriculture makes the difference between the possibility or impossibility of survival. If in various regions of the world the scope of this problem gestures to the necessity of agricultural reforms that have always been promised but rarely enacted, it is nonetheless important to recall the gains achieved on this terrain by the large-scale movements for the appropriation of land, above all the *Sem Terra* who in the last 20 years have contributed to the settling of 250,000 rural families on 8 million hectares in almost all Brazilian states. For developed areas, beginning with Italy, access to the land requires above all that the land has maintained a price that is accessible to the farmer. In our case this is no longer possible when land is particularly close to important tracts of highway or when there are tourist-industry interests or other profitable investments nearby, thanks to which the price rises so much that it is no longer accessible or amortizable within an agricultural

process. This has been a typically Italian phenomenon, one that, due to the greater availability of land, is not as much the case in Spain, France or Germany. Yet in our case this is an added obstacle for the possibility of a diffuse presence of agriculture. And, obviously, a problem that aggravates the matter and is substantial in our area with respect to the issue of access to the land is that of a justly remunerative agricultural income, especially when managing a type of farming that is other than the productivist and industrial kind. Another important aspect of being able to access the land is that relative to the lands upon which there persist practices of common usage (often this dates back to medieval times), a necessary corollary of the breeding of livestock and farming. These lands are diminishing in Italy as well, where they are sold or hoarded by private companies or individuals also thanks to negligence in their cataloguing or in the conservation of land records.

2. Short-cycle farming, one that is sustainable across its various dimensions, is the only kind capable of guaranteeing freshness, authenticity, and the traceability of the food. Freshness and authenticity have increasingly become a part of the demands made by movements of farmers and citizens in the most developed regions, beginning with the United States where from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific "fresh and genuine food for the community's nutritional security"<sup>8</sup> has been the banner of networks like the Community Food Security Coalition. Another emerging demand has been that the food be produced and distributed with methods and organizational networks that can guarantee moderation in its pricing and therefore its accessibility for customers with less income at their disposal. To this end agreements are stipulated between the producer and the consumer, according to which an amount of agricultural product is purchased in advance with cash or through offering other forms of labour in exchange. Another important phenomenon that, significantly, is growing in the United States (but not only) in past years, is the possibility for producers to directly sell their products in farmers' markets in cities without resorting to costly intermediaries. In Italy fair trade buying associations have been growing. GAS (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale), which has roughly 2 million members, has adopted 5 basic principles: 1)

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8 Dalla Costa, Mariarosa. 2002. "The Native in Us, the Land we Belong to," in *The Commoner* n.6, 2002. URL: <http://www.thecommoner.org>

respect for human beings, so the purchased products cannot be the result of social injustice but rather must actively contribute to a sustainable social development; 2) respect for the environment, or the choice of products obtained in a manner that is respectful of nature while trying ensure the least possible transportation; 3) respect for health, which comes in the form of choosing organic products; 4) solidarity, or choosing to purchase from small producers who otherwise would be crushed by larger ones; 5) respect for flavour, as a part of returning to natural rhythms by eating seasonal foods such as organic products, which beyond having greater nutritional capacity are notoriously better tasting. It is significant that the new ethic that is appearing involves the economic, social, and environmental aspects of the question. Here too there is the desire to declare “*ya basta*” in the face of the modalities of this kind of development and their consequences, the desire to affirm other relations. In this way initiatives such as that of the [prezzo sorgente]<sup>9</sup>, or ensuring a registered designation of origin, including the new forms of local designation, (De. Co., or “*Denominazione comunale*”, is a simple and inexpensive method created by the municipalities) guarantee transparency and traceability, valorize the location of production against the invisible or uncertain place of origin, and valorize the locality of production and the difference of relations that flow from it, not only between producers and consumers, but between citizens. These practices obviously re-familiarize humanity with the local, which is valorized as the fragment of a common good and therefore as something accessible to everyone.

3. The series of projects in many countries that for some time have been organizing in order to recuperate varieties of foodstuffs, and their relative methods of cultivation and preparation, that are at risk of being forgotten or becoming extinct. This is a reclaiming of cultivation, of cultures and of knowledges against the disappearance of varieties and the

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9 “*Prezzo sorgente*” is an expression that emerges from social movements, and refers to the original price or source price, that which is paid to the farmer. The proposal is that this be noted on the product’s label in order to discourage unjustified price hikes during the phases in which the product is transformed and commercialized. In this way the consumer can be aware of such price increases if they have occurred. The problem is that the farmer is paid very little and yet the end consumer pays a great deal due to the unjustified profits that are eked out during intermediate phases. Such distortions and price increases are caused by “long cycle” agricultural production.

standardization and the obliteration of flavour imposed by the nutritional dictatorship of the multinationals. This is connected to the right to variety (beginning with the variety offered by the land upon which one lives), which in turn is tied not only to the right to a variety of taste but also to the greater nutritional potential of a varied diet and the greater nutritional security that this provides considering the risk of species becoming subject to disease. In Italy in the most recent years, together with an emerging interest in the revalorization of some partially forgotten species, within the context of *Civiltà Contadina*, the activity of the Seed Savers is also growing.<sup>10</sup> Yet without defining themselves as such, elderly people and farmers also act as seed savers, seized as they are with the preoccupation of "prolonging" the life of varieties of fruit and vegetables that have been absent for years from the catalogues of seed companies. Young women, with the ancient love for the reproduction of life, are seed savers as well. If some varieties lend themselves to being commodified in different regions others do not, as they might not be able to survive the trip, and therefore in such cases only the locality and the regionality of production and distribution could offer the pleasure of seeing and enjoying these species. Associations such as Pomona that are dedicated to the recuperation of ancient fruit also demonstrate another process these practices address: that of the survival of animal species that do so through the consumption of endangered fruit. The re-localization of development, therefore, geared towards the recuperation of some of the immense richness not only of vegetable, but also of animal biodiversity.

4. The necessity of revealing the falseness and to contrast the abuses of a neoliberalism that wishes to simply impose on all countries the erasure of borders for the benefit of a dictatorship of the strongest, the extroversion of development (that is, a strong orientation towards exports), and above all agricultural development (with the pretext of reducing international debt). In reality this model of development cannot but increase foreign debt and with it the difficulties for

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<sup>10</sup> *Civiltà Contadina* is an association that valorizes and protects farming traditions. Seed Savers are a group belonging to an international network that in Italy work within *Civiltà Contadina*, in the area of recovering varieties of seed at risk of becoming extinct or forgotten. Such a practice is exceptionally important given that it occurs in the face of tendencies that are destructive and commodifying of biodiversity, such as European Directive 98/95 that declares the free exchange of seeds illegal.

nourishment and for life. Next to the construction from below of a new agriculture there should also be the reclamation of a political regulation that promotes, protects and valorizes a local, regional and national agriculture (the qualification of such terms must be contextualized however) that is sustainable in every aspect, aimed at the maximum promotion of self-sufficiency as well as the conservation of biodiversity and the diversification of cultivation, all aspects that are subtended to the perspective of food sovereignty which alone can offer a guarantee against the growth of foreign debt. Food, as a fundamental rule for and right of citizens in the North as well as in the South, must not only be available, but above all it must not be alien to the history and the geographical context of those consuming it. Therefore, imports or exports, instead of constituting the driving axis of a nutritional system, ought to be a subsidiary measure with respect to that which cannot be produced locally or that which constitutes an excess.

As for the items placed in my basket with which one could figuratively re-ruralize the world, let us take a closer look at these.

1. The spread of an agriculture that is sustainable and diversified in every respect. In order to be able to spread, this farming must be oriented towards the creation of the maximum possible number of jobs and therefore to the refusal of the industrial model and the logic of the concentration of industry which is its bearer. Therefore an agriculture that is not only organically, but also socially oriented.
2. A type of agriculture with these characteristics ought to be maintained even in areas where the land presents particular difficulties, along with economic incentives that could assist in the remuneration of greater work. A landscape without agriculture is, in fact, a landscape with less life. Yet the landscape is a common good, and it makes sense therefore that everyone make it their responsibility.
3. The resumption of a widespread free range raising of livestock as a crucial element of agriculture, allowing the animals to graze, allowing herbivores to remain such, and maintaining in this manner the fertility of the land through organic fertilization. The reflections, honed and practiced by François Dufour, beginning with not keeping more animals than that

which the land which one has access to can sustain, seem quite illuminated to me.

4. The promotion of a culture, a diffusion of experiences of self-organization, the appeal for politics that concretely sustain the possibility of a broad agricultural re-conversion. In developed regions in particular, after the phase of Fordism and then post-Fordism in which agriculture was first considered the poor sister and then a degenerate daughter of large-scale industry, it is necessary to ensure a primary role for agriculture, one which it has had and which it must continue to have in human history. This must occur by allowing agricultural practices access to the means that can allow it to re-convert itself in its entirety to an agriculture that is healthy and sustainable in all of its aspects, the social one above all. In different situations one might discover that, as my students tell me, many people, instead of considering spending their lives amidst paper and plastic and in front of a computer, want to be farmers. Thus from the earth there has also begun to germinate a new imaginary.

*Translated by Enda Brophy*



# Food as Common and Community

Mariarosa Dalla Costa<sup>1</sup>

Food is a fundamental human right because it is the basis of the most important of all rights, the right to life to which all other rights depend.

The right to eat itself, however, has a long history of being denied, which has run in parallel with the history of the denial of the right to land. The most recent period of this history runs from the drastic structural adjustments of the eighties to the maturing of neoliberal globalisation which has been taking place from the nineties on.

It is thus not by chance that the emergence and grassroots organisation of the various collective subjects protagonists in the movements of the seventies and then in the hard struggles for food, land and water in the eighties has given rise to networks which, crossing land and sea, have focussed on the most fundamental question: how to get food. It is as if all the issues regarding development were thrown upside down and the debate about them landed with its feet firmly planted on the ground: there is no sense in talking about anything else unless one first talks about how people can feed themselves, unless a solution to the problem of staying alive is found first. The other questions are subordinated to it.

This was also the story of my research. I had a deep sense of rejection, and felt a deep lack of interest in the discourses which were going on around me. I found them profoundly boring if the question of how to get food, still outstanding for ever larger shares of humanity, was still being sidestepped.

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1 This article is from a lecture given at the European Social Forum, London, 14-17 October 2004.

So I began by examining the land and sea routes of those were working towards finding a way to feed themselves, and discovered first of all the struggles and the experiences of self-organisation of native peoples, marginalised population groups, and tribals who are for ever being moved on because they are in the wrong place, somewhere which was the most suitable place for testing the ground to find precious materials, or flooding it to build dams or covering it with concrete to build major roads and ports or, in the case of the sea, plundering it.

This story concerns developed areas too, in ways which are sometimes similar and sometimes different.

What I have found is that food is only regained as a fundamental right in its fullest sense when it is regained as a common. It is regained as a common if, along the way, all its conditions are also regained as commons. This is what is already apparent from the ways in which networks of farmers, fisherpeople, and citizens who are not only consumers organize themselves.

First of all, the networks themselves are communities insofar as they tend to guarantee food to the human community as a common good, as a primary human right, and every link within a network forms a community which is organised in various ways to guarantee such a common good to the population of which it is an expression in the context in which it lives. To reach such a common good, however, the various links in the network need to be connected with the community's defence of other common goods. Otherwise we would only be in the spiral of food as a commodity which is imported, exported, contaminated and for many people difficult or impossible to get hold of. Let's take a look at some of these commons which have to be defended to guarantee full access to food

## I Safeguard of the ecosystem

This is even more important than access to the land. Significant examples of this are the campaigns against the so-called 'blue revolution', that is the industrial-scale shrimp farms which have become notorious in many countries of the South for their destructiveness to traditional integrated systems of farming, fishing and the raising of fish, campaigns which many people have died in. With the arrival of the enormous tanks (2 metres deep and a hectare across) full of shrimps and chemicals, many populations have seen the destruction of the ecosystem which was the means of production and reproduction they depended on for their livelihoods. The damage has

ranged from the destruction of mangrove forests, a precious nursery for many species of fish, to the salination of aquifers leading to a loss of drinking water for people, animals and agriculture, and the chemical pollution of the surrounding area with a deterioration in the water quality of the sea nearby. For many, these shrimp farms have not only meant that they cannot get food because they cannot carry out their traditional farming and fishing activities, and they no longer have a place to live; they have also deprived them of their small trade and thus of the cash income that is an essential supplement to what they produce for their own consumption. These fish farms have destroyed mangrove forests in Ecuador, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, the Philippines, Honduras, Indonesia, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as in India. They have given rise to a great deal of protest, including violent campaigns and clashes. Murders linked to the shrimp industry have been reported in eleven countries. In India this industry has attacked the country's 7,000 kilometres of coastline. The people uprooted by these shrimp farms very rarely have land where they can re-establish their economies. The alternative is the poverty, degradation and hunger of big city slums, with other outcomes, from emigration in inhumane conditions to becoming meat for the traffic in organs and other foul trades.

The situations of many coastal communities which have been hit by the arrival of big industrial trawlers are just as much examples of the crucial importance of the ecosystem. These communities used to make their living from a combination of fishing and farming and are now seeing the sea being depleted, with a heavy reduction of fish stocks and the extinction of many species. In such cases it really isn't enough to demand access to the land or the sea, while they are being devastated. To tackle this primary problem, the reestablishment of the ecosystem as a common, since it is a fundamental good, because without it a community would not be able to feed itself and survive, networks of fisherpeople, farmers, citizens and human rights activists have been formed in the Philippines, India, Canada, Senegal and Central America. For example, in the Philippines the Agri-Aqua association, whose name itself shows its wish to respect the balance between farming and traditional fishing, re-establishing it where it has been upset, has succeeded in restoring the mangrove forest and at the same time bringing back the bird species which had disappeared when the trees were destroyed, and they even built an artificial coral reef. It has rebuilt the basis from which to start again as a preliminary to re-establishing an economy which the community is familiar with and wants to preserve.

Comparable issues are found in many other cases, from that of the people evacuated to make way for the great dams in India, of which the Narmada dam is among the best known, to that of the people living along the banks of the Mun river, a tributary of the Mekong, who, again because of a dam, have experienced the loss of a way of getting food which they often did not even have to pay for.

But I have emphasised the examples of coastal communities hit by shrimp farms and industrial trawling carried out by major companies, because thanks to the strength of the fisherpeople movement which, from the seventies on, has grown in various countries and then formed itself into a worldwide forum, the defence of the ecosystem, from the maintenance of the specific character of the coastline to the abundance of fish in the sea, has been a priority, a primary common good which is defended not only because it represents a reliable source of nutrition, but also an economy and a way of life which people do not want to abandon, first and foremost because it puts them in control of their own living conditions.

## II Access to the Land

The second common good is that of **access to the land** and, of course, to the sea for communities that live near it. Access to the land is a much-debated theme. The Via Campesina network of networks, in which farmers' associations from the North and the South from the Karnataka Farmers' Union to Confederation Paysanne to the National Family Farm Coalition has developed this theme in relation to a variety of situations: communal or private systems of land tenure asserting women's right to land ownership where this is denied them, and the possibility of working the land organically to get all the varieties that that land can offer from it. These demands are brought together under the network's banner of "Food Sovereignty". So this is about people's right to produce their own food, the right to a variety of foods rather than having standardized, highly-processed foods imposed on them, the product of the industrial concept of food production and of the specialisation by geographical areas in the neo-liberal globalization of the markets. In this way freedom of enjoying a variety food is the other side of food democracy, which is itself an unavoidable base of a different type of development. If anything it should be emphasised that in countries such as Italy it is difficult for those who want to farm, perhaps organically, to get access to land because of the very high prices which are increased because of the presence of industry, tourism and important motorways. Because of this there are only a few

areas (in the South and on the side of the Apennines overlooking the Adriatic) where land can have a price that is amortizable within the farming process. Then there are the other obstacles that get in the way of agricultural work for a fair level of income comparable with that of other works. As a consequence, in Italy a farm is closing down every half hour. Because of this getting access to the land, farming in a healthy way, earning a fair income from it, establishing relations with other farmers from the point of view that the countryside should create not a few but many jobs, as José Bové has stated, is a rather complicated undertaking, for which it is significant that farmers' networks have been set up that are completely in tune with those of farmers in the South of the world. Notably, *Foro-Contadino – Altragricoltura* which has backed land squats has launched an "Appeal for the Right to Land" and organized a "Farmers' Aid" and a "National Farmers Coordination for the Right to Land". In its appeal it states: "More of all other difficulties a problem that Italy seemed to have shelved with the victories of the farmers struggles of the last century has become very serious again and is more and more dramatically urgent: the denial of access to the land for those who want to work on it due to the very high cost of agricultural land which is linked ever more closely to speculation and less to the real agricultural value..."

### III Healthiness, Freshness, and Quality

The third common good is made up of three elements: healthiness, freshness and quality. This means a refusal of an agriculture that is the product of chemistry and more recently of genetic modification. The deceits of the green revolution and its products to make agriculture more productive have meant that many farmers and other citizens have become ill and are continuing to get ill. To give just one example, xenoestrogens, that is toxic estrogens linked with pesticides, are believed to be causing serious gynaecological disorders and to be a factor in the reduction of male fertility. Thousands of Indian farmers taken in by GMOs have committed suicide. The movement for an alternative agriculture has undertaken various initiatives against foods which increasingly bring death and disease rather than life and health. It has rejected the industrial view of nature which sees the land, plants and animals as things to be treated like machines and therefore it has rejected productivism, that is the false productivity forced out of nature by means of chemicals or genetic modification and which intentionally fails to calculate other economic costs, let alone social and environmental costs. As a consequence, in this context there is a

range of initiatives going from reintroducing *indigenous and natural seeds* against the hybrids which farmers' networks are already engaged in (from the Karnataka Farmers Union to the Columbian peasants' unions to Seed Savers and other associations in various countries including Italy), to the experiences of *saving species which have fallen into disuse and re-establishing traditional methods of cultivation and cooking* which are today being kept alive because of the initiatives of men and women of both the third and first worlds. Indeed, speaking of this, in the first world today there is a notable reawakening of interest and promotional activities on the part of various sectors of society. Other initiatives in advanced countries are those aimed at guaranteeing that small agricultural producers can sell their produce directly in city markets without going through expensive intermediaries, as they have succeeded in doing in the United States or, as it has happened on other cases, in places that people have arranged themselves to meet the needs of customers with economic difficulties. At the same time complaints and protests against the various types of food adulteration which have if anything multiplied with the processes of outsourcing/offshoring and importation. For example, and this is just one example among thousands, the outsourcing of chicken production from Italy to Brazil, with greatly reduced hygiene and health safeguards, chickens which are then sent back to Italy to be served on the tables of those who are poorest in money or time. Against that picture, in the name of a more real possibility of knowing and making known the food production cycle and better preserving its variety and specificity, consumers and producers have become more favourable to and interested in short cycle production systems, where food is distributed locally, as opposed to long cycle production systems which are, of course, still what match the interests of big business. There are even types of vegetable which cannot be transported at all. Only short cycle production can keep them alive. Within the alternative agriculture movement as a whole, there are also initiatives to maintain agricultural production even in difficult places, such as in mountainous areas. When the alternative agriculture movement promotes the short cycle, it is thus also safeguarding various fundamental common goods: biodiversity, freshness, healthiness, quality, the knowability of the production cycle.

#### IV Actual Transparency and Traceability

The fourth common good is the actual transparency and traceability of the production process. The short cycle is already a good start in terms

of verification of the process, including verification by the consumer. The movement has, however, already generated unusual actions to do with this and a series of innovative proposals. Among the most successful actions was one in Monopoli, near Bari in South-Eastern Italy, against the olive oil fraud because of which some brands had been sold for inexplicably low prices on the Italian market for many years. In reality the olive oil was often mixed with other oils, or even replaced by them, highly manipulated to give colour and flavour, and at best made using olives imported from various countries. Since the law permitted the place where the “last substantial transformation”, that is the transformation into oil, to be considered to be the place of origin, rather than the place where the olives had been harvested, it was in fact easy to sell all sorts of things as Italian olive oil. New legislation requires the indication of the place where the olives come from. Apart from this case, though, which is striking just because this is such a crucial product for Italian agriculture, there have been other initiatives related to the deeply felt need to be able to verify the production process which it is worth noting. First and foremost De.co, that is a denomination of origin made by the local council. This initiative is working alongside the very few products which have a denomination of origin, such as Doc, Dop, which, however, are often subject to an increase in price which makes them elite products because of such denominations. It is showing the new powers of local councils and thus the possibility of declaring the origin of a product by means of a specific but simple procedure. This provision, which has already been adopted by various councils, makes it possible to enhance the value of a product, give certainty about its origin and production, increase appreciation of the area and promote employment without falling into a surge in price which would make it a luxury product. At the same time a completely voluntary register of producers has been proposed, in which producers self-certify their product, describing its history, cultivation and characteristics and above all creating a relation with the person who buys it which goes beyond the limits of bureaucracy. Another initiative is that of the “farm-gate” price, of course only for those producers who agree to adopt it, that is the indication on the label of the price at which the product is sold by the primary producer, for example the farmer. This answers the need for price transparency. It makes it possible to recognise the exorbitant increases which are often introduced when the product is processed or marketed.

## V The New Ethics

The fifth common good is the new ethics. In the alternative agriculture movement in its broadest sense there is an explosion in the call for alternative relations both from the producer's and the consumer's side (among others) precisely because of the new relationship which they are hoping to establish for food production and distribution. As a consequence, new networks have also been established in the field of distribution. In Italy mutual buying groups (Gas, Gruppi di acquisto solidale) have taken hold. The two million people involved have given themselves five basic rules:

5. respect for human beings, that is the products that are bought must not be the products of social injustice but must rather contribute to a socially sustainable society;
6. respect for the environment, that is the choice of products obtained with a respect for nature which have also been transported as little as possible;
7. respect for the health that stems from the choice of organic products;
8. solidarity, that is choosing to buy from small producers who would otherwise be crushed by bigger ones;
9. respect for taste, since organic food is well known for having a better flavour as well as a higher nutritional value, in the context of getting closer to the natural rhythms of life by eating only foods that are in season.

What is significant is the emerging of new ethics which affects economic, social and environmental factors. Here too, there is a will to reject the procedures of a development that is becoming more and more unsustainable, a will to establish other relationships. In this sense initiatives which, like the "farm gate price" or the denominations of origin made by the local councils guarantee transparency and traceability, increase the value of local production, the value of the area where the goods are actually produced and with it the value of the new relations that spring from it, not only between producers and consumers, but between citizens. As a result, these initiatives make that area a common good which is available not only to local people but to everybody.

To conclude: in both the South and the North there is a growing global movement for food as a common good which will have to embrace a series of commons, including respect for the ecosystem to the re-establishment of its life cycles, the appreciation of the specific

features of various types of territory. Food that will be a bringer of life, health, abundance, and alternative relationships with nature and between people.