

**Globalization from below:
A brief survey of the ‘movement of movements’**

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1. Introduction: a brief sketch

It is probably appropriate for me to begin with an instance of *histoire événementiel*. The emergence of the movement for an alternative globalization (often also referred to as the *anti-globalization* movement, the *anti-capitalist* movement, or the *global justice* movement) is usually dated at 1 January 1994. On that day – not coincidentally the same day that the *North-American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA) came into operation – the Zapatista guerilla’s of the EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*) staged an armed uprising after more than ten years of preparation. Observers realized immediately that an uprising of a new type was involved here. Robert Burbach for example concluded in the spring of 1994: ‘What distinguishes the EZLN from its predecessors is that it is not bent on taking power in Mexico City, nor is it calling for state socialism. Its objective is to spark a broad-based movement of civil society in Chiapas and the rest of Mexico that will transform the country from the bottom up.’¹ Very quickly the Zapatistas, and in particular their articulate spokesman sub-comandante Marcos (Sebastián Guillén) learnt how they could with great effect spread their message over the Internet.² Their militant approach, oriented to decentralizing power, received an extremely positive response from leftists all over the world.³ Their slogans -

¹ R. BURBACH, Roots of the Postmodern Rebellion in Chiapas. In *New Left Review*, 205 (May-June 1994), p. 113-124, at 113.

² On the learning process of the Zapatistas: J.W. KNUDSON, Rebellion in Chiapas: Insurrection by Internet and Public Relations. In *Media, Culture and Society*, 20 (1998), p. 507-518.

³ J. PETRAS and S. VIEUX, Myths and Realities of the Chiapas Uprising. In *Economic and Political Weekly*, 23 November 1996, p. 3054-56 argue that it was especially the timing of the uprising that made the movement so successful in public opinion: – ‘it occurred during a period of worldwide leftist retreat and in particular at a moment when other central American guerilla movements were laying down their arms and entering into political deals with the neo-liberals in power.’ (p. 3054)

including 'Another world is possible!' and 'Ya Basta!' (We've had enough!) - struck a popular chord in many circles. Using this opportunity, the EZLN broadcast an appeal in 1996 to take part in an intercontinental *Encuentro* in the Chiapas rainforest during the summer that year (27 July to 3 August). Some thousands of activists participated in this meeting – the so-called First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism – especially from North America and Western Europe. They were inspired not only by the content but especially by the style of the Zapatist rebellion. Various autonomist and anarchist groups, especially in Southern Europe, began to identify strongly with the Zapatistas and their ideology, for example the *Tute Bianche* emerging from the EZLN-solidarity committees in Italy. In particular, they were attracted by the Zapatista concept that the best solidarity consists of fighting the battle oneself in one's own local context. The initiative also sparked off many new ones, the most important one being a second intercontinental *Encuentro* held in Spain in 1997.

At the moment that the EZLN burst onto the stage of history, there were however also other elements of the 'movement of movements' in the making. Already on 15 March 1990, the *Comité pour l'Annulation de la Dette du Tiers Monde* (CADTM) [Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt] had been founded. Initially operating as an organization of volunteers, CADTM professionalized from 1994, when the organization began to receive donations from private institutions and, parallel to an older North American-initiated campaign called *IMF, World Bank, WTO: 50 Years is Enough*, began a campaign with the slogan *Banque mondiale, FMI, OMC: 50 ans, ça suffit!* [World Bank, IMF, WTO: 50 years is enough!] From that time, CADTM has operated trans-nationally in a real sense, with publications in French, English and Dutch, and with active support in the Americas, Africa and Asia.

Another movement which emerged almost at the same time as EZLN was the intercontinental farmer's organization *Via Campesina*. The idea for this alliance was mooted in April 1992 during the Congress of the National Union of Farmers and Livestock Owners (UNAG) in Managua, and the organization was formally established in the Belgian town Mons in May 1993, with support from among others the French *Confédération Paysanne* led by José Bové, and the Brazilian movement of landless farmers MST (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*).⁴

⁴ A.-A. DESMARAIS, Peasants Speak – The Vía Campesina: Consolidating an International Peasant and Farm Movement. In *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 29, 2 (January 2002), p. 91-124; M. EDELMAN, Toward an

The international campaign against the labour practices of sports-shoe manufacturer Nike likewise emerged at the beginning of the 1990s. The network behind this campaign had gradually grown since 1992 and very quickly had contacts around the world, in part thanks to intensive use of the Internet. Only in the second half of the 1990s however did it succeed in drawing attention in broad circles and win adherents. In 1997 and 1998 the network organized three Nike International Mobilization Days in support of Asian production workers. At the first International Mobilization Day [18 October 1997], there were protests in at least 13 countries of the world. In the U.S. alone there were protests in more than 50 cities and in at least 28 states. At the second Mobilization Day, April 18, 1998, the Campaign for Labor Rights reported events in approximately 50 communities in the U.S. and 15 communities in Canada. Several other countries of the world reported Nike events.⁵

Other local campaign against privatisations or other forms of marketisation were also gradually integrated into the new movement. Among the most important examples are the (ultimately unsuccessful) Indian *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (NBA; Save Narmada Movement) which opposed the building of a large dam threatening to the destroy the lives of thousands of peasant families,⁶ and the (successful) battle in the Bolivian Cochabamba area against the sale of the municipal water system to Aguas del Tunari, a division of the US Bechtel concern.⁷

Anthropology of Some New Internationalisms: Small Farmers in Global Resistance Movements. In *Focaal*, 40 (2002), p. 103-122; G. WASSERMAN, La dimension originale et le rôle précurseur de Via Campesina. Entretien avec François Dufour. In *Mouvements*, 25 (January-February 2003), p. 62-66. About the MST, see: J.P. STEDILE, Landless Battalions. The Sem Terra Movement of Brazil. In *New Left Review*, New Series, 15 (May-June 2002), p. 77-104; W. WOLFORD, Producing Community: The MST and Land Reform Settlements in Brazil. In *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 3, 4 (October 2003), p. 500-520; on Bové see J.-PH. MARTIN, José Bové un activiste sans projet? In *Modern and Contemporary France*, 11, 3 (August 2003), p. 307-321.

⁵ G.H. SAGE, Justice Do It! The Nike Transnational Advocacy Network: Organization, Collective Actions, and Outcomes. In *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 16 (1999), p. 206-235, at 217.

⁶ A. BAVISKAR, *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995; L. UDALL, The International Narmada Campaign: A Case of Sustained Advocacy. In W.F. FISHER (ed.), *Toward Sustainable Development? Struggling over India's Narmada River*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995, p. 201-227; U. TURAGA, Damming Waters and Wisdom: Protest in the Narmada River Valley. In *Technology in Society*, 22 (2000), p. 237-253; CH. PALIT, Monsoon Risings. Mega-Dam Resistance in the Narmada Valley. In *New Left Review*, Second Series, 21 (May-June 2003), p. 81-100; P.S. BOSE, Critics and Experts, Activists and Academics: Intellectuals in the Fight for Social and Ecological Justice in the Narmada Valley, India. In *International Review of Social History*, Supplement 12 (2004), p. 133-157.

⁷ A. NICKSON and C. VARGAS, The Limitations of Water Regulation: The Failure of the Cochabamba Concession in Bolivia. In *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 21, 1 (January 2002), p. 99-120; W. ASSIE, David versus Goliath in Cochabamba: Water Rights, Neo-Liberalism, and the Revival of Social Protest in Bolivia. In *Latin American Perspectives*, 20, 3 (May 2003), p. 14-36.

Again and again, activities emerged which placed themselves under the flag of the battle against neo-liberalism. Thus, in 1997-98, a large international campaign developed against the *Multilateral Agreements on Investment* (MAI) for OECD-countries which rather quickly had an effect.⁸ In North America, new transnational initiatives appeared repeatedly to fight (the consequences of) NAFTA,⁹ while within the European Union, the vague contours of a cross-border protest movement became visible.¹⁰

The different and not always coordinated initiatives gained backing from a source that at first sight seemed rather unlikely: the monthly *Le Monde Diplomatique*, originally the monthly supplement of the French daily *Le Monde*, which had over the years metamorphosed into an independent and authoritative periodical, with editions in more than forty languages (printed and on-line) and a total print-run of about one and a half million. Under the influence of the French strike-wave in 1995 and the Asian stocks crisis of 1997, the chief editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Ignacio Ramonet, published a commentary in December 1997 titled 'Désarmer les marchés'. In this article, he indicted the 'tyranny' of finance capital, and called for the establishment of a movement which he - inspired by Robert Aldrich's 1956 film *Attack* - called the *Association pour la Taxe Tobin pour l'Aide aux citoyens*. The appeal received a large response from readers, with the result that on 3 June 1998 an organization called ATTAC was really founded.¹¹ The organization nowadays has branches in North and South

⁸ D. WOOD, The International Campaign Against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment: A Test Case for the Future of Globalization? In *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 3, 1 (March 2000), p. 25-45; J. JOHNSTON and G. LAXER, Solidarity in the Age of Globalization: Lessons from the Anti-MAI and Zapatista Struggles. In *Theory and Society*, 32, 1 (February 2003), p. 39-91.

⁹ H.L. WILLIAMS, Mobile Capital and Transborder Labor Rights Mobilization. In *Politics and Society*, 27 (1999), p. 139-166; J. SHOCH, Contesting Globalization: Organized Labor, NAFTA, and the 1997 and 1998 Fast-Track Fights. In *Politics and Society*, 28 (2000), p. 119-150; H. CUNNINGHAM, Transnational Social Movements and Sovereignties in Transition: Charting New Interfaces of Power at the U.S.-Mexican Border. In *Anthropologica*, 44 (2002), p. 185-196.

¹⁰ S. TARROW, The Europeanisation of Conflict: Reflections from a Social Movement Perspective. In *West European Politics*, 18, 2 (April 1995), p. 223-251; D. IMIG and S. TARROW (eds), *Contentious Europeans. Protest and Politics in an Emerging Polity*, Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001; D. IMIG, Contestation in the Streets. European Protest and the Emerging Euro-Polity. In *Comparative Political Studies*, 35 (2002), p. 914-33; I. BEDOYAN, P. VAN AELST and ST. WALGRAVE, Limitations and Possibilities of Transnational Mobilization: The Case of EU Summit Protesters in Brussels, 2001. In *Mobilization*, 9, 1 (February 2004), p. 39-54; S. TORMEY, The 2003 European Social Forum: Where Next for the Anti-Capitalist Movement? In *Capital & Class*, 84 (Winter 2004), p. 149-157.

¹¹ M. ANCELOVICI, Organizing Against Globalization: The Case of ATTAC in France. In *Politics & Society*, 30, 3 (2002), p. 427-463; B. CASSEN, On the Attack. In *New Left Review*, New Series, 19 (January-February 2003), p. 41-60.

America, nearly all European countries as well as Japan. Most national organizations are not exclusively focused on Tobin Tax, but operate a much broader political programme.¹²

The next step in the rise of the movement occurred at the end of November and early December 1999 in Seattle, on the occasion of a WTO meeting held there. Thousands of members of the AFL-CIO union federation protested there, together with ecologists, feminists and many others, in support of a more just world order.¹³ This overwhelming show of strength, which gained a lot of support worldwide, was followed up by confrontations at summit meetings, such as those of the IMF and the World Bank in Prague (20-28 September 2000), the European Union in Göteborg (14-16 June 2001), and the World Bank in Barcelona (22-25 June 2001). The series reached a provisional climax with the protest against the meeting of the G8 in Genua, on 19-21 July 2001, when police action resulted in the death of a protestor.¹⁴ But since that time the protest has remained alive, as was evident during the worldwide activities during the WTO conference at Cancún, 10-14 September 2003.¹⁵

At the beginning of the 21st century, Brazilian progressives and French ATTAC-representatives stood at the cradle of an important innovation within the movement, namely the *social forums*. In January 2001, the first so-called World Social Forum was held in Porto

¹² R. JUNG (ed.), *Attac: Sand im Getriebe*, Hamburg: Nautilus, 2002; V. RUGGIERO, ATTAC: A Global Social Movement? In *Social Justice*, 29, 1-2 (2002), p. 48-60; V. BIRCHFIELD and A. FREYBERG-INAN, Constructing Opposition in the Age of Globalization: The Potential of ATTAC. In *Globalizations*, 1, 2 (December 2004), p. 278-304.

¹³ Meantime many publications have appeared about the 'Battle in Seattle'. From a participant's perspective, there are J. THOMAS, *The Battle in Seattle. The Story Behind and Beyond the WTO Demonstrations*, Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2000; K. DANAHER and R. BURBACH (eds), *Globalize This! The Battle Against the World Trade Organization and Corporate Rule*, Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000; and J. CHARLTON, Talking Seattle. In *International Socialism*, 2nd Series, 86 (Spring 2000), p. 3-18. More in-depth analyses are collected in a symposium in *Millenium: Journal of International Studies*, 29 (2000), 105-40; P.F. GILHAM and G.T. MARX, Complexity and Irony in Policing and Protesting: The World Trade Organization in Seattle. In *Social Justice*, 27, 2 (2000), p. 212-236; M. LEVI and D. OLSON, The Battles in Seattle. In *Politics & Society*, 28, 3 (2000), p. 309-329; J. SMITH, Globalizing Resistance: The Battle of Seattle and the Future of Social Movements. In *Mobilization*, 6 (2001), p. 1-20. The University of Washington hosts a 'WTO History Project', which collects as much information as possible about the events of 1999. See <<http://depts.washington.edu/wtohist>>.

¹⁴ T. BEHAN, Nothing Can Be the Same Again. In *International Socialism*, Second Series, 92 (Autumn 2001), p. 3-26; D. DELLA PORTA and H. REITER, Mouvement 'anti-mondialisation' et ordre public – l'exemple de Gênes. In *Les Cahiers de la Sécurité Intérieure*, 47 (2002), p. 51-77; P. ULLRICH, *Gegner der Globalisierung? Protest-Mobilisierung zum G8-Gipfel in Genua*, Leipzig: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Sachsen, 2003.

¹⁵ K. AINGER, Will They Ever Understnd? In *New Statesman*, 22 September 2003.

Allegre, parallel to the World Economic Forum of business leaders in Davos, Switzerland¹⁶. Porto Alegre is a Brazilian maritime city which through its experiments with 'participatory budgetting' had acquired fame as the frontier of democratic alternative politics.¹⁷

Characteristic for the social forum has been a conscious refusal to take binding positions or to vote for resolutions. The formula proved to be a great success, and was not only repeated at world level each year (in 2004 in Mumbai, the other years in Porto Alegre), but also at the level of continents, regions, countries and even cities. Thus, already three European Social Forums have been held (Florence 2002, Paris 2003, London 2004), an Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad (2003), and national forums in among others Uruguay (2002, 2003, 2004), Norway (2003 and 2004), the Netherlands (2004) and Germany (2005).

The movement was given an impulse indirectly by the invasion of Iraq, in February 2003. The demonstrations which were held on the 15th of that month can without exaggeration be regarded as the 'the largest antiwar protests in human history'.¹⁸ According to the lowest estimates, over 7 million people participated in more than 300 cities and 60 countries.¹⁹ The actors in these demonstrations partly overlapped with the participants in anti-globalization protests.

On the whole, the growing movement would appear to consist of at least *three* components in recent years, which continually interact with each other, and overlap with each other, namely (1) national or regional networks and organizations (e.g.. France or Pan-

¹⁶ Founded in 1971 by the Swiss economist Karl Schwab. Zie <www.weforum.org>. J.-CH. GRAZ, How Powerful are Transnational Elite Clubs? The Social Myth of the World Economic Forum. In *New Political Economy*, 8, 3 (November 2003), p. 321-340.

¹⁷ G. WASSERMAN, De la théologie de la libération au Forum social mondial. Entretien avec Chico Whitaker. In *Mouvements*, 32 (March-April 2004), p. 161-169. About the origin of participatory budgeting, the role of the Workers Party (PT) and the Socialist Democratic tendency within it, see I. BRUCE (ed.), *The Porto Alegre Alternative. Direct Democracy in Action* (London: Pluto Press and IIRE, 2004), esp. p. 23-37. Similar experiments also took place elsewhere. See P. HELLER, Moving the State: The Politics of Democratic Decentralization in Kerala, South Africa, and Porto Alegre. In *Politics and Society*, 29 (2001), p. 131-163; D. CHAVEZ, *Polis and Demos. The Left in Municipal Government in Montevideo and Porto Alegre*, Amsterdam: TNI/Shaker, 2004.

¹⁸ D. CORTRIGHT, Civil Society: The 'Other Superpower'. In *Disarmament Diplomacy*, 76 (March-April 2004).

¹⁹ St. WALGRAVE and J. VERHULST, The February 15 Worldwide Protests against a War in Iraq: An Empirical Test of Transnational Opportunities. Unpublished paper, University of Antwerp, <<http://nicomedia.math.upatras.gr/conf/CAWM2003/Papers/Verhulst.pdf>>.

Amazonia); (2) episodic coalitions on the occasion of international (WTO, G8, etc.) summit meetings; and (3) many social forums at the world, continental, national or local level.

2. *The context: two transformations*

The birth of the movement in the 1990s cannot be understood in separation from a number of important changes in the world system since about 1970. I will just briefly indicate the most important aspects here. First of all there are the ‘tectonic shifts’ in the world economy, including the reduced economic hegemony of the USA since the early ‘70s, the growing importance of international financial institutions, and the growing debt burden of countries in the Third World. Secondly, the gradual collapse of the states system of Westphalia and, connected with this, the strongly growing influence of NGOs in international relations.²⁰ Thirdly, the collapse of official communism, which occurred at the beginning of the 1990s, and which made new political alliances possible. Fourthly, the emergence in the 1990s of the widespread use of powerful new communication media: the Internet and cellphones.

In combination, these four great changes have had two big consequences for the nature of protest movements. The first important change could be called the *globalization of the addressee of protest*. More and more, not only the national authorities (and in particular the government of the United States) are the object of protests, but also international organisations, especially the International Monetary Fund which forced Third World countries into ‘structural adjustments’, usually leading to a lower standard of life for many people. IMF policy caused a wave of protests in approximately one-third of 80 debtor countries. Between 1976 and the beginning of 1989, there were 85 protest incidents in 26 countries, the high point being 1983-85. Walton & Ragin have described these protests as follows: ‘Protests sometimes appear as classic food riots (e.g., Morocco, Brazil, and Haiti) and at other times as demonstrations that turn violent (e.g., Sudan, Turkey, and Chili) or as general strikes (e.g., Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia). [...] Most participants are drawn from the urban poor (shantytown dwellers, unemployed youth, street vendors) and the working class (unions). Usually, these low income groups combine with other groups, e.g. students in Liberia, teachers in Guatemala, public employees in Bolivia, shopkeepers in the Dominican Republic,

²⁰ NGOs, especially transnational NGOs, which facilitated the communication between different protestors. They assisted with building a ‘transnationale Gegenöffentlichkeit’ of which the origin dates back to at least the 1960s. See I. GILCHER-HOLTHEY, *Der Transfer zwischen den Studentenbewegungen von 1968 und die Entstehung einer transnationalen Gegenöffentlichkeit*. In *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, 10 (2000), p. 485-500. Since that time, many non-NGO-contacts have been added.

and professional groups from physicians to pilots in Sudan.’²¹ Parallel to the protests in debtor countries a new kind of solidarity movement developed in rich countries, a movement which did not, as was previously the norm, focus on country-to-country solidarity (culminating with solidarity with the Sandinist in Nicaragua, where about 15.000 internationale brigadistas took part – who often acted as a kind of development aid-workers), but on a problem affecting many countries at the same time, the debt crisis.²² The attention of critics was now focused increasingly on the IMF, the World Bank and the collective economic policy of the largest capitalist countries, as was evident from the demonstration of 30.000 people in Cologne and Bonn against the G7 in 1985 and 80.000 people against the annual meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in Berlin 1988.²³ In brief, a *scale shift* occurred, a significant broadening of the number of actors and actions, through diffusion along lines of interaction, but also (and especially) via brokerage, that is to say, the linking of previously unconnected social sites.²⁴ The collapse of official communism and the establishment of the WTO further strengthened this shift. By these developments, ‘local and national social movements that had engaged in struggles against privatization, the IMF and World Bank, for environmental protection, self-determination and other issues began to see their interests as shared, and link their struggles together.’²⁵ International communication took place via trade

²¹ J. WALTON and CH. RAGIN, Global and National Sources of Political Protest: Third World Responses to the Debt Crisis. In *American Sociological Review*, 55 (1990), p. 876-890, at 877. J. WALTON, Debt, Protest, and the State in Latin America. In Susan Eckstein (ed.), *Power and Popular Protest. Latin American Social Movements*. Berkeley, etc.: University of California Press, 1989, p. 299-328, provides a list of the most important protest events: pp. 310-4; see also J. WALTON and D. SEDDON, *Free Markets and Food Riots. The Politics of Global Adjustment*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994.

²² M. HIERLMEIER, Times They Are A Changin’ – (k)eine Nostalgie. Internationalismusbewegung im Wandel. In *alaska*, 238 (2001), p. 18-23.

²³ ULLRICH, *Gegner der Globalisierung?*, p. 30.

²⁴ D. McADAM, S. TARROW and CH. TILLY, *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 331-336. The authors claim that ‘Contention that spreads primarily through diffusion [...] will almost always remain narrower in its reach and generality than contention that spreads through brokerage.’ As reasons for this they state that ‘the diffusion pathway will not easily transcend the typically segmented lines of interaction that characterize social life’, while brokerage ‘by definition brings together different actors within frames and forms of action that cross these segmented lines.’ (p. 335)

²⁵ L.J. WOOD, Breaking the Bank & Taking to the Streets: How Protesters Target Neoliberalism. In *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 10, 1 (Winter 2004), p. 69-89, at 73.

unions, 'Old Left' organizations like the Trotskyist Fourth International, and especially also via transnational NGOs, whose influence was strongly growing.²⁶

The second change occurred in the middle of the 1990s with the increased use of the Internet, and led to the *globalization of the expression of protest*.²⁷ It was this change which signified a real breakthrough to a very different kind of activism than had dominated in the two preceding centuries. The role of the new technology already became clear in the first months of 1994, when the Zapatistas were able to use the Internet for an unprecedented media offensive. But it became visible to all when in 1996 the Zapatistas organized their first intercontinental *Encuentro*. . In the same year, on 16 February, the McSpotlight network was founded in London, Chicago, Helsinki en Auckland which opposed the McDonalds fast-food chain (www.mcspotlight.org). During the first 24 hours of its existence, the website was visited some 35,386 times – an astonishing total at that time. A qualitative breakthrough occurred with the founding of the Independent Media Center (www.indymedia.org), in Seattle, November 1999. The network reports its foundation on its web site as follows: 'Several hundred media activists [...] came together in late November, 1999 in Seattle to create an Independent Media Center to cover protests against the World Trade Organization. The Seattle IMC provided coverage of the WTO through both a printed publication called *The Blind Spot* and the first IMC web site. The web site received almost 1.5 million hits during the WTO protests.' Although the Seattle IMC remained the *de facto* centre, Indymedia has developed into an intercontinental network, which however is mainly concentrated in Europe and North America. Technically speaking, Indymedia uses 'open publishing software, where any independent journalist (any activist, for that matter, though the two were often the same)

²⁶ It is not my purpose to discuss these NGOs in depth here. But it ought to be said, that the 'advocate' role which NGOs by definition play (they always speak on behalf of others) can lead to the weakening of independent action by social movements – a fact on which many critics have focused attention. See for example B. HOURS, *Les ONG: mercenaires du village planétaire ou gardiennes des ghettos?* In *L'homme et la société*, 105-6 (1992), p. 36-50; *Les ONG: instruments du projet néo-libéral ou bases solidaires des alternatives populaires?* (Thematic issue of *Alternatives Sud*, 4, 4 (1997)); J. PETRAS, *NGOs: In the Service of Imperialism*. In *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 29, 4 (1999), p. 429-440; E. ALTVATER et al., *Vernetzt und verstrickt. Nicht-Regierungs-Organisationen als gesellschaftliche Produktivkraft*. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2000; A. BRUNNENGRÄBER, A. KLEIN and H. WALK (eds), *NGOs als Legitimationsressource. Zivilgesellschaftliche Partizipationsformen im Globalisierungsprozess*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2001.

²⁷ See for example F. GRANJON, *L'Internet militant. Mouvement social et usages des réseaux télématiques*. Rennes: Apogée, 2001; P. VAN AELST, *De virtuele strijd tegen de globalisering: de rol van het Internet in het ontstaan van de 'anti-globalizerings' beweging*. In *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie*, 23 (2002), p. 571-598; J. RUEGG, P. COMBY and D. DOUSSE, 'Mouvements sociaux et Internet: le local-global réinterrogé?', *Geographica Helvetica*, 59 (2004), p. 133-143.

could upload their reports using a pro-forma on the IMC Website. No prior approval was needed from the core group, neither was that group responsible for editing the content of the reports in any way.²⁸

3. *Forms of organization and action*

The movement for an alternative globalization is sometimes also called 'the movement of movements' because the whole is a very complex conglomerate of targets, political currents, organizational structures and forms of action. The political spectrum reaches from left-liberals and moderate social democrats to anarchists and revolutionary socialists.²⁹ But even though the movement is breathtakingly heterogeneous, I do think we can identify a number of important characteristics.

In the first place, we can conclude that, notwithstanding the fact that rather rigidly organized currents exist within the movements, such as the International Socialists (with the most important organization being the British Socialist Workers Party and its offshoots), in general a strongly developed *distrust* dominates with regard to centralization of decision-making and binding agreements, perhaps as an historic reaction to the failure of self-proclaimed 'vanguard organizations' which in the 1960s and 1970s had such a great influence internationally among the radical left. A few examples can clarify what I mean here.

An influential network within the movement is the 'People's Global Action (PGA) against "Free" Trade and the World Trade Organization', founded on 23-25 February 1998 in Geneva.³⁰ The PGA seeks to develop a world-wide, direct-democratic and non-violent alliance of grassroots movements against the unjust world system. The basic protocol is laid down in its political manifesto,³¹ and in five so-called 'hallmarks' with which affiliated groups are expected to agree. The hallmarks proclaim among other things that supporters reject 'capitalism, imperialism and feudalism' and seek to achieve their goals via direct action,

²⁸ CH. ATTON, Reshaping Social Movement Media for a New Millennium. In *Social Movement Studies*, 2, 1 (2003), p. 3-15, at 7.

²⁹ A separate story are the extreme right-wing movements which feel an affinity with the battle against globalization. They take a paradoxical standpoint by seeking to create an 'Internationale' or radical nationalists.

³⁰ The founding idea emerged during the second Intergalactic *Encuentro* in El Indiano, Spain, at the end of July and beginning of August 1997, organized by the European Zapatista network.

³¹ <www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/en/pgainfos/manifest.htm>.

civil disobedience and other confrontational methods. PGA does not have money, and has no members or affiliated organizations. At every PGA conference – of which there have been about four – a Convenors’ Committee is chosen that prepares the next Conference. Despite this extremely decentralized structure, the PGA was over the years able to organize several ‘global days of action’ when international organizations like the G8, WTO and IMF held summits. On these action days, protests are articulated simultaneously in many parts of the world. How successful this formula can be, can be gauged from research by Lesley Wood who studied the first five action days. He based himself on internet media by the ‘movement of movements’ itself and on other sources. As an aside, this research yielded as a surprising by-product the insight that the movement media did not register some protests.³² I will summarise Wood’s findings in the tables below.

³² ‘Perhaps surprisingly, 27 of the events identified by the news media were not included in activist reports – suggesting that some events that are unconnected to existing activist networks of communication and independent media but are visible to authorities. These “missing” events were equally spread across time and continents.’ L.J. WOOD, *Breaking the Bank*, p. 77.

Table 1: Global days of action: protest events (totals)

Date	Summit	Number of events	Number of cities protesting
16-18 May 1998	G8 (15 March) in Birmingham, WTO (18 March) in Geneva	43	41
18 June 1999	G8 in Cologne	58	54
30 November 1999	WTO in Seattle	111	97
26 September 2000	IMF and World Bank in Prague	98	88
9 November 2001	WTO in Doha, Qatar	157	152
Total		467	432

Source: L.J. WOOD, Breaking the Bank & Taking to the Streets: How Protesters Target Neoliberalism. In *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 10, 1 (Winter 2004), p. 69-89.

Note: 'events are included if they are public, larger than 10 persons and explicitly identified with the global day of action by organizers, participants or compilers of global day of action catalogues. Organizational meetings or conferences are excluded.' (p. 76-77).

Table 2: Global days of action: protest events (data by countries|cities)

Date	Africa	Asia	Australia/ New Zealand	Europe	Latin America	USA/Cana da
16-18 May 1998	--	4 5	2 4	12 21	2 2	2 9
18 June 1999	2 2	3 3	1 3	12 27	4 4	2 14
30 November 1999	--	7 20	1 2	12 41	--	2 34
26 September 2000	1 3	7 14	2 2	16 26	5 11	2 32
9 November 2001	2 2	11 15	2 5	17 95	7 10	2 25

Source: L.J. WOOD, Breaking the Bank.

It appears that not only the preparation and co-ordination of protests can be organized in a decentralized way via the Internet, but also the protests themselves sometimes diverge strongly from the traditional social movement repertoire. Striking examples were the already mentioned protests against the summits of the IMF and the World Bank in Prague on 26 September 2000 (in activist jargon, 'S26'). In the planning of the large demonstration, it appeared that the activists were politically very much divided. The preparatory conferences sometimes lasted for more than twelve hours, and time and again it emerged that the 'socialist/anarchist dichotomy' was almost unbridgeable. Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh provided the following commentary: 'The International Socialists [...] were in favour of a mass protest that culminated in a march around the perimeter of the conference centre. Opposed to this were various groups with anarchist, autonomist or ecological orientations who had developed and were familiar with direct action repertoires that were explicitly critical

of the “mass march”. Within this section were prominent actors within People’s Global Action, including Ya Basta! – the Italian autonomist and Zapatista support network and the current convenors of the PGA, and Reclaim The Streets, the ecological direct action organization from the UK who were the original and former convenors of European PGA.’³³ The negotiations resulted ultimately in a compromise, ‘involving a mass gathering at a central convergence point, followed by “a unity march” during which the assembled protesters would be divided into separate marches each of which would be assigned a colour. These “coloured” marches would be characterized by political affiliation, ideological standpoint or affective links determined by regional identity, language or affinity with particular protest repertoires.’³⁴ In the end three marches took place, a ‘yellow’ one with Ya Basta! and the International Socialists, a ‘pink’ march with among others the British ecologists of *Earth First!* and *Reclaim The Streets*, and a ‘blue’ march, supported among others by the *Black Block* and the *Infernal Noise Brigade* from Seattle.

Very different protest traditions regularly clashed, but largest part of the participants demonstrated in a ‘classical’ way: by joining a march, possibly carrying placards or banners, and shouting slogans. Small groups - closely followed by the sensation-hungry media - used different tactics. Several times the so-called ‘Black Blocks’ received a lot of attention: coalitions of masked anarchist ‘affinity groups’ dressed in black who after the preparatory discussions sometimes applied violent methods of struggle. ‘Certain groups would opt for offensive actions (they had batons, slingshots, billiard balls, Molotov cocktails, etc.) or defensive ones (shields, breastplates, gloves, leggings, helmets, gasmasks, etc.), others specialized in supportive actions: they effected operations of reconnaissance and communication (bikes, walkie-talkies or cell-phones); forming a voluntary medical corps (supplying the equipment necessary to care for victims of teargas and pepper sprays or giving first aid to the wounded); or they would have the task of meantime inspiring the morale of the troops by playing music.’³⁵ Explicitly non-violent were the sophisticated protest techniques which the Ruckus Society taught its followers. ‘The training includes the basics in climbing,

³³ G. CHESTERS and I. WELSH, *The Rebel Colours of S26: Social Movement ‘Frame-work’ during the Prague IMF/WB Protests* = Working Paper 18, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, November 2001, p.10-11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁵ F. DUPUIS-DERI, *Black Blocs: bas les masques*. In *Mouvements*, 25 (January-February 2003), p. 74-80, at 76. The tactics of the ‘Black Bloc’ was first tested in the winter of 1980 in Berlin (*Ibid.*, p. 74).

as well as how to support those who are willing to be arrested, which might mean everything from chanting encouragement to surrounding the arrest vehicle. They learn political theatre, make up protest songs, and devise cheerleading routines. They also get crash courses in media manipulation, e-mail mischief, monitoring police radios, and using walkie-talkies, scanners, CB radios, and cell phones. They learn how to shout back effectively at a CEO as well as how to get arrested well.³⁶

4. In conclusion

Just like all other social movements, the movement against capitalist globalization displays a *cyclical* course. The ‘movement of movements’ however exhibits an even more capricious behaviour than ‘normal’ movements, because continually some of its constituent parts are on the rise while others decline. Since the problems which the movement of movements highlights remain urgent (they range from ecology to war, and from economic inequality to the oppression of women) it can be expected, that the protests will continue in coming years, sometimes more strongly, at other times more weakly and with a shifting focus. One can guess that the new transnational movements will become more important, rather than less important in the future. Nevertheless the movement faces an insuperable structural problem, which it is unable to change of its own accord. Quite simply, there is no supra-national ‘address’ to which its demands can be sent, which often leads to a certain lack of direction, sometimes ‘Zapatistically’ ideologized as ‘Change the world without taking power’³⁷ and which sometimes leads to a new nationalism³⁸ or to a nostalgic attempt at so-called ‘pre-capitalist’ small-scale activity.³⁹

The movement of movements is young, and research about it is still at an infant stage. Especially social scientists have paid attention to it, often with the purpose of enriching the

³⁶ J. THOMAS, *The Battle in Seattle*, p. 87. A large part of these tactics had been learnt from Greenpeace. See J. SELLERS, Raising a Ruckus. In *New Left Review*, New Series, 10 (July-August 2001), p. 71-85.

³⁷ J. HOLLOWAY, *Change the World Without Taking Power. The Meaning of Revolution Today*. London: Pluto Press, 2002.

³⁸ G. LAXER, The Movement That Dare Not Speak Its Name: The Return of Left Nationalism/Internationalism. In *Alternatives*, 26 (2001), p. 1-32.

³⁹ See for example V. SHIVA *et al.*, *The Enclosure and Recovery of the Commons: Biodiversity, Indigenous Knowledge, and Intellectual Property Rights*. New Delhi: Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, 1997.

theory of social movements with new insights.⁴⁰ Interest from historians in the topic has been conspicuous by its absence, presumably because the events are so recent, and because studying the sources in large part no longer involves paper texts, but electronic media.⁴¹ I hope though that they will soon change their attitude, because the ‘movement of movements’ is ‘historic’ in several senses of the word.

⁴⁰ See for example J. SMITH and H. JOHNSTON, *Globalization and Resistance. Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002; I. SOMMIER, *Le renouveau des mouvements contestataires à l’heure de la mondialisation*. Paris: Flammarion, 2003; and the special issue (X, 1 (Winter 2004)) of the *Journal of World Systems Research* (<<http://jwsr.ucr.edu>>) on ‘Global Social Movements Before and After 9-11’.

⁴¹ For some useful observations in this regard. see: P.D. ALMEIDA and M.I. LICHBACH, To the Internet, From the Internet: Comparative Media Coverage of Transnational Protests. In *Mobilization*, 8, 3 (October 2003), p. 249-272; W.L. BENNETT, New Media Power: The Internet and Global Activism. In Nick Couldry and James Curran (eds), *Contesting Media Power. Alternative Media in a Networked World*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, p. 17-37; W. VAN DE DONK *et al.* (eds), *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements*. London: Routledge, 2004.