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Whither autonomism as a global social movement?

By Patrick Cuninghame

Whither autonomism as a global social movement? [1]

Patrick Cuninghame [2]

Despite the consensus opinion that alterglobalism is in crisis and apparently without a clear objective or vehicle for promoting global change, given the crisis of the WSF format, a significant internal, anti-capitalist tendency continues to remain active. However, questions remain over autonomism's ability to avoid ghettoizing itself and provide more than intense internal criticism of other more institutionalized and 'vertical' currents. Autonomism originated in Europe in the Seventies and Eighties, specifically around the *Autonomia* and *Autonomen* radical social movements in Italy and Germany. Based on Italian workerist theories of worker self-management and autonomy from the mediating institutions of both capital and labour, the movement has since absorbed strong influences from radical feminism, the North American counter-culture, French post-structuralism, neo-anarchism, Mexican neo-Zapatism and the Argentinean worker recuperated factory and self-management movements. In *Empire* (2000) and *Multitude* (2004), Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, intellectuals close to the movement, have produced a polemical theory of globalization that frames a new global collective actor, 'the multitude', as a critique of the dominant historical privileged subjects of 'the people' and 'the proletariat'. They also claim that the multitude is the hegemonic opponent of 'Empire', the emerging form of global, networked, deterritorialized sovereignty, with the military biopower of the United States and the economic biopower of the transnational corporations at its heart. Today autonomism can be seen as a global network of alliances between occupied social centres and media activists in Europe, Zapatistas and Piqueteros in Latin America, Black Blockers in North America, cyber hacktivists in Japan and autonomous workers, unemployed youth, students, dispossessed peasants and urban squatter movements in South Korea, South Africa and India who have preferred to coordinate their anti-capitalist global days of actions through the structure of People's Global Action (PGA) rather than the World Social Forum (WSF), united in their disparity and diversity by the overriding principle and practice of autonomy from all forms of capitalist institution, authority or power, but also along the lines of the autonomy of one section of the multitude from the rest in order to prevent their absorption by traditional socialist 'workers' centrality; for example, women, immigrants and youth. Through a critical examination of contemporary global social movement theories and autonomist movement texts and discourses, the paper seeks to ascertain if autonomism can in fact be considered a global social movement in itself or is it in reality a loose transnational network of shifting alliances too dispersed to be named as such and which in any case rejects such generalising 'catchall' criteria. Secondly, the paper will briefly outline autonomism's historical trajectory. Thirdly, the questions of rivals, competitors and the criticisms of autonomism within alterglobalism and global anti-capitalism are dealt with. The possible options and future directions of autonomism before the present crisis of global social movements form the final part of the paper.

1. Global social movement theories and autonomism

Autonomism has made connections with similar movements around the world since the mid 1990s when the global social movement sector began to accelerate its mobilizations against neoliberal globalism. However, the question remains as to whether it can in fact be considered a global social movement - that is an international network of movements globally coordinated around a common theme - or is it in reality a much looser and more conjunctural transnational network, too disparate and dispersed to be named as such, many of whom would reject both the term 'autonomism' and the use

of such generalising 'catchall' labels as 'global social movement'. In order to answer this question we need to review briefly the main theories about global social movements (GSM). According to Ghimire (2005), there are five types of GSM, organized around (i) debt relief; (ii) trade; (iii) Tobin tax; (iv) anticorruption; and (v) fair trade: 'Of particular interest regarding these movements is their attempt to combine advocacy campaigns with concrete alternatives by way of action and practical application [â] Likewise, these movements have numerous overlapping agendas, thereby providing a collective identity. Yet, it is unclear if this convergence has actually led to a stable alliance and if essential claims are put forward in a coordinated manner [â] (G)iven that transnational activism associated with these movements as well as 'alternative' globalization as a whole seeks to move beyond conventional opposition strategies to proposing alternatives and to work with the existing system [â] bilateral bodies and international development institutions have gradually begun to pay attention to the reformist transnational movements, [but] this has not resulted in any significant policy impulse. There are major ideological limitations of the system to readily accommodate such demands.' Writing from an institutional perspective, Ghimire also suggests that: 'While the public influence of these movements has increased, taken as a whole, their actions remain highly spontaneous and informal, with a low level of institutionalization. At the same time, there are few signs of stable interactions between formal political bodies and social movements. While critical internal divisions persist between reformist and radical forces, these and the 'anti-globalization' movement as a whole have come under increased financial pressure, and their social base remains highly unstable.' Such claims stand in opposition to those of Negri and Cocco (2006: 16), who identify a new form of governance and interdependence between radical social movements and the weak state form in Latin America, which is at the root of the continental upsurge in conflict against neoliberalism: 'The innovation resides in the fact that the governments of Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela - now with that of Evo Morales in Bolivia - are not the representation of a 'national' project, but rather they are the expression of a multiple movement.' Frundt, cited in Ghimire (2005), applies three strands of movement theory to actual and potential cross-border movement strategies in the Americas. These are 'the structural relevance of political opportunities, the mobilization of networks as a resource, and the emphasis [given] by New Social Movement theory on framing and reflexive identity [â] each strand offers important insights, one clarifying limitations, a second demarcating and cultivating supporters, and a third motivating participation. Taken together, the strands comprise a dynamic basis for solidarity that enriches organizing strategies and gains measurable victories' (Frundt, 2005). Another aspect of GSM theory is posed by Schultz (1998) in relation to the dynamics of the Zapatista uprising in 1994 in Chiapas, Mexico, a key event for anti-capitalist GSMs in general and autonomism in particular: 'the insurgent indigenous peasants of Chiapas rose up in arms under conditions of relative economic and political deprivation at a particularly opportune moment after developing a project of insurgency and acquiring significant organizational strength. Militarily, the Zapatistas would not have been able to hold out long against the overwhelming force of the federal army. But enormous media attention and massive national and international protest prevented the regime from military crackdowns. The Zapatistas' ability to link personal, organizational, and informational networks has helped to gain crucial support. Using globalized means of communication, they were able to disseminate their messages around the world where they touched a chord in the discourse of an incipient global civil society linked by non-governmental organizations, fax machines, and the internet.' Thus, one of the core social movement organisations of global autonomism, the EZLN in Chiapas, Mexico, has been a catalyst for GSM theory from the outset. Therefore I would argue that autonomism, despite some internal opposition to such claims and indeed to Zapatism itself, can be seen as a GSM of a new type, neither structured as a social category, such as the global women's movement, nor formally coordinated from a fixed centre, such as the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Internationals, or even, arguably, the World Social Forum. Avoiding ideological justifications and based more on practical considerations, a group of autonomist movements began to coalesce globally in the mid 1990s, particularly around the First and Second Gatherings for Humanity and Against

Neoliberalism in Chiapas in 1996 and in the Spanish State in 1997, the latter leading to the formation of People's Global Action (PGA), a GSM that predated the WSF by four years and that refused to have a central coordinating committee precisely to avoid the pitfalls of such centralization in the past.Â Â

2.Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Autonomism as a social movement.

As a starting point, it must be stressed that autonomismâs âautonomyâ is not the separation of the rural-urban working class (conceptualized as the Spinozian âmultitudeâ rather than the Marxian proletariat by Negri and Hardt) from capitalism. Rather, it is class self-determination and self-management within capitalism, thus taking the form of a counter-power and âexodusâ[4], rather than entrenched, static, resistance to capitalism. In fact the word "autonomy" is derived from ancient Greek *autonomos*, meaning âsomeone who lives according to their own lawâ. So autonomy is not independence, rather it is the interdependence of the various sectors of the multitude inside, against and beyond capital. Thus, independence is intended primarily for autarchic forms of life, completely separated from the community, while the autonomous deals with life within society but under self-government.

Autonomism has developed from neo-Marxist sources, but here I will confine myself to its trajectory during the twentieth century. The Wobblies (IWW, the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers of the World revolutionary syndicalist trade union) organized immigrants, highly mobile and newly arrived in the US, to fight robber-baron capitalism, state repression and racist trade unionism which only organized white, Anglo-American qualified "professional workers". Following the First World War, German, Italian and Hungarian council communism criticized the authoritarian and anti-worker nature of the Bolshevik ârevolution as putschâ and organized revolutions based on workers councils, or Soviets, denouncing the state capitalist and despotic nature of the Soviet Union from its beginning and not just under Stalin. In the fifties the French and US dissident libertarian/post-Trotskyite journals âSocialisme ou Barbarieâ of Claude Lefort, Cornelius Castoriadis, Guy Debord and Jean-Francois Lyotard and âCorrespondenceâ of the Johnson-Forrest Tendency of CLR James and Raya Dunayevskaya (Trotskyâs former secretary) fiercely criticised the limits both of the vanguardist, democratic-centralist communist parties and of the Trotskyite 4th

But above all it was the politico-social laboratory that was the Italy of the Sixties and Seventies that most deeply marked autonomism as an ideology and finally as a GSM. The late 1950s witnessed the emergence of a new type of worker: internal migrants from southern Italy, of peasant origin, outside the socialist tradition of the skilled industrial workers of the north, who arrived as anticommunist strike-breakers but quickly became protagonists of revolt against neo-fascist and corporative trade unions. Above all, they had a cultural, almost ontological, rejection of the repetitive, serial, disciplined and toxic labour imposed by the assembly line of the Fordist factory. Quaderni Rossi (QR/Red Notebooks), a neo-Marxist sociological journal, was founded in 1959 by trade unionists and intellectuals from the Communist and Socialist parties, concerned by the inability of their organizations to understand, less organize these new outbreaks of worker rebellion. They based their research on a rereading of Marx and a reinterpretation of his âworkersâ enquiryâ methodology, combined with the methodology of co-research from the sociology of action, received from the United States and France where important co-researched studies of car factory workers were published in the Forties and Fifties. So was born operaismo or Italian workerism. Following the three-day long Revolt of Piazza Statuto in 1962 in Turin, when FIAT car workers attempted to burn down the offices of the most pro-management trade union confederation, QR divided on the question of converting their originally purely investigative interventions into political action. Thus were initiated political developments that led to the founding of the neo-Leninist extra-parliamentary group Potere Operaio (PO/Workers Power) in 1969 which after 1973 was to dissolve itself into the broader experience of the new social movements of the Seventies. However, the most important theoretical contribution was that

of Mario Tronti in his 1964 essay "Lenin in England", which called for a "Copernican inversion of perspective" within Marxism: instead of first studying capital and then labour, as had always been its practice hitherto, Marxists had to depart from the exclusive capacity of "living labour" to produce surplus value, before researching the "dead labour" of capital. The latter depended, vampire-like, on living labour, while living labour historically sought to free itself from capital's dependence, forcing it to continuously innovate new forms of exploitation and social command, leading to separate but related cycles of political and technical class composition-decomposition-recomposition within the overall class struggle. So developed the theory of technical and political class composition: each new form of refusal and rebellion against work that the working class invented forced capital to repress it both politically and technically through the alteration of the relationship between machinery and living labour within the factory, even at the risk that this alteration could result in an economic crisis. Thus, the main problem for revolutionaries, according to Tronti, was not the apparent passivity, conformism, apathy and subordination of workers to capital, as posed both by orthodox Marxism-Leninism and the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. Rather, it was the question of organizing the underlying antagonism of labour in an explicitly political form. Even so, for Tronti the political organizations most suited to this task remained the Communist Party and the historic labour movement, though renovated and cleansed of their reformist-social democrat tendencies. For other "operaists", the historic labour movement had been institutionalized and incorporated by capital through the Fordist-Keynesian pact of producers and thus new antagonistic organizational forms were required. Initially in the Sixties this was based on "Workers centrality" and the Fordist "mass worker". Successively in the 1970s, a decentralized and horizontal movement emerged - Autonomia - whose social composition was based on what Negri (1979) called the postfordist "socialized worker". According to Hardt and Negri's (2000) highly controversial theory of "Empire", the real opponent of "Empire" is the "Multitude", a collective subject that does not substitute the "proletariat" or the "people" but rather has absorbed them within its deterritorialized plurality that is disconnected from national territories. An example of this phenomenon would be the massive waves of migration from the global South to the North that coincide with and were catalysed by the postfordist global division of labour after about 1980 and represent the most significant change in global class composition since 1945. But the new class composition that Empire exists to control and exploit is the so-called "immaterial worker". It is immaterial because it produces intangible products in the form of symbols, knowledge, information and affects. Within the field of immaterial labour, affective labour is the most valuable form, though usually low paid and often unpaid. Affective labour is a form of "biopower", a concept innovated by Foucault (1998). However, many autonomist thinkers disagree with the concepts of Empire, Multitude, bio power, and bio politics, considered much closer to the French post-structuralism of Deleuze, Guattari and Foucault than to Italian workerism. The Italian philosopher Paolo Virno (2004), a former activist in Autonomia in the Seventies and political prisoner in the Eighties, has criticised the limits of the concept of Empire, which other autonomist thinkers have seen as premature and too tied to the "new economy" and sustainable capitalism of Clintonism, swept aside by the return of the "neocons" and the old, territorialized, "petrolarchy". Nor is the multitude necessarily a phenomenon antagonistic to capitalism, according to the same author. He has a more ambiguous view of the currently prevailing values and attitudes of hyper-individualism, cynicism, opportunism and fear (Virno 1996). Another autonomist theorist Franco Berardi, a former free radio activist in the 1970s and cyber activist since the 1990s, is much more pessimistic than Negri about the prospects for revolutionary change. In his book on the New Economy and the "cognitariat", Berardi (2001) identifies a paradoxical transition from the refusal of Fordist work in the 1970s to the love of Postfordist telematic work in the 21st[5] State monopolies over information and the use of censorship have been overturned thanks to autonomist media activism, but only to allow the corporate media conglomerates of Berlusconi and Murdoch to take advantage of the liberated media space. However, what unifies autonomist thought, beyond its criticism of orthodox Marxism and of course of neoliberal capitalism, is the perception that Marxist historical concepts and categories are undergoing radical

transition. Faced with this situation of extreme uncertainty and unpredictability, the best strategy seems to be the Zapatista one of "walking by asking"; avoiding dogmatism and rigid thinking through a process of continual reflexivity in order to discover possible paths of exodus from capitalism (Cunningham 2007).

3. Rivals, competitors and criticisms within Alter-Globalism and Anti-capitalism

The re-emergence of autonomism – a movement which had suffered severe criminalisation and repression in Italy after 1978 – since the late 1980s and particularly through the birth of the global anti-capitalist movement following the Battle of Seattle in 1999, has led to a series of critiques from its political rivals within alterglobalism. The main targets have been Hardt and Negri's books on *Empire* and *Multitude*, but there has also been political and not just theoretical criticism of autonomist strategy. The attacks have come from four directions: from intellectuals connected to Trotskyite groups such as the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the French League Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR); from Latin American left-nationalism, outraged by Hardt and Negri's assertion that the nation state and therefore populist nationalism have been rendered obsolete by the postnational capitalism of *Empire*; from within autonomism and from forms of neo-Marxism closely related to it such as "Open Marxism", in particular from John Holloway; and finally from the more radical-liberal stream of alterglobalism, as represented by the environmental journalist George Monbiot of *The Guardian*, who accuse autonomism of playing politics with climate change and of anarchist utopianism. Alex Callinicos (2001), the guru of the SWP, has been particularly active in his denunciations of autonomism and of the theories of *Empire* and *Multitude*: "One of the main currents in the anti-capitalist movement is autonomism. This has two main political characteristics: (1) the rejection of the Leninist conception of organisation; and (2) the adoption of substitutionist forms of action in which a politically enlightened elite acts on behalf of the masses. Autonomism is in fact a diverse political formation. The most notorious version is represented by the anarchist Black Bloc, whose pursuit of violent confrontation with the state played into the police's hands at Genoa. More attractive is the Italian autonomist coalition *Ya Basta!*, which combines an uncompromising rejection of the political establishment - including the parties of the reformist left - with, on the one hand, the adoption of imaginative forms of non-violent direct action and, on the other, contesting municipal elections, sometimes successfully. *Ya Basta!*, which itself acts as an umbrella for different views and emphases, overlaps with the *Tute Bianche*, known after the white overalls they used to wear on demonstrations, most famously at the Prague S26 protests in September 2000. Autonomism is a living political force. But the idea of exemplary action on behalf of the masses remains influential, whether in the Black Block's cult of street violence or the *Tute Bianche*'s more peaceful tactics. These actions function as a substitute for mass mobilisation. In analyses such as Hardt and Negri's the working class--reshaped in the transformations of the past few years but still very much a real force--is either dissolved into the amorphous multitude or denounced as a privileged labour aristocracy. The activists act in the name of one and try to bypass or confront the other. Toni Negri is still the key theorist of autonomism the influence of his ideas is an obstacle to the development of a successful movement against the global capitalism whose structures he seeks to plot in *Empire*." Callinicos (2003) also blames the hostility of the anti-capitalist movement towards all political parties, including his own, on autonomism: "A significant section of the anti-capitalist movement have a more or less hostile attitude towards political parties. This reflects a variety of factors: for example, the appalling record of the "official left" (social democrats, Communists, and Greens) in office, negative experiences with far left organizations, and the influence of autonomism. The result is a movementism that, for example, has led to the formal exclusion of political parties from the World Social Forum and attempts to extend this ban to the European Social Forum." However, the criticisms by Callinicos and the SWP, particularly the accusations of elitism, have since rebounded against that party following the fiasco of the 2004 European Social Forum (ESF), when the SWP colluded with the Labour Party to exclude not just autonomists but all civil society and social

movement organisations from participating in the planning and administration of the event, so leading to the organisation of an alternative London ESF and the subsequent decline of the ESF due to the damage inflicted on its credibility as an open, inclusive, plural, transparent and directly democratic forum. Admittedly, this has been part of a general, global decline in the alterglobalist movement since its highpoint of the February 15th 2003 mass mobilizations against the imminent US invasion of Iraq. Latin American orthodox Marxist apologists for left nationalism, such as Guillermo Almeyra (2006) and Atilio Boron (2005), have accused Hardt and Negri of being unwitting 'postmodernist' supporters of neoliberalism and even of US neo-imperialism. Certainly, left nationalism has enjoyed a resurgence in Latin America with the election of the radical Chavez and Evo Morales governments in Venezuela and Bolivia, as well as several other centre-left and 'progressive neoliberal' governments in South America. However, as Raul Zibechi (2006) emphasizes, these governments owe their popularity and in the case of both Chavez and Morales, their political survival to basically autonomous (not autonomist) social movements, who could potentially withdraw such support if Chavez and Morales fail to deliver on their promises to roll back neoliberalism. Furthermore, Zibechi (2008) questions the ability of particularly Morales, given the state of virtual civil war in Bolivia, or of the increasingly embattled Chavez to implement such change by means of state power: 'Those like us who distrust the state as a tool with which to build a new world, can learn from these ongoing crises. Experience tells us that movements can take two paths to change the world: to become state bureaucracies or remain as movements. The first is a path trodden for over a century, the other offers no guarantees, but you can be assured, at least, that it is the surest path so that the future does not slip away from our hands.' The two main autonomist movements in Latin America, the Zapatistas in Mexico and a section of the piqueteros and self-managed recuperated factories in Argentina have remained aloof from the Chavez and Morales governments, rejecting anti-capitalist strategies based on the taking of power and change from above. Yet another type of criticism of Negri and Hardt's theories of Empire and Multitude has come from an unexpected quarter, from within autonomism itself, in the shape of the 'open Marxist', John Holloway, who accuses them of promoting divisive and self-defeating identity politics, of 'being' rather than 'doing', through the idea of Multitude in particular, based on Deleuze's theory of deterritorialization and the plurality of singularities. Holloway (2002b) attacks Hardt and Negri by arguing that both 'empire' and 'imperialism' are invalid concepts when seeking to analyse contemporary global capitalism: 'What is objectionable in Hardt and Negri's argument that imperialism has been replaced by empire is the assumption that the concept of imperialism used to be valid - but then this reflects the ambiguous relation to Lenin that has always been present in Negri's writings and indeed in much autonomist writing'. In reply and as part of an often acerbic debate between Negri and Holloway and within autonomism itself over the validity of the theories of Empire and Multitude and their place within global anti-capitalist struggle, Negri (2006) outlines the limits of Holloway's 'scream' of negative dialectics in his book *Change the World Without Taking Power* (2002a): 'Holloway's line represents the best of the opposition to attempts by a certain institutional Latin American left to flatten within the categories of nation and development the relation between biopower and biopolitical potential. Yet, it remains limited by its negative dialectical framework. Negativity is not just a mere 'scream'; it is rather, desire, a multitudinary necessity to continuously affirm joy, peace, and communism.' Hardt and Negri have defended their core concepts in *Multitude* (2004) and other writings and interviews from these and other critiques, notably by Callinicos, whose views dovetails with those of Latin American left nationalists and orthodox Marxists. However, they have adapted their original stance, which was almost exultant at the prospect of the death of the nation-state and its despotic sovereignty in *Empire* (2000), particularly in the light of the process of reterritorialization of Empire under the US unilateralist policy of 'global war against terrorism' since 9/11. They now see Empire as a continuum of imperialism, its ultimate stage, rather than a complete rupture. The nation-state is certainly not dead and in the case of the advanced capitalist countries has reinforced its Hobbesian repressive role as the global 'society of control' replaces Foucault's 'society of discipline', while extracting itself from its social and redistributive

functions by transferring them to the market-led NGO sector. However, for the great majority of nation-states, real independence and self-determination are now a mirage, and they are visibly losing control over their national economies – the very essence of state power – to the supranational organisms and transnational corporations that form the backbone of Empire. Any attempt to break with the global economic status quo can be punished with capital flight, a fall in stock exchange values, currency devaluation and the extraction of foreign investment in a matter of hours thanks to the ITC revolution. Thus their thesis stands that those political actors who wish to radically alter society and economy will need to struggle simultaneously at both local and global levels, seeking to build new nodes in the network of the multitude, while struggling for state power through insurrectionism or electoralism seems doomed to failure. The neo-Zapatistas of the EZLN and its base communities in Chiapas, also nominally left nationalists, would seem to agree. They sent no delegates to Evo Morales presidential inauguration in Bolivia in 2005 on the grounds that they are opposed to all top-down, state-controlled change, including by the left. Instead, they have promoted change from below and to the left through the Other Campaign at the Mexican national level and the Zetza International globally, both organized following the Sixth Declaration in 2005. In Chiapas, they have continued to consolidate the Juntas de Buen Gobierno Caracoles (core Zapatista communities which actively interface with the outside world) since their establishment in 2003, replacing the Aguascalientes meeting places and Autonomous Municipalities established following the revolt in 1994. These local initiatives are based on the neo-Zapatista principles of governing by obeying (mandando obedeciendo) and everything for everyone, nothing for us (todo para todos, para nosotros nada), in stark contrast to the corruption, impunity and authoritarianism that continues to dominate official Mexican political culture, despite the only formal transition to democracy in 2000. As a result, the JBG, based on annual elections and revocable delegation, have managed, with the support of the alterglobal movement, to set up schools, hospitals and even a university without any government support and despite continuing harassment by paramilitary and state forces, now under the control of the centre-left PRD (Partido de la Revolucion Democratica/Party of the Democratic Revolution) governor of Chiapas. The heart of this social revolution from below has been the self-transformation of indigenous women in the Zapatista communities, who have passed from a passive obedience to men still evident in the 1990s to active, militant, autonomy, self-determination and participation in every aspect of economic, social, cultural and political life. However, the paradox remains that while neo-Zapatism advances at the local and global level, it has been unable to break through the state's military, political and economic cordon sanitaire de facto state of emergency existing in Mexico due to the failed war against drugs of President Calderon, which has already cost over 3,000 lives in 2008 and is causing political destabilization, and with increased military activity in Chiapas, the neo-Zapatista movement faces the imminent prospect of war and repression, unless the alterglobalist movement can mobilize global public opinion to prevent it, as stated by the organizations that participated in the July 2008 International Caravan in Solidarity with the Zapatista Communities in Chiapas: "The Mexican Army's decision to invade La Garrucha, Rancho Alegre (known as Chapuyil), Hermenegildo Galeana and San Alejandro [in June 2008] represents more than the violation of the Dialogue, Conciliation and Peace in Chiapas Law (1995), the Mexican Constitution (Article 29), the American Human Rights Declaration (Articles 21 and 29b) and the International Civil and Political Rights Convention (Articles 14 and 27). It also represents a change in the strategy against the Zapatistas. In view of this, we are extremely concerned for the physical and physiological integrity of our indigenous Zapatista brothers and sisters. The Mexican Government is attacking the right of indigenous peoples to freely organize by attempting to use the outrageous accusation that the Zapatistas cultivate marijuana. As the Mexican State looks for mechanisms to legitimise open warfare, it is clear that its real objective is the destruction of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN)." While the multitude is a collective actor in formation, the product of the end of the certainties of the clearly defined social classes and antagonists of the modern era, working class and peasant organizations have been instrumental in the centre-left gaining power in various Latin American

countries since 2000. However, they have achieved this almost always in alliance with the social movement sector, and by acting as social movements themselves in the cases of the PT in Brazil, the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) in Bolivia and of Chavez's popular support base in Venezuela (Negri & Cocco 2006). Negri's opinion of Chavez has changed too: once considered suspect for his statism and militarist origins, he is now reconsidered in the light of his dependence on the popular movements of the barrios (the product of the Caracazo, the 1989 social revolt in Caracas), after the abortive coup attempt in 2002 by the oligarchy and sections of the army, under the probable orchestration of the CIA. Thus a multitude, a monster with many heads where no one social movement, party or political force seems to dominate and does seem to be the basis of both the more radical and the progressive governments in Latin America coming to and staying in power, despite their ambiguous relationship. A fourth type of criticism has come from the more pragmatic and less ideological sections of alterglobalism, as represented by George Monbiot (2008), the Guardian reporter, who accuses the autonomist organizers of this year's Climate Change Camp in Kent, southern England of playing utopian politics with the climate change issue: "Ewa [Jasiewicz] rightly celebrates the leaderless, autonomous model of organising that has made this movement so effective. The two climate camps I have attended - this year and last - were among the most inspiring events I've ever witnessed. I am awed by the people who organised them, who managed to create, under extraordinary pressure, safe, functioning, delightful spaces in which we could debate the issues and plan the actions which thrust Heathrow and Kingsnorth into the public eye. [â] But in seeking to extrapolate from this experience to a wider social plan, she makes two grave errors. The first is to confuse ends and means. She claims to want to stop global warming, but she makes that task 100 times harder by rejecting all state and corporate solutions. It seems to me that what she really wants to do is to create an anarchist utopia, and use climate change as an excuse to engineer it." Monbiot returns to the old dividing line of whether or not radical social movements should at some point agree to work with the state to resolve a problem of impending urgency. The real dividing line is the issue of instrumental politics: do the ends justify the means? However, as Adamovsky (2007) points out, one of the most important differences between the new anti-capitalism of which autonomism is an integral part, and the old anti-capitalism of traditional socialism has been the rejection of instrumentality and the insistence that the means and ends must both be justifiable.4. (JBG, Good Government Councils) and and consolidate in other parts of Mexico, despite the best efforts of the Other Campaign and the growing presence of autonomous social movements, particularly APPO (Asemblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca/Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca) (Cunningham 2007). This is due mainly to the capturing of the social movement sector by the populist, nationalist, anti-neoliberal campaigning of Lopez Obrador, the defeated PRD presidential candidate in 2006, who has convincingly claimed that the 2006 elections were fraudulent and who has conducted a so far successful campaign to block the privatization of PEMEX, the state-owned oil company and jewel of the Mexican economy, through his directly controlled proxy-social movement, the CND (Convencion Nacional Democratica/National Democratic Convention). He has been actively supported by most of the verticalist, left nationalist, extra-parliamentary left, despite the fact that neither he nor the deeply-divided PRD are in fact anti-neoliberal since they continue to support NAFTA. Now, in the

4. Conclusion: options and future directions

In conclusion, it is clear that the global anti-capitalist justice movement is in difficulties after five years of relative decline, following the upsurge between Seattle 1999, Genoa 2001 and ending with the February 15th Global Day of Action against the War in Iraq. The growing dissatisfaction over the organization of this year's polyvalent WSF is a case in point, as is the fact that global autonomism has virtually withdrawn from the WSF, given the insistence of a controlling clique (ATTAC - defunct in 2007 - Le Monde International, the French Socialist Party and the Brazilian Workers Party or PT) to centralize decision making. Autonomism has been affected by this present phase of demobilization and

return to private life, although it still retains a considerable ability to mobilize and organize, as shown by this year's Climate Change Camps. A further problem has been the increase in the repression of autonomist movements around the world, particularly of the Zapatistas in Mexico, who expect to be attacked by the Mexican Army as part of its war against drugs at any moment. This has obviously led to some disarticulation of autonomism as a GSM, although it has responded by organizing an International Caravan to Chiapas in July (2008). Furthermore, the criticisms of Berardi about the failure of media activism imply a rethinking of media activism and its effectiveness under its present form, essentially that of Indymedia. The most important question is to avoid a return to the ghetto of the 80s and early 90s.

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[3] My translation.

[4] "By Exodus we want to indicate the form of struggle that is based not in direct opposition but in a kind of struggle by subtraction—a refusal of power, a refusal of obedience. Not only a refusal of work and a refusal of authority, but also emigration and movement of all sorts that refuses the obstacles that block movements and desire." (Hardt & Negri, 2000b)

[5] Interview with the author, Mexico City, 23 May 2008.

[6] My translation.