

## CANCELLING DAVOS, BOARDING FOR PORTO ALEGRE:

### ON "GLOBALIZATION FROM BELOW" AND ITS POLITICAL VISIONS

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*Despite the vast amounts of media coverage and plethora of books and articles on the alter-globalization movement (AGM), the movement's innovative solutions and proposals have still not been addressed properly within the discipline of comparative politics. The aim of this article is, therefore, twofold: on one hand, the author examines the AGM's genuinely new political alternative, one founded on municipalized – yet global – democracy, horizontalism, and decentralization while, on the other, it addresses the epistemological transformation of comparative politics since many of the concepts and solutions the AGM offers are too elusive for traditional disciplines, classical theories, and Western epistemologies. The article starts from the supposition that for a long time the most important political innovations have not come from the traditional centers of political power, but have rather been invented by the "newest social movements." In the last part, the article considers topical debates on global, world and cosmopolitan citizenship in the light of a conceptualization of translocal citizenship that, in the long run, may prove to be the single most subversive thing the AGM has recuperated.*

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## I INTRODUCTION

“BROTHERS AND SISTERS, THERE IS DISSENT OVER THE PROJECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ALL OVER THE WORLD. THOSE ABOVE, WHO GLOBALISE CONFORMISM, CYNICISM, STUPIDITY, WAR, DESTRUCTION AND DEATH. AND THOSE BELOW WHO GLOBALISE REBELLION, HOPE, CREATIVITY, INTELLIGENCE, IMAGINATION, LIFE, MEMORY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A WORLD THAT WE CAN ALL FIT IN. A WORLD WITH DEMOCRACY, LIBERTY AND JUSTICE.”

– SUBCOMANDANTE MARCOS

Thomas L. Friedman, a famous *New York Times* columnist, concluded his analysis of the effects of (economic) globalization with the daring statement that people should be grateful to be living in a world in which a historical question has been resolved, and the answer is free-market capitalism. In a world in which the invisible hand of the market cannot function without a hidden fist, and McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of fighter jets.<sup>2</sup>

The neoliberal conception of globalization, says Friedman, forces nation states to finally put on the Golden Straitjacket of liberalization, privatization and fiscal discipline which fosters economic growth, although on the political front the Golden Straitjacket narrows the political and economic policy choices to relatively narrow parameters. “Once your country puts it on, its political choices get reduced to Pepsi or Coke – to slight nuances of taste, slight nuances of policy, slight alterations in design to account for local traditions, some loosening here or there, but never any major deviation from the core golden rules”<sup>3</sup> Friedman admits that its “*one-size-fits-all*” ideology does not suit the specifics of various societies and therefore the only way to enlarge it is to wear it ever tighter.

To fit into the Golden Straitjacket a country must either adopt, or be seen as moving toward, the following golden rules: making the private sector the primary engine of its economic growth, maintaining a low rate of inflation and price stability, shrinking the size of its state bureaucracy, maintaining as close to a balanced budget as possible, if not a surplus, eliminating and lowering tariffs on imported goods, removing restrictions on foreign investment, getting rid of quotas and domestic monopolies, increasing exports, privatizing state-owned industries and utilities, deregulating capital markets, making its currency convertible, opening its industries, stock and bond markets to direct foreign

<sup>2</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding the Globalization* (New York, NY: Anchor Books), 443–445.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

ownership and investment, deregulating its economy to promote as much domestic competition as possible, eliminating government corruption, subsidies and kickbacks as much as possible, opening its banking and telecommunications systems to private ownership and competition and allowing its citizens to choose from an array of competing pension options and foreign-run pension and mutual funds. When you stitch all of these pieces together you have the Golden Straitjacket.<sup>4</sup>

Although Friedman sums up his apotheosis of the Golden Straitjacket, ergo the neoliberal conception of globalization with the conclusion that “the tighter you wear it, the more gold it produces and the more padding you can then put into it for your society,” we can observe nowadays that its stitches have finally broken.<sup>5</sup> Two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and in the middle of a global financial and economic crisis, we are discovering that praise for the hegemonic economic model described above has been too hasty, as was Margaret Thatcher with her statement that there is no alternative to neoliberalism. Moreover, the current financial meltdown and economic crisis is also revealing a crisis of politics per se, where the crisis is not understood as the incompetence of politics to mitigate the contradictions inherent to the current economic model, but as its incompetence to transcend the very same economic model. Following Nicos Poulantzas and his warning that, with the overuse of the word crisis, the word is also losing its content and clarity; we should at the very beginning theoretically elaborate the concept of crisis and our own understanding of it.<sup>6</sup>

In the past a crisis – economic and political – has been perceived merely as an anomaly or rupture within the harmonious working of a self-regulatory system, as a dysfunctional moment that will be overcome when the balance of the system is restored. This conception of crisis results in myopia that:

1. overlooks many crises that are present, but are not perceived as such, because of their positive role in consolidating and reproducing the status quo, despite their undemocratic and even anti-democratic inclinations; and
2. equates with a crisis various ruptures that are inherent to the hegemonic economic paradigm and do not represent a threat to its functioning since they are a permanent part of its consolidation and reproduction.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>6</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, “La crise politique, et la crise de l’état,” in *The Poulantzas Reader: Marxism, Law and the State*, edited by James Martin (New York, NY: Verso, 2008), 294–322.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

The current crisis is therefore an economic and political crisis in the proper meaning of the word, a “crisis of crisis,” since we face such a concentration of contradictions inherent to the system that they now represent a threat to its stability and very survival. Hence, the proper question we should ask is not how to redesign the basic contours of the Golden Straightjacket, but how to get rid of it in the first place. A myriad of innovative solutions, on the level of theoretical paradigms as well as political practices, can be found within the alter-globalization movement (AGM) or a “movement of movements.” Mexican writer and activist, Gustavo Esteva, once described it as “one no and many yeses” since many different collectives and movements, in many different places, are united in their critique of neoliberal globalization, whereas their aspirations, goals and visions are diverse.<sup>8</sup> When the first World Social Forum was convened in 2001 under the event’s official slogan “Another World is Possible,” Naomi Klein remarked that the various groups and collectives gathered in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre were not cheering for a specific other world, just the possibility of one: “We were cheering for the idea that another world could, in theory, exist.”<sup>9</sup>

After protests against the World Trade Organization summit in Seattle in the late fall of 1999, mainstream media tried to dismiss the protesters and their demands with distorted reports that depicted them as “global village idiots” (*The Wall Street Journal*), “a guerrilla army of anti-trade activists” (*The Washington Post*), or even as “a Noah’s ark of flat-earth advocates, protectionist trade unions, and yuppies looking for their 1960s fix” (*The New York Times*).<sup>10</sup> Despite the vast amounts of media coverage and plethora of books and articles on the AGM, the movement’s innovative solutions and proposals have still not been addressed properly within the discipline of comparative politics. Therefore, the aim of this article is to re-examine the solutions and proposals the AGM offers as an alternative to the anomalies of the neoliberal (neoconservative?) project.

The article starts from the supposition that for a long time the most important political innovations have not come from the summits of the World Economic Forum, held each year in Davos, a Swiss ski resort, but have instead been invented by the “newest social movements” (Day) that in recent years have strengthened their counter-hegemonic position, including with the initiation of the World Social Forum.<sup>11</sup> After a short genealogy of the AGM, an analysis of

<sup>8</sup> Gustavo Esteva in *One No, Many Yeses*, Paul Kingsnorth (London: Free Press, 2003), 44.

<sup>9</sup> Naomi Klein, *Fences and Windows, Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Globalization Debate* (London: Flamingo, 2002), 193.

<sup>10</sup> For more about the media representation of the AGM, see David McNally, *Another World is Possible: Globalization & Anti-Capitalism* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed conceptualization of the “newest social movements,” see Richard J. F. Day, *Gramsci is Dead, Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005); Giorel Curran, *21st Century Dissent: Anarchism, Anti-Globalization and Environmentalism* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2006), 53–56.

prefigurative politics as a new post-ideology of the AGM will follow. In the last and main part of the article we will examine the epistemological transformation that is needed for a proper understanding of the AGM's inspirations and aspirations. In topical debates on global, world and cosmopolitan citizenship we will examine the concept of translocal citizenship, namely one of the AGM's main theoretical and political innovations and representing an important part of its attempt to delegitimize the status quo and build its alternative from the bottom-up. To sum up, our goal is twofold: on one hand, we will reflect on the AGM's ideas and practices that have not yet received proper attention while, on the other, we will address the epistemological transformation of the discipline of comparative politics.

## 2 MAPPING THE “MOVEMENT OF MOVEMENTS”

Writing about the AGM can be a demanding and also perilous endeavour, particularly if we bear in mind that, *per analogiam* with Subcomandante Marcos' definition of *zapatismo*, we are not dealing with a “doctrine, but an intuition. Something so open and flexible that it really occurs in all places. It poses the question: ‘What is that has excluded me?’ ‘What is that has isolated me?’ In each place the response is different. It simply poses that question and stipulates that the response is plural, that the response is inclusive.”<sup>12</sup>

The AGM is consequently a colourful coalition of ecologists, indigenous activists, farmers, feminists, trade unionists, NGOs and other initiatives that, according to Esteva, offer “one no, and many yeses.” According to Zadnikar, we can also find pieces of the AGM in the everyday resistance of life against the imperatives of the system, the joy of life and the gallows of the ordinary people, the dance of the neglected, the migration of nomads, the settling of migrants, farmers' fight for land, the love of gays, punk piercings and not least the smile of an overworked saleswoman. We should also not forget squatters, people without official documents (the “Erased” in Slovenia or the *Sans papiers* in France) and the “illegals” in the global Babylon, *adbusters* and *culturejammers*, workers in maquiladoras, the unemployed and the precarious, *piqueteros* and *cacerolazos*, activists in centri sociali, anti-war activists, feminist groups, antifascist organizations, *Reclaim the Streets*, *Food Not Bombs*, the *No Border network*, the *Save Narmada Movement* (*Narmada Bachao Andolan*), the *Animal Liberation Front*, the *Earth Liberation Front*, *Earth First!*, guerrilla gardeners, anti-war and No-NATO activists, members of the *Black Cross* collectives, graffiti artists and hackers or *hacktivists* on the Internet, *Indymedia* activists, open code and copyleft advocates, organic growers, and researchers of spiritual

<sup>12</sup> Subcomandante Marcos, “The Seven Loose Pieces of the Global Jigsaw Puzzle,” in *Ya Basta! – Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising*, ed. Žiga Vodovnik (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004), 45.

dimensions.<sup>13</sup>

Many studies conclude that the AGM was born amid the tear gas and rain that accompanied the anti-WTO protests in Seattle in 1999, but its broader understanding – as the umbrella term under which we can place many different political inspirations and aspirations – opens a new dilemma of where to start with its genealogy. Zahara Heckscher, for instance, traces antecedents of the AGM already back to the late 18th century, more precisely, in the Tupac Amaru II uprising between 1780–1781. Heckscher believes the uprising represents “a bridge between local anti-colonial rebellion and transnational social movements against exploitive economic integration.”<sup>14</sup> The movement was one of the first to overcome ethnic, religious and even gender differences, and was also able to connect European Enlightenment ideas with indigenous cultures. In his seminal history of Latin America entitled *Open Veins of Latin America*, Eduardo Galeano also detects many regional and global networks of anti-colonial resistance that set the beginnings of the AGM many decades, if not centuries before the famous “battle in Seattle.”<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Benedict Anderson concludes in *Under the Three Flags* that the global anarchist movement at the end of the 19th century is not only the main ideological inspiration of the AGM, but also its very beginning.<sup>16</sup>

If, however, we focus solely on the second half of the “short 20th century”, then we can trace the beginnings of the AGM in Liberation Theology in the global South, and the autonomist movements in the North (e.g., *Autonomia* in Italy, *Autonomen* in Germany). Experiences from the 1960s namely only strengthened the distrust of trade unions and political parties, resulting in a new form of political organizing that connected radical workers, students, urban youth, unemployed, indigenous and other marginalized social groups or declassé elements of modern societies that Marx famously dismissed as the *lumpenproletariat*. It was about this time that the first infoshops, social centres and squats were founded, while the first protests against the growing power of supranational financial institutions were organized. These developments, particularly the protests against the International Monetary Fund, often also called “riots for bread”, were forecasting the birth of a new global justice

<sup>13</sup> Epitomized from Darij Zadnikar, “Que se vayan todos!”, *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo* XXXI, 212 (2003): 5–8; Darij Zadnikar, “Kronika radostnega upornišтва”, in *Spreminjamo svet brez boja za oblast: pomen revolucije danes*, John Holloway (Ljubljana: Študentska založba, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Zahara Heckscher, “Long before Seattle: Historical Resistance to Economic Globalization”, in *Global Backlash: Citizen Initiatives for a Just World Economy*, ed. Robin Broad (Manham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 86–91.

<sup>15</sup> Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

<sup>16</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (New York, NY: Verso, 2007).

movement.

The AGM was born, or at least came to world attention, on the day of “the end of history,” when the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA) came into force. On that morning, the indigenous people of Chiapas, Mexico, chose to start war against oblivion, as the NAFTA – it enabled buying communal land and on the other hand banned subsidies to indigenous farm cooperatives – would bring the “summary execution” of all indigenous people in Mexico. Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolabal, Ch’ol, Zoque, and Mam Indians, dressed in handmade blankets, rough sandals, woollen ski-masks, and many of them armed only with wooden facsimiles of guns, disrupted the festive mood with a declaration of war against neoliberal globalization. The uprising was dangerous to its opponents, and attractive to its supporters, because of its “modest” demand – to build another world, a world with many worlds in it (*un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos*). As Esteva explains, this immodest goal of the Zapatista uprising is not a residue of some romantic dreams or illusions, but in a world of cynicism and hypocrisy it is a completely pragmatic attitude.<sup>17</sup>

The Zapatista uprising and the later encuentro against neoliberalism and for humanity (*Encuentro Intercontinental por la Humanidad y contra el Neoliberalismo*) mark the birth of the AGM or the “movement of movements.” The encuentro, organized in the Lacandon jungle in 1996 by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (*Ejército Zapatista Liberación Nacional*, EZLN), resulted in an appeal for intercontinental network of resistance, recognizing differences and acknowledging similarities, [that] will strive to find itself in other resistances around the world. This intercontinental network of resistance will be the medium in which distant resistances may support one another. This intercontinental network if resistance is not on organizing structure; it has no central head or decision maker; it has no central command or hierarchies. We are the network, all of us who resist.<sup>18</sup>

An important outcome of the Zapatista *encuentro*, one still often overlooked, was the global network the *People’s Global Action* (PGA), which “unites anarchist collectives in Europe and elsewhere with groups ranging from Maori activists in New Zealand, fisherfolk in Indonesia, or the Canadian postal workers’ union,” and that would become one of the main organizers of the counter-summits from Seattle and Prague, to Quebec and Genoa.<sup>19</sup> The network includes many

<sup>17</sup> Gustavo Esteva, “The Other Campaign, APPO and the Left: Reclaiming an Alternative,” in *Teaching Rebellion, Stories from the Grassroots Mobilization in Oaxaca*, ed. Diana Denham and C.A.S.A. Collective (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2008), 336.

<sup>18</sup> Subcomandante Marcos in *Our Word is Our Weapon: Selected Writings of Subcomandante Marcos*, ed. Juana Ponce de León (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2001), 125.

<sup>19</sup> See David Graeber and Andrej Grubačić. *Anarchism, Or The Revolutionary Movement of The Twenty-first Century*. Available at: <http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/9258> (June 10, 2010).



movements and collectives that cannot be reduced to a single ideological platform but, as can be seen from its *Hallmarks*, the organizational principles of the PGA are identical to the main anarchist ideas:

1. A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism; all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalization.
2. We reject all forms and systems of domination and discrimination including, but not limited to, patriarchy, racism and religious fundamentalism of all creeds. We embrace the full dignity of all human beings.
3. A confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organizations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker;
4. A call to direct action and civil disobedience, support for social movements' struggles, advocating forms of resistance which maximize respect for life and oppressed peoples' rights, as well as the construction of local alternatives to global capitalism.
5. An organizational philosophy based on decentralization and autonomy.<sup>20</sup>

The story of the AGM then continues with the growing (international) recognition of the Brazilian landless farmers' movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*) and the Indian Karnataka State Farmers' Association (*Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha*); the strengthening of the global coalition of small farmers Vía Campesina; the restoration of the international network for the democratic supervision of financial markets and institutions ATTAC (*Association pour la Taxation des Transactions par l'Aide aux Citoyens*); revolts against privatization of the water system (and rainwater) in Bolivia, privatization of the energy system in South Africa, the "Washington Consensus" policies, and neoliberalism in Argentina; the creation of the international research and education institution *The International Forum on Globalization*; the organization of the first World Social Forum (*Fórum Social Mundial*) in Porto Alegre, that was followed by regional social forums in Europe, Africa, and Asia; leading to the biggest protests in the history of mankind when on February 15, 2003 over 20 million people all over the world protested against the war in Iraq.

Although the AGM is a diverse "coalition of coalitions," as Klein once described it, and unites various collectives and movements that were often oppositional in the past, the AGM has still managed to develop its own collective identity. However, the AGM's diversity can be viewed as both a fundamental strength and a fundamental weakness. Diversity can come at a high cost, especially "[i]n a political culture that values unity, the AGM's diversity provides opportunities

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<sup>20</sup> See People's Global Action (PGA). *Hallmarks*. Available at: <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/en/> (June 10, 2010).



for its critics to disparage it and security forces to undermine it.”<sup>21</sup> What we should address next, therefore, is the AGM’s (post-ideological) connective tissue, which manages to preserve its unity in diversity.

### 3 ANARCHISM AND THE ALTER-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT: PREFIGURATION AS THE POST-IDEOLOGY OF THE MOVEMENT?

While we can clearly not define the AGM as an anarchist movement only, we can without any hesitation add that the majority of its creative energy is nowadays coming exactly from anarchist groups. On the other hand, anarchist principles are so widespread throughout the AGM that we could mark it as anarchist in places where it is without this identity.

According to Giorel Curran, “post-ideological anarchism” represents the main ideological current within the AGM, and at the same time also its best response to the reconfigured ideological landscape that renders doctrinal purity obsolete.<sup>22</sup> “Post-ideological anarchism” adopts ideas and principles from classical anarchism very flexibly and non-doctrinally, and simultaneously rejects its traditional forms to construct genuinely new autonomous politics. So, is it possible to talk about a new anarchism within the AGM?

In Dave Neal’s essay *Anarchism: Ideology or Methodology?* We find two basic positions within anarchism – *capital-A* and *small-a* anarchism. If *capital-A* anarchism puts an emphasis on achieving ideological uniformity, and can be understood as “a set of rules and conventions to which you must abide”, then *small-a* anarchism is understood as a methodology or “a way of acting, or a historical tendency against illegitimate authority”.<sup>23</sup>

Duality within anarchism can also be found in Jeffs’ conceptualization of *latent* and *manifest* anarchism. *Manifest* anarchism represents “a deliberate take over of ideology and practices, and with this self-identification of the subject as an anarchist”, while *latent* anarchism bears the same characteristics as Neal’s conceptualization of anarchism as a methodology. Latent anarchism therefore “represents various practices that have been throughout history conceived past relations of power and submission. For these, neither interpellation nor constitution of an individual into a subject of some self-reflected anarchism isn’t

<sup>21</sup> Giorel Curran, *21st Century Dissent: Anarchism, Anti-Globalization and Environmentalism* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2006), 64.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> See Neal, Dave. *Anarchism: Ideology or Methodology?* Available at: [http://www.infoshop.org/library/Dave\\_Neal:Anarchism:\\_ideology\\_or\\_methodology](http://www.infoshop.org/library/Dave_Neal:Anarchism:_ideology_or_methodology) (June 10, 2010).

crucial.”<sup>24</sup>

In an essay written before the boom of the AGM, Neal estimated that within the movement we could still find “a plethora of Anarchists – ideologues – who focus endlessly on their dogma instead of organizing solidarity among workers”. A decade later, David Graeber contemplates that what we might call *capital-A* anarchism still exists within the AGM, but it is the small-a anarchism that represents the real locus of creativity within the AGM.<sup>25</sup> In his reflection on new anarchism, he stresses that it still has an ideology but for the first time it is an entirely new one – *i.e.*, a post-ideology that is immanent in the anti-authoritarian principles underlying its political practice.

A constant complaint about the globalization movement in the progressive press is that, while tactically brilliant, it lacks any central theme or coherent ideology. . . . [T]his is a movement about reinventing democracy. It is not opposed to organization. It is about creating new forms of organization. It is not lacking in ideology. Those new forms of organization are its ideology. It is about creating and enacting horizontal networks instead of top-down structures like states, parties or corporations; networks based on principles of decentralized, non-hierarchical consensus democracy. Ultimately, it aspires to be much more than that, because ultimately it aspires to reinvent daily life as whole.<sup>26</sup>

In her article *Anarchism and the Anti-Globalization Movement*, Barbara Epstein also ascertains that anarchism in the AGM represents the main inspiration for a new generation of activists. Their understanding of anarchism surpasses its narrow interpretation that reduces it to a set of prefabricated solutions or even to an eternal truth that can only be interpreted, commented upon, or confirmed anew. We could state that the opening of political space within the AGM is leading to final acceptance of an upgraded version of Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach which, according to Maurice Brinton states: “The activists have hitherto only interpreted Marx and Bakunin in various ways; the point is to change them.”<sup>27</sup>

Epstein states that we can distinguish anarchism *per se*, thus “capital-A” anarchism or anarchism as an ideological tradition, and anarchist *sensibilities* that overlap with the fluid, flexible and eclectic position of “small-a” anarchism. For contemporary young activists anarchism does not represent some abstract

<sup>24</sup> Nikolai Jeffs, “All you need is love (nasilje, emancipacija, pa tudi nekaj uvodnih besed...)”, *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo* XXVI, 188 (1998): 23.

<sup>25</sup> David Graeber, “The New Anarchists”, in *A Movement of Movements, Is Another World Really Possible?*, edited by Tom Mertes (New York, NY: Verso, 2004), 214.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>27</sup> David Goodway (ed.), *For Worker’s Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004), 3.

radical ideology, but instead means a decentralized organizational structure, based on affinity groups that work together on an ad hoc basis, and decision-making by consensus. It also means egalitarianism; opposition to all hierarchies; suspicion of authority, especially that of the state; and commitment to living according to one's values. . . . Many envision a stateless society based on small, egalitarian communities. For some, however, the society of the future remains an open question. For them, anarchism is important mainly as an organizational structure and as a commitment to egalitarianism. It is a form of politics that revolves around the exposure of the truth rather than strategy. It is a politics decidedly in the moment.<sup>28</sup>

As can already be seen, the AGM contributes to the "actionization of political theory," above all, through recuperation of the concept of prefigurative politics or prefiguration that claims that we should create the future in the present with political and economic organizing alone, or at least foresee social changes and solutions for which we aspire. It is an attempt to overcome current limitations with the construction of alternatives from the bottom-up, and rejects total construction of the future as a new phantasm that paralyzes human creativity and freedom, but rather simply demands a search for new political solutions that are open to modification.

#### 4 EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

If we try to answer the question of which political and economic alternatives the AGM offers, we soon realize that to frame an adequate answer and form a proper discourse the discipline of comparative politics would have to undergo a preliminary epistemological transformation to enable it to detect and truly understand the political ideas and praxis of the AGM. Many concepts and solutions offered by the AGM are, namely, too elusive for traditional disciplines, classical theories, and Western epistemologies, therefore the analysis must be founded on new, more flexible epistemology. As Arjun Appadurai already ascertained, research in the era of globalization is a peculiar optical challenge.<sup>29</sup>

In the past many disciplines went through radical epistemological turbulence and these examples can offer us some guiding principles for how to reframe the discipline of comparative politics, which is still overburdened with concepts and research foci from the Cold War. Within historiography, for instance, a new generation of young scholars of the New Left enabled the discipline no earlier than the 1960s and 1970s to overcome inner limitations, best summed up by

<sup>28</sup> Barbara Epstein, "Anarchism and the Anti-Globalization Movement," *Monthly Review* 53, 4 (2001): 1–14.

<sup>29</sup> Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination," in *The Anthropology of Politics: A Reader in Ethnography, Theory, and a Critique*, ed. Joan Vincent (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 271–284.

Henry Kissinger's thesis that history is the memory of states, everything else is of minor importance. Radical historians such as, inter alia, E. P. Thompson, Howard Zinn, Staughton Lynd and Jesse Lemisch initiated history from the bottom-up or people's history which, figuratively speaking, moved its focus from those in the White House to those picketing the White House. With this shift alone, the discipline was able to detect new questions and offer new answers.

For our aims, perhaps more interesting are the current transformations of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities. Particularly beneficial directions for the development of comparative politics and political science per se can be found in the works of Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos. De Sousa Santos reasonably warns that there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice.<sup>30</sup> We are witnessing epistemological ignorance that strengthens the status quo and at the same time dismisses, discredits and trivializes arguments and solutions not in accordance with the hegemonic epistemological position – a hegemonic notion of truth, objectivity and rationality. What is therefore needed is an epistemological transformation that will broaden the spectrum of (relevant) political solutions and innovations. According to de Sousa Santos, the solution is "the comparative politics of absences," which transforms impossible into possible objects, absent into present objects, irrelevant into relevant objects.

If the production of the non-existence, *ergo* the hegemonic conception of comparative politics, is founded on:

1. *a monoculture of science* that turns modern science and high culture into the sole criteria of truth and aesthetic quality, respectively;
2. *a monoculture of linear time* that dismisses as "backward" whatever is asymmetrical and contrary to whatever is declared "forward";
3. *a monoculture of classification* that attempts to naturalize social differences and hierarchies;
4. *a monoculture of the universal and the global* that trivializes all particular and local practices and ideas, and renders them incapable of being credible alternatives to what exists globally and universally; and
5. *a monoculture of capitalist production and efficiency* that privileges growth through market forces and dismisses other systems of production as non-productive;<sup>31</sup>

then "the comparative politics of absences" should be founded on the following epistemological assumptions:

<sup>30</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "The World Social Forum: Toward a Counter-Hegemonic Globalisation (Part I)," in *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*, ed. Jai Sen et al. (New Delhi: The Viveka Foundation, 2004), 238.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 238–239.

1. *an ecology of knowledges* that recognizes other knowledge and criteria of rigor that operate credibly in social practices;
2. *an ecology of temporalities* that understands linear time as only one of many conceptions of time and that is not even the most commonly adopted one. The rejection of linear time places other and different political and social practices on the same level as political and social practices of the West since now they become another form of contemporaneity;
3. *an ecology of recognition* that rejects the colonial ideas of race and sexuality, and tries to articulate a new nexus between the principles of equality and of difference, thus allowing for the possibility of equal differences;
4. *an ecology of trans-scale* that rejects the logic of the global scale and recuperates particular and local practices and ideas as relevant alternatives;
5. *an ecology of productiveness* that refutes the hegemonic paradigm of development and infinite economic growth. It recuperates and validates alternative systems of production, popular economic organizations, workers' co-operatives, self-managed enterprises etc., which have been trivialized by the capitalist orthodoxy of productivity.<sup>32</sup>

"The comparative politics of absences" thus rescues and reveals the diversity and multitude of political practices and ideas that may inform a credible new counter-hegemonic conception of the discipline suitable for the postmodern, globalized world. A relevant example of the epistemological transformation of the discipline can also be found in recent breakthroughs within contemporary anthropology. With their conceptualization of "other anthropologies/anthropology otherwise," Eduardo Restrepo and Arturo Escobar call for a critical awareness of both the larger epistemic and political field in which disciplines emerged and continue to function, and of the micro-practices and relations of power within and across different locations and traditions of individual disciplines.<sup>33</sup> "Other comparative politics/comparative politics otherwise" would consequently have to analyze other, subalternized forms of knowledge, modalities of writing, political and intellectual practices etc. The solution is once again an epistemological and methodological transformation that will overcome the "asymmetrical ignorance" and "parochial mentality" that still characterizes the discipline of

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 239–240. For a further elaboration of the sociology of absences, see Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "The World Social Forum: Toward a Counter-Hegemonic Globalisation (Part I)," in *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*, ed. Jai Sen et al. (New Delhi: The Viveka Foundation, 2004), 235–245; Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond* (London: Zed Books, 2006); Boaventura de Sousa Santos (ed.), *Cognitive Justice in a Global World: Prudent Knowledges for a Decent Life* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); Boaventura de Sousa Santos (ed.), *Another Knowledge Is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies* (New York, NY: Verso, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Eduardo Restrepo and Arturo Escobar, "Other Anthropologies and Anthropology Otherwise: Steps to a World Anthropologies Framework," *Critique of Anthropology* 25, 2 (2005): 99–129.

comparative politics. How then should we reveal the subalternized?

1. *By accepting an un-disciplinary and anti-disciplinary approach* that offers a radical critique of the canon of authority and authorization crucial for the reproduction of the dominant political science. Un-disciplinarity and anti-disciplinarity at the same time reject the idea of inter- and trans-disciplinarity that implicitly strengthens the separation of individual disciplines and fields of research.
2. *By moving beyond the academic and non-academic divide.* Within political theory the most important theoretical contribution and insight has for a long time come from the ranks of academics and activists who are involved in a critical and reflective practice of social movement through "co-research," "militant investigation" or "action research." The participation of scholars-activists in contemporary social struggles results in "collective theorization" of all topical and also sensitive issues, as well as the search for realistic and, above all, credible analysis that are all later offered to movements as a contribution to the success of their common struggles.

As already noted, a similar epistemological and methodological transformation within the discipline of comparative politics would, *inter alia*, result in new forms of knowledge, modalities of writing etc. We should add that the shift would also result in the acceptance of new methodologies, research foci and research ambitions, which would be a first step towards the pluralization and decentralization of political science. According to de Sousa Santos, even this would also mark the first step towards cognitive justice as a prerequisite for global social justice.

## 5 THE MUNICIPALIZATION OF POLITICAL MEMBERSHIP AND TRANSLOCAL CITIZENSHIP

In the past practically every single progressive intellectual current subsumed *politics* under *statecraft*. Consequently, their anti-statist position resulted in theoretical purism and anti-intellectualism that rejected every in-depth reflection of key concepts such as political power or even citizenship. According to Murray Bookchin, politics and statecraft are not only significantly different, but are in opposition to each other. Historically, politics has not been and could not be developed within the state since it has always been closer to a philosophical concept of praxis as a free and creative activity of individuals within fluid polities.<sup>34</sup> The modern state, on the other hand, was born as a reactionary response to Renaissance humanism, and has always been an obstacle to

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<sup>34</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Social Ecology and Communalism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007), 93–94.

global democracy.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, for Richard Day, the struggle for dismantlement of community through demutilization that is being waged between community on one hand, and state and corporate forms on the other, is indeed the struggle of the (post)modern condition.<sup>36</sup>

David Graeber also acknowledges that politics and statecraft are in mutual conflict. Graeber contends that majoritarian democracy, in all its forms, has been a rarity in the history of political communities, because it builds on two factors that only rarely co-exist:

1. belief that people should have an equal say in the decision-making;
2. a coercive apparatus capable of enforcing those decisions.<sup>37</sup>

Graeber claims that throughout human history it has been extremely unusual to have both ideas at the same time. In egalitarian societies it has usually been considered wrong to impose develop systematic coercion, whereas in polities where a system of coercion did develop it did not even occur to those wielding it that they were enforcing any sort of popular will.<sup>38</sup>

In the end, the common denominator of the various movements and collectives that comprise the AGM and also its most interesting contribution on the political and theoretical level can be found in their new understanding of political community and political membership.<sup>39</sup> In current debates on citizenship they intervene with communalism and libertarian municipalism that, *inter alia*, offer a new conceptualization of nomadic citizenship – we might call it translocal citizenship. Translocal citizenship is yet another outcome of the AGM's focus on prefigurative politics as an attempt to create the future in the present with political and economic organizing alone, or at least foresee social changes for which we aspire. It is indeed an attempt to overcome current limitations with a construction of alternatives from the bottom-up since it foresees a renewal of the political power of local communities, and their federation into a global non-statist network as an anti-power to nation-states and corporate power.

Communalism and libertarian municipalism resonate the theory of the German anarchist writer Gustav Landauer who, already at the beginning of the 20th century, revealed that for political emancipation we should overcome the negative fetishization of the state. According to Landauer, an author not well

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Tom Mertes, "Grass-roots Globalism," in *A Movement of Movements, Is Another World Really Possible?*, ed. Tom Mertes (New York, NY: Verso, 2004), 238.

<sup>36</sup> Richard J. F. Day, *Gramsci is Dead, Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 38.

<sup>37</sup> David Graeber, *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007), 342.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> For a short introduction to communalism and libertarian municipalism, see Murray Bookchin, *Social Ecology and Communalism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007).



known outside anarchist circles, the state is rather “a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, a mode of behaviour” that must be theoretically addressed and not rejected merely due to our theoretical purity or ontological principles. Therefore, a state is not something that can be destroyed by means of a revolution, which is why it is necessary to build libertine enclaves next to it, or to postulate a revolution as a “peaceful and gradual creation of counterculture” opposite to the idea of “a revolution as a violent mass rebellion”. It is not possible to attain a free society merely by replacing an old order with a new one since it can only be attained by spreading the spheres of liberty to such an extent that they finally prevail over the entire social life. If the state is in all of us, then we can abolish it only by revising our behaviour.

One can overturn a table and smash a windowpane; but they are puffed-up word-spewers [*Wortemacher*] and gullible word-adorers [*Wortanbeter*], who hold the state for such a thing – akin to a fetish – that one can smash in order to destroy. The state is a relationship between human beings, a way by which people relate to each other; and one destroys it by entering into other relationships, but behaving differently to each other. . . . [W]e must recognize the truth: we are the state – and are it as long as we are not otherwise, as long as we have not created the institutions that constitute a genuine community and society of human beings.<sup>40</sup>

In her reflection on the AGM, Cindy Milstein acknowledges that it is time for the movement to transcend from protest to politics, from shutting streets down to opening public space up, from supplication to those few in power to taking over political power.<sup>41</sup> The trend we can detect within the AGM is therefore a prefigurative adventure into new political practices and structures that – in the here and now – draw contours of the democratic changes that the movement aspires to. Within the AGM, the prefiguring of alternatives is also accepted through Hakim Bey’s popular conceptualization of spontaneous and subversive tactics of *Temporary Autonomous Zones* (TAZ) “which liberates a part (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, *before* the State can crush it.”<sup>42</sup>

According to Jeffs’ elaboration of Bey’s theory of TAZ, the political change should be “deterritorialized, decentralized, and delinearized on all political, economic, social, libidinal, and, last but not least, narrative levels, and small and nomadic forms of resistance introduced, also because there is not a single place in the

<sup>40</sup> Gustav Landauer, “Schwache Staatsmänner, schwächeres Volk!,” in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300CE to 1939)*, ed. Robert Graham (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 2005), 165.

<sup>41</sup> Cindy Milstein, *Anarchism and Its Aspirations* (Oakland, CA: AK Press), 122.

<sup>42</sup> Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2003), 99.

world, which has not been delineated by the nation state. . . . [TAZ] is invisible to the state and flexible enough to vanish, when determined, defined, and fixated.”<sup>43</sup> Such emancipation does not have to postpone its mission for the fulfilment of the necessary precondition – the maturity of objective historic circumstances, or the formation of some coherent subject or class – since it builds on the supposition that every individual is capable of co-creating the world with their, even if very small, gestures.<sup>44</sup> Going back to Landauer, the necessary change “concerns every aspect of a human life, not only the state, class structure, industry and trade, art, education. . . . The path to a new, better social order runs along a dark and fatal road of our instincts and terra abscondita of our souls. The world can only be formed from the inside out.”<sup>45</sup>

The concept of translocal citizenship within the *municipalized* international community represents a significant departure from classical theories of citizenship because rather on *identity* it builds on *inclusion* and *participation*, rather than *equality* it accentuates differences, or “equal differences” (de Sousa Santos). Yet translocal citizenship should also not be understood as another postmodern conception of political membership characterized by relativism and particularism. It represents a critique of the universalistic assumptions within the liberal tradition, or their upgrade with differentiated universalism that draws close to Habermas’ idea of “constitutional patriotism.”<sup>46</sup>

Considering that translocal citizenship offers a different understanding of political community and stresses its constant reinvention, we should rather conclude that translocal citizenship represents a form of “unconstitutional patriotism” that in its replacement of *ethnos* with *demos* follows a significantly more radical definition of democracy than Habermas. It does not equate democracy with a particular constitutional system only, nor with a particular constellation of centres of power within a society, but instead understands democracy in Westian terms – as a verb, and never as a noun.<sup>47</sup> Hence, translocal citizenship is not limited to the sphere of politics only (an achievement of the 18th eighteenth century), but logically includes all social and economic life. At the same time, the altered nexus between the local – regional – global makes it possible to finally separate political membership from the national and its constitution according to entirely new criteria. Translocal citizenship therefore does not represent the

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<sup>43</sup> Nikolai Jeffs, “Intelektualci, novi razredi, anarhizmi”, in *Somrak demokracije*, ed. Noam Chomsky (Ljubljana: Studia humanitatis, 1997), 368–369.

<sup>44</sup> See Nikolai Jeffs, “All you need is love (nasilje, emancipacija, pa tudi nekaj uvodnih besed...)”, *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo*, XXVI, 188 (1998), 22–23.

<sup>45</sup> See Gustav Landauer in Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 411–412.

<sup>46</sup> See Lister in Gerard Delanty, *Citizenship in a global age: Society, culture, politics* (New York, NY: Open University Press, 2006) 45–47.

<sup>47</sup> Cornel West, *Democracy Matters* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 68.

depolitization of political membership, but rather a substantive understanding of the concept that in past decades has been reduced to a legal status without substance. In the long run, the concept, with its vision of communitarian nomadism, may prove to be the single most subversive thing the AGM has recuperated.

## 6 CLOSING REMARKS: ON MOVING BEYOND MODERNITY THAT MOVES FORWARD BY GOING BACKWARD

In his communiqué *Siete piezas sueltas del rompecabezas mundial*, Subcomandante Marcos, the voice and strategist of the EZLN, ascertains that with the current processes of economic globalization the nation-state is being forced to redefine its position and purpose.<sup>48</sup> Namely, the end of the Cold War brought with it a new framework of international relations in which the new struggle for new markets and territories produced a new world war, the Fourth World War and, as do all wars, a redefinition of the nation-state. The structure of the global economy, which has up till now been leaning against the system of sovereign nation-states, is today namely in an irreversible crisis. In the “cabaret of economic globalization” with the construction of a de-territorialized Empire, the nation-state is being reduced to the indispensable minimum.

[It] shows itself as a table dancer that strips of everything until it is left with only the minimum indispensable garments: the repressive force. With its material base destroyed, its possibilities of sovereignty annulled, its political classes blurred, the nation-states become nothing more a security apparatus of the megacorporations.<sup>49</sup>

Politics as the organizer of nation-states in this “new world order” ceases to exist. Now politics is nothing more than the economic organizer and politicians are administrators of companies, while “national” governments are only responsible for the administration of business in different regions of the Empire.

Nations are department stores with CEOs dressed as governments, and the new regional alliances, economic and political, come closer to being a modern commercial “mall” than a political federation. The “unification” produced by neoliberalism is economic, it is the unification of markets to facilitate the circulation of money and merchandise. In the gigantic global Hypermarket merchandise circulates freely, not people.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> For an English translation of the communiqué, see Subcomandante Marcos, “The Seven Loose Pieces of the Global Jigsaw Puzzle,” in *Ya Basta! – Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising*, ed. Žiga Vodovnik (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004), 257–278.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

This type of political architecture is not a *novum*, but merely a continuation and perfection of the hegemonic logic which, in a changed environment, consequently took on a new form. According to Marcos, this is indeed a strange modernity that moves forward by going backward.<sup>51</sup>

From Marcos' description of contemporary political and economic architecture it can already be seen that nowadays, when within the top 100 economies we find more multinational corporations than national economies, the nation-state ceases to exist as the only centre of sovereignty and arena where crucial political decisions are made. On these grounds, April Carter is calling for a new concept of citizenship that moves away from the idea of nationality, but at the same time surpasses the parochial forms of political community that make global connectedness impossible.<sup>52</sup>

The idea of translocal citizenship certainly represents interesting dialectics between the Scylla of the particular and Charybdis of the universal. We should, nevertheless, again stress that this conceptualization of citizenship and political community is not a sheer novelty, as Harold Barclay concludes in his anthropological study of non-statist polities, it "is by no means unusual; . . . it is a perfectly common form of polity or political organization. Not only is it common, but it is probably the oldest type . . . and one which has characterized most of human history."<sup>53</sup>

To sum up, the political vision of the AGM is an antithesis to the hegemonic economic and political paradigm. It stresses that democracy can be and needs to be worked out first on a more manageable scale, ergo within local communities. Moreover, it prefigures a different political vision that is based on municipalized (yet global) democracy, horizontalism and decentralization. There is an open space in the political landscape for a new economic and political paradigm. The panacea for "a strange modernity that moves forward by going backward" may not be found in Swiss ski resorts and other centres of political power anymore, but we might find it on the margins of the current political map where various "subterranean" collectives and movements are developing a genuinely new political alternative.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

<sup>52</sup> April Carter, *The Political Theory of Global Citizenship* (London: Routledge, 2001), 8.

<sup>53</sup> Harold Barclay, *People Without Government: An Anthropology of Anarchy* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1996), 12.

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