Introduction: What is Antisystemic?

This chapter examines “systemic” and “antisystemic” forces in relation to the contemporary world-system. What is “antisystemic” is not immediately evident. “Antisystemic” forces could, for example, be either external or internal to reigning social-historical conditions. An external military intervention could destroy an existing system and transform social relations in such a way that a different system emerges. While such an “external” intervention may have been possible in the past, as in the case of the Dorian invasion and destruction of the Mycenaean system c. 1400 B.C. (Vernant 1982(1962)), such a form of antisystemic intervention is no longer possible given the system’s geographical expansion and the systemic forces that control military power and keep law and order on the world scene.

Antisystemic “internal” forces—which make up most of what we currently describe as “antisystemic”—may be said to consist of forces of opposition and resistance to the consolidation, expansion, and stability of the existing system. Since the system is in a constant state of transformation, antisystemic forces have to effectively transform and shape the system in ways that are deemed oppositional or counter-productive at a particular social-historical intersection-- but that may not appear to be oppositional in the long run. That makes “antisystemic” an ever more elusive term, since it describes forces internal to the functioning of the dominant system that participate, to varying degrees, in shaping that system through opposition and resistance over an extended period of time.

What concerns us here is how and to what extent certain forces of opposition and resistance stand in relation to the capitalist world-system “which we define quite simply as a unit
with a single division of labor and multiple cultural systems” (Wallerstein 1993 (1979):17). This “single” division of labor is complex, shifting to accommodate the system’s transformation, while the multiple and varied cultural systems have been increasingly permeated by the dominant capitalist social imaginaries,\(^2\) provoking reactions and adaptations that become inherent to world-system itself. The modern world-system, as depicted by world-systems theorists, will always retain certain basic characteristics that warrant calling it “capitalist”—even when there is no definitive agreement on what can be considered as “structural constants,” “systemic cycles,” or “systemic trends.”

Most world-system theorists would nevertheless accept as “systemic” those forces that uphold and consolidate a system whose basic characteristics consist of the following:

1) a single division of labor perpetuated through relations among an interstate system,
2) the endless accumulation of capital and maximal appropriation of surplus value, including related socio-cultural values and practices;
3) continual technical and economic innovations which ensure high levels of production, consumption and the belief in progress and development,
4) polarization between the few who benefit from accumulation and an impoverished majority, and
5) the expansion of the system through the incorporation of new regions and the subjectivization of socialized individuals through dominant capitalist imaginaries.\(^3\)

Antisystemic Movements

Within historical systems, forces of resistance do not necessarily have to be conscious or self-reflective, and are not exclusively based on the associations of human beings. In fact, most
forms of resistance that delayed incorporation and that opposed systemic forces have been related to social imaginaries. Social imaginaries encompass sites of both intangible and material forces pertaining to psyche (affects, desires, intentions, representations, etc.), social institutions underlying ethics and norms, political institutions underlying power relations, economic interactions encompassing production, consumption, distribution, and exchange, and other social and environmental relations that envelop varied ways of living. While these sites can be separated for analytical reasons, their interrelatedness calls for a reality associated with “multiplicity.”

The term “movement” entails by contrast conscious and self-reflective teleology. Movements are new historical constructs dating back to the era of “revolutions” when they became associated with the will of the masses. Movements are traditionally considered popular struggles where people, consciously or unconsciously, organize towards the achievement of a goal. Protest by the most oppressed have historically tended to explode in less orderly and teleological ways than are ascribed to movements, which are motivated by and directed towards specific goals or aims provided through social imaginaries.

Many movements are, it should be remembered, not antisystemic per se but can be described as “anti-repressive.” Anti-repressive movements aimed at the repressive state apparatus, but not the ideological state apparatus, and may contribute to the well-being of the oppressed without being antisystemic. Examples might include “liberal reform” movements, which do not question the capitalist world-economy, or demands to increase wages or reduce working hours, which do not detrimentally affect the capitalist world-economy as opposed to a demand to abolish wage labor. As Wallerstein has suggested, most anti-repressive and liberal reformist movements are clearly motivated by systemic forces permeated through a “capitalist
civilization” that demands “more” for “us” (Wallerstein 1978:1-10). Nonetheless, the process of empowerment that accompanies anti-repressive or liberal reformist movements can encourage or contribute to future antisystemic forces.

Social needs and desires have always both motivated malcontent groups and contributed to their pacification and contentment. Social and political institutions managed to effectively control, and eventually produce, the populaces’ needs and desires by manipulating various social imaginary significations—especially those transcendent and extra-social projections associated with religion and universal laws, as well as with (cultural or national) identity and difference (based on a construct of the “other”). Social movements in general, and antisystemic movements in particular, were constantly thwarted through the creation of needs that tended to become less “material” or “tangible”, but that nonetheless played increasing roles in the “material life” of populations around the globe: from “immortality” and the “afterlife” to “freedom, equality, fraternity” or “human rights.” Religious, communal, or ideological ways of living and relating to the world encompassed the various life experiences that characterized social movements that came to be known as “antisystemic;” It is only in recent history that the “economic” was able to shed its religious or political façade and to claim its place at the “center” of social needs and desires, as the state emerged as the contested site of this center—and with it capitalism was able to consolidate its powers..

After 1800, most antisystemic movements--including labor, socialist and communist movements--situated themselves in relation to the “state,” with the purpose of evading, abolishing, or controlling it. But while antisystemic movements were actively looking to control the “state,” systemic forces were perfecting ways of producing desires and needs and shaping “subjectivities”—mainly through the interaction of systemic and antisystemic tendencies. What
Gilles Deleuze in the name of Foucault has described as the transition from “disciplinary”
regimes to “societies of control” exemplifies best how systemic forces move away from the state
center to permeate all aspects of material life (Foucault 1982 and 2000; Deleuze 1990 and 1995).
In this respect systemic forces now operate by dominating social imaginaries and inhabiting
cultural worlds at the base of a less stable interstate system. As these comments suggest, by the
time of our epoch both systemic and antisystemic forces have undergone significant
transformation by comparison to previous epochs.

PART ONE - ANTISYSTEMIC MOVEMENTS 1968-1989

If 1968 was a period of disillusionment with the historic antisystemic movements
(nationalist, socialist, labor, and social-democrats; see Amin, Arrighi, Frank and Wallerstein
1990; Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein 1992:221-242; Wallerstein 1991d:65-83; and
Wallerstein 1999b:109-125), it was also a time of transformation for antisystemic struggles
across the globe. We shall focus on world-historical events extending from 1968 to the present,
highlighting select cases to support our more general claims. While it is impossible to present a
comprehensive overview of all major antisystemic events, we shall try to consider a pool of
significant representative events. We proceed chronologically to point to possible effects, links
and transformations.

World Historical Events circa 1968

Three major world-historical events were influential in determining forms of popular
struggle throughout the 1968 period: the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Cuban Revolution,
and the Vietnam War. These were, of course, not the only determinants—or even the most
influential—of antisystemic forces or struggles. We are simply trying to follow here orientations and trends that were central to these processes.

The “Cultural Revolution” emerged in 1966-67 as the Red Guards conducted destructive attacks against the People’s Liberation Army (especially high-ranking officers) and the Communist Party bureaucracy. Only in 1968 did it change to a struggle supposedly carried out by peasants and workers rather than armed militants. The Cultural Revolution was meant to reshuffle the cards of class struggle and to enhance the self-importance of certain strata of the population that are oppressed by other strata. But the violence of the destruction that was meant to destabilize an entrenched system resonated around the globe. Armed struggle was deemed necessary in continuous class warfare, where the masses could take on the task of shaping their future rather than trusting specialized bureaucrats or party apparatchiks. The anti-bureaucratic struggle was thus a way of assuring that the masses, voiceless and shapeless, took an active role in self-government.

This orientation was echoed in Cuba where Ernesto Che Guevara, a member of the Castro government from 1959 until 1965, decided to disseminate the practice of “guerilla warfare.” Around the same time that the Red Guards and other revolutionary groups were actively engaged in armed struggle in China, Guevara was engaged with Latin American peasants in rebellions aimed at regaining control of their future. Like the Red Guards, this engagement was halted in 1967 when Guevara was killed in Bolivia. Interestingly, as early as February 1963, Guevara wrote a piece entitled “Against Bureaucracy” in which he presented a form of re-education, invigorated with nationalism, as the median between what he called “guerillarism” and the “Junta Central de Planificacion.” (Guevara 1968: 121-127).

Nationalism, of course, was behind the Vietnamese successes in opposing their French
and American aggressors. But this nationalism was characterized by a socialist ideology and was related to a struggle against “imperialism” that used any means necessary to achieve “liberation.” In the Tet offensive of 1968, for example, the romantic construction of a David versus Goliath scenario permeated the imagination of an entire generation which felt empowered to struggle against all authoritative and dominant powers and to liberate itself not only from imperialism but also from other forms of oppression.

These three processes were combined with numerous other struggles that inspired “popular” movements around the globe, and a variety of movements would flourish throughout this period. While nationalist struggles often took on ideologies of socialism, the popular imaginary in core countries started veering towards what we will call “identity” movements—paralleled in later periods, particularly in the periphery, by orientations towards “ethnic” and “religious” identities.

The decline of traditional antisystemic movements and rise of “identity” movements

Reshuffling the cards of class struggle enhanced the self-importance of certain oppressed strata of society. In Cambodia, this process led to taking class struggle to its logical limits. The Khmer Rouge took the cultural revolution’s aims of “transforming education, literature, art and all other parts of the superstructure which do not correspond to the socialist economic base” literally, and decided that the only logical attainment of such aims would be through a single class system. This led to the systematic elimination of the intelligentsia, the class thought to carry within it ingrained bourgeois values and which sustained the capitalist superstructure. Most core-based imaginaries, however, interpreted this aspect of the cultural revolution as a new crisis of legitimacy of authority, accompanied by a prevailing anti-bureaucratic tendency. In the core,
similar struggles aimed at the superstructure occurred with the proliferation of various identity movements combating sexism, racism, as well as authority, assimilation, and integration—which in turn came to compete with nationalist or socialist identities.

A new student consciousness emerged in the 1960s amidst the crisis of education and a growing dissatisfaction with the economic and political conditions dominated by the repressive “old” parties and an ominous cold war. To this was added a desire for autonomy that reflected the proliferation of revolutionary and anti-authoritarian imaginaries. From 1967 to May 1968 and continuing until 1973, student unrest exploded across France, West Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, the USA, Brazil, Mexico, the UK, Argentina, Algeria, and Senegal. This was soon extended to other countries including Canada, Japan, South Korea, Greece, India, Zambia, Pakistan, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Venezuela (Katsiaficas 1987:37-57). However, as an identity group aimed at empowering itself, the “students” as an independent movement did not last beyond the 1980s (Altbach 1981) although some elements became part of other movements or causes.

By this time the USSR could no longer be counted on to offer an alternative system much less a replacement for the capitalist world economy. This resulted in reforms and reassessment of the roles and functions of the communist and socialist parties worldwide. Communist parties split into factions, with many marginalized and persecuted in the semi-periphery by socialist or social democratic parties. Maoism inspired a few communist parties in power (e.g., Albania, Cambodia) but mostly left its mark in the periphery. It inspired peasant-based and localized, cultural, socialist approaches to government. Combined with Che Guevara’s guerilla “focos” strategy, Maoism inspired guerilla warfare and armed propaganda struggles across the globe. During the late 1960s and 1970s guerilla warfare became a socialist as well as a nationalist
instrument of armed struggle aimed at taking control of the state. But by this time it was no longer as effective. While it may have worked earlier in Cuba (and elsewhere in de-colonization struggles), few socialist armed struggles successfully took over a state.

One successful example was the Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional) of Nicaragua in 1979. The Front relied on a complicated “practice of social transformation” that involved combining socialist goals with nationalist, anti-repressive, indigenous, and other aspirations (Coraggio 1985:203-231). A monolithic socialistic strategy would probably not have been as successful in defeating both Somoza’s forces and in holding back the U.S. supported Contras. As elsewhere, when social self-identification or “identities” proliferated (women, men, peasants, urban dwellers, students, workers, unemployed, international socialists), social movements were transformed. Socialist or nationalist movements that could not cater to, and combine the interests of, numerous strata of the population, were not be able to sustain their struggles effectively. In El Salvador, for example, the Popular Liberation Forces (Fuerzas Populares de Liberacion) aimed at a “prolonged popular war” by building on strong peasant support. While at times militarily effective, they were not able to engage the “masses” (Green 1997(1991):150-154). One result of these trends was that more guerilla warfare style armed-struggles started turning towards desperate terrorism.

The 1980s prepared the way for the 1990s, as finance and speculative capital advanced wildly and state socialism was tossed out of the window. While Reagan and Thatcher were unleashing the “blind fury” of conservative forces against the “evil empire,” socialism was collapsing and new forces came to motivate the masses. American direct and indirect interventions—as in Nicaragua, Honduras, El-Salvador, Grenada, Columbia, Afghanistan, and Panama—showed that capitalist forces were ready to save hundreds of thousands from the
clutches of socialism—even if it took killing most of them. Militarily, capital was able to create soldiers for itself everywhere through the production and support of “right wing” identities built on pure ideologies of the free market (e.g., Columbia, Nicaragua, El Salvador) or through “Muslim” defenders of a pure faith fighting infidels (Afghanistan).

By the 1990s, states and corporations increasingly used mercenary armies (such as Executive Outcomes or DynCorp), led mostly by American ex-military personnel. The economic policies implemented by the Washington consensus throughout the 1980s, along with those of the U.S.-dominated international financial institutions, had a lasting impact, ranging from U.S. pressures exerted on Japan, to extensive international regulation and manipulation of trade, foreign currencies, tariffs, and the widespread use of the dollar, to the imposition of “liberalization” schemes (and “structural adjustment”) on third world countries (Arrighi 1994:323, Harvey 2003). State socialist policies everywhere (including France in the early 1980s) could not last in this global environment, and the Soviet Union and its satellite states were led to collapse through compounded causes including the ever-accelerating arms race. As state socialism was expiring, new religious and ethnic “identities” developed.

The 1979 Iranian revolution reflected what was happening across various geo-cultural spaces in the world-system. In the 1980s, identity, religious, and ethnic movements flourished as forms of resistance to an “internationalization” or “regionalization” that grew more and more capitalistic. Afghanistan reinforced Vietnam as yet another David fighting another Goliath, and joined the Iranian revolution in inspiring antisystemic religious ways of relating to a world repressed through modernist, socialist and liberal discourses. Religion became an effective component of various social movements in the Middle East, North and West Africa, as well as in India, Europe, and the United States, where Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and Christians organized
themselves politically and economically in order to confront the changing face of their societies. Nationalist and socialist struggles were greatly affected by these transformations. In 1989, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan contrasted with the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia; the first was leaving behind a “specter” while the second was abandoning a cadaver.

In this climate the fall of the Berlin Wall was widely proclaimed to be the success of liberal dreams in fostering imaginaries of “freedom” and “equality of rights,” while surpassing any dreams of “justice” and “economic equity.” Reaganism and Thatcherism provided for a counter-resistance that not only undermined communism worldwide, but also changed the meaning of socialism itself. The reign of Mitterand in France and the sweeping victory for socialists throughout Europe ironically marked a reformation and liberalization of socialism. Meanwhile struggles against European unification revealed a growing opposition to centralization and an imaginary that demanded less centralized control and more localized interests. “Freedom” became the catchword of this era, and with it the expansion of markets and elimination of restrictions on capital.

Under these pressures internationalism was transformed into an empty discourse of rights that overrode discourses of equity and distribution. Freedom brought with it the proliferation of global investments, the formalization of international intellectual property rights, and the increasing role of international institutions promoting privatization and de-regulation. These capitalistic forces also revived, however, oppositional forces that drew on a left-oriented ideology: anarchism, anti-authoritarianism, squatters movements, and anti-racist and pro-immigrant groups started to multiply in the core, especially in Western Europe.

Following the Chinese model of re-organization into collectives and cooperatives, pockets within countries such as France or Italy reacted to the growing social crisis by calling for
workers’ autonomy and self-management (Calvi 1977 and Castoriadis 1957). Although they fell short of generating autonomy, various cooperatives, collectives, and communes flourished throughout the West and the Third World, advocating self-management and non-hierarchical relations; sometimes these reactions were combined with other communal, religious, or identity movements. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, local communities interested in cooperative efforts and communal autonomy flourished everywhere, out of necessity in the periphery and semi-periphery, and as a political engagement in the core. Neo-luddite or anti-consumer sentiments emerged as alternatives to capitalism, as did many identity-based communities, with their antisystemic drive made more effective through collaborative efforts and active resistance to capitalist values. Some of these communities built their identity on an oppositional ideology that was neither ethnic nor religious based; cults proliferated (from Guyana, to Switzerland, to Waco) as did military or semi-military associations or hate-groups (anti-state militias, white supremacists, anti-immigrant groups). Some communities were also built on anarchist principles (especially in Italy, the Netherlands, France, Greece, Spain, Mexico, Argentina, and the U.S. East Coast and Mid-West), while others flourished as squatters (especially in Germany, Italy, France, Mexico and the U.S.).

At the height of the 1980s, homeless individuals, impoverished people, immigrants, destitute families and young migrants found refuge in parks and abandoned buildings in core countries. Millions of the impoverished and destitute of the periphery and the semi-periphery, in addition to increasing numbers of refugees fleeing a variety of wars and conflicts, started building shanty towns or bidon-villes, mostly in urban areas (from Rio de Janeiro to Cape Town). Inevitably, confrontations between these poor populations and the state followed and movements were formed. In Europe, the height of confrontations with the state and supporting

The global nature of these movements was also extended through a new “internationalism” associated with new identities. The struggle against the war in Vietnam and against the cold war and the possibility of a nuclear holocaust brought people together in peace movements, which reached their peak in Europe during the mid-1980s. Meanwhile environmental movements aiming at the protection of human, animal, and earth rights came to the fore. Coalitions among these movements and their cooperation on trans-national issues reflected the internationalization and the proliferation of similar problems across national boundaries. These kinds of coalitions initially emerged as alliances of nation-states under the banners of such internationalist tendencies and sometimes against dominant ideologies. The non-aligned movement, for example, inspired various movement-based coalitions to evolve into cartels of power politics based on regional economic and political interests. Although most regional state coalitions emerged in the 1950s-60s (e.g. OAS, OECD, SEATO, the Arab League, ECOWAS), international institutions that were either independent (Bretton Woods institutions, GATT/WTO) or part of the United Nations system (WHO, UNDP, UNICEF), and that flourished on the basis of post-1945 internationalism, started to become effective global forces in the 1980s.

The freedom and human rights campaigns of the 1980s also had numerous unexpected consequences, as new internationalist and egalitarian orientations started inhabiting international institutions and creating hundreds of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with antisystemic orientations. The United Nations started investigating the importance of “economic” and “social” rights. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, mass movements of solidarity
for the humane and/or equal treatment of immigrants, minorities, and the poor, started to spread in the core and formed a constellation of new movements calling for policies opposing traditional mechanisms of upholding the interstate system and the capitalist world-economy. These ranged from pro-immigration rights movements, anti-racist movements, and movements calling for the elimination of debt and re-distribution of wealth. These movements of the 1980s would become the backbone of today’s global egalitarian and anti-globalization movements.

The decline of antisystemic labor movements

While these new movements based on new identities were emerging, older movements died. Most prominent were labor movements in the core and in a few countries of the “rising” semi-periphery— including “communist” countries such as Poland or Czechoslovakia—which became more preoccupied with their self-interest associated with the professionalization of workers. Indeed in the core, the labor movement was predominantly guided by liberal-reformist tendencies interested in reforming the system institutionally in order to guarantee certain rights and privileges for those already legally residing within the core, rather than transforming the system as a whole. In the 1980s and 1990s, labor movements in the core ceased to generate any antisystemic activities and many of their constituents felt as if they belonged to a “professional class,” that is an amalgamation of “white collar” with “blue collar” workers, all working towards higher levels of credit and purchasing power.

During the same period, labor movements in the periphery and other “rising” semi-peripheral countries, especially in Southeast Asia and Latin America, were mushrooming into anti-repressive struggles. The “outsourcing” policies of core countries, which benefited semi-peripheral nations first, initially led to a growth of unionization that was in many cases
antisystemic in orientation. Only in the 1990s, with “sub-contracting” to smaller and non-unionized factories and with yet another wave of “outsourcing” from the semi-periphery to the periphery did the piece-work system replace assembly lines in the semiPeripheral countries. This led to the decimation of labor unions and to more repressive work conditions encouraged and allowed by the “savage” capitalism of the 1990s, which re-integrated in the world-system the extraction of absolute surplus value or “new slavery” (e.g. sweatshops, sexual slavery, indentured labor). The majority of the peasants or farmers living in the periphery and the semi-periphery were hard hit in the 1990s after the dismantlement of Fordist policies and the implementation of structural adjustment programs or neo-liberal trade policies that undermined farm subsidies and in some cases, food subsidies. Some may become “professionals” but most will become “casual laborers.” The worst off and their families may end up trapped in “migrant importing” or “slave exporting” schemes, thus swelling the ranks of the “new slavery.” (see below).

Our aim is not to map the antisystemic labor movements across our period; a good start for such an endeavor would be the excellent survey of “labor unrest” across the world-system, conducted by a research working group a decade ago (see Silver, Arrighi and Dubovsky 1995). Representative cases to support our observations are now many. In Latin America, the state-controlled trade unions in Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil gave way to new forms of labor alliances with various anti-repressive movements. In Brazil, for instance, a new Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT or Partido dos Trabalhadores) was formed in 1979, through an alliance of rural unions, radical Catholics, left-wing intellectuals, and shanty-town movements (Green 1997(1991):155). Invigorated by the metalworkers’ strikes in 1978-1980 in São Paolo, and in 1980 in São Bernardo, the PT became an important movement precisely because it reached out to
other popular movements not representing workers but a variety of oppressed people (landless peasants, homeless and unemployed, women’s groups, indigenous movements, etc.). Unlike other labor-union based parties, the PT increased in popularity and power in the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in the election of PT leader Luis Inácio “Lula” da Silva as president in 2002.

Peru’s trade unionists also combined their efforts with popular neighborhood movements (*barrios populares*) in their nation-wide strikes between 1977 and 1979 (Henry 1985:127-146). The factors that made Latin America a hotbed of antisystemic activities in the 1970s and 1980s included: a) repressive military regimes; b) radical Catholic “liberation theology” and “Base Christian Communities” established after the 1968 Medellín conference of Latin American Bishops; and c) the increasing pauperization of mass urban populations and the disruption and destruction of peasants’ livelihoods. When labor combined its forces with other movements, it was able to grow as a movement as had happened in Brazil. However, Latin America was also a popular site for socialist guerilla movements backed by labor and/or the peasantry. While 1979 was the year of the founding of the Brazilian PT, it was also the year of the successful Nicaraguan Revolution. Grenada and Iran were other sites of change in 1979, and like Nicaragua, they revealed that “labor” could no longer function independently of other movements, be they socialist-based (Nicaragua), religious-based (Iran) or identity-based (e.g., women’s movement in Grenada).

These lessons spread. A reinvigorated internationalist orientation of labor, with special links between the core, the periphery and semi-periphery, was re-established in the late 1990s but its mobilization power remained negligible. Massive efforts of international institutions (not limited to the ILO) and NGOs were undertaken to support workers’ rights in various outsourcing sites in the (semi)periphery. In the core, a reinvigorated but dwindling labor force in industrial
production opted for joining the ranks of those dissatisfied with regionalization and de-regulation efforts, and would play a major role in the emerging “anti-globalization” movement.

The Transformation of Nationalism and Socialism, and the Rise of Terrorism

Nationalist movements were only antisystemic in the anti-colonial stage as they undermined the resources and threatened the economic, as well as the political and socio-cultural stability of core capitalist countries. Fewer were considered antisystemic when the outcome of their liberation struggle created a socialist space, or provided an egalitarian, distributive, and communitarian form of government that countered exploitative capitalist conditions. Most nationalist movements that achieved control of the state ultimately participated in the consolidation of the interstate system, even as they ended up as the playground for American and Soviet realpolitik and fell victim to the so-called “Cold War.”

The USSR’s withdrawal of support for world socialism and its entrenchment as a bureaucratic system engaged in a “Cold War” with capitalist centers meant limited support for state socialism and for socialist liberation struggles (although Cuba filled that gap in many parts of Africa). The demise of USSR support also meant a reassessment of socialist doctrines and an attempt to realize socialist goals in a capitalist-dominated world (an impossibility, as socialism was supposed to succeed and flourish as a historical system in its own right). The neo-liberal policies implemented in the 1980s by an aggressive U.S. also served as a secondary set of forces that undermined socialism.

Nationalist movements unable under these conditions to take over the state, along with socialist and communist forces that were disillusioned by the state, forged the necessary mix of direct action and counter-violence to become “terrorists.” Immersed in desperate situations,
dwindling members of these movements resorted to desperate means. But instead of smashing the state machine, as recommended by Marx in *the 18th Brumaire*, they perfected it—through a fabricated need for security. It is the interstate system, under U.S. hegemony, that smashed most antisystemic terrorists (those terrorists who targeted capitalist institutions or centers of power and who were motivated by socialist or communist ideologies) using the new tool of controlling imaginary significations, along with the application of the military and economic muscle necessary for any hegemon to control the means of terror and mass genocide.

“Terrorism” is a charged word with a long history of use and abuse (Onwudiwe 2001: 28-49). We use it here to designate “a strategy that generates fear and anxiety, through violent methods, in order to achieve political aims.” In most cases then, terrorism is proper to state institutions and to the state’s ideological or repressive state apparatuses. The terror of random violence, when it is not applied through dominant state powers, becomes the “weapon of the weak” (see Onwudiwe 2001, Chomsky 1986, 2000, and Herman 1983). Such a form of desperate resistance which proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s, and reached unprecedented heights in the mid-1980s (reported “terrorist” incidents increased from 572 in 1975 to 3525 in 1984 (Katsiaficas 1987, p. 182)) as socialist, communist, and nationalist promises started to wane, seems to have been born again.

When faced with desperate situations and devoid of hope for the success of their movements (e.g. in taking over the state), some individuals or groups have taken it upon themselves to appropriate that strategy as in Czarist Russia, in Nazi-occupied Europe, in China’s liberation wars, and in Algeria’s de-colonization struggle. The strategy was appropriated by desperate national liberation movements, such as the Palestinian liberation movements, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and yet other groups desiring a separate nation-state based on a shared
religion, ethnicity, language, or another identity trait. Socialist strategies also started appropriating terrorism in an attempt to counter the violence of capitalism, as was the case with Baader-Meinhof, Action Directe, Brigate Rossa, the Black Panthers, Tupac Amaru, the Japanese Red Army, Sendero Luminoso, etc. Socialist activists also appropriated various dimensions of “terrorism” and spread them across the globe in the 1970s and 1980s, as in the targeting of CEOs and rich politicians for kidnappings or assassinations, and the targeting of symbolic locations, meetings, companies and brand names for destruction or disruption. These strategies were soon re-appropriated in different contexts, and performed in the name of a different set of meanings and goals; some became associated with religious and ethnic movements—which would replace socialism and nationalism as dominant movements—while others became associated with “anti-globalization” tendencies.

Rise of Religious Nationalism

In the aftermath of 1968 “liberation theology” merged with many socialist and nationalist anti-repressive struggles across Latin America and in Mexico where leading Catholic figures, as well as common practitioners of the faith, reaffirmed a social commitment to helping the poor and to assisting the oppressed. This commitment materialized itself in a large-scale organizational attempt at offering assistance, education, and in building communities. In South America and Mexico, countless people hoped to liberate themselves from military regimes and repressive governments. In Central America, liberation did not come easily; priests, bishops, nuns, and scores of believers and lay people were massacred by right-wing militias and armies trained, financed, and supported by the United States government. In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, armies and militias trained by the U.S. Army and its School of the Americas
helped to defeat the liberation theology of those clergy within the Catholic Church who made the mistake of choosing “the preferential option for the poor” (Chomsky 2003:48-51). As archbishop Dom Helder Camara of Recife Brazil, famously put it: "When I give bread to the poor, they call me a saint; but when I ask why people are poor, they call me a communist" (Chomsky 2003:48-51). At the same time, in the 1970s and 1980s, a different set of religious beliefs took hold of oppressed populations in the Middle East, India, and elsewhere. The face of nationalism was changing, especially as it reflected the plight of the impoverished by increasing neo-liberalization; it was no longer socialist in orientation, but often religious or ethnic.

In the Middle East, post-colonial governments cracked down on communist parties and highlighted socialist versions of nationalism that soon evolved into a form of Arab pan-nationalism. Every government was eliminating radical egalitarians, even if those governments declared allegiance to socialism and allied themselves with the USSR or were non-aligned. In Iraq, the socialist Baath government started an extensive purge from government and systematic elimination of members of the Iraqi Communist Party (from 1978 to 1986). Similarly Nasser’s regime in Egypt was working on land reform and creating an “Arab socialism” while exterminating communists.

At the same time religious movements—such as the Islamic Brotherhood—were also persecuted, as Arabism was defined in secular terms. The Pan-Arab movement reached its peak in the late 1950s and continued through the 1960s as Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and the Sudan attempted—unsuccessfully—different combinations of unitary or cooperative schemes. These failed attempts at federation continued until the early 1970s when Nasserism and Pan-Arabism started to wither; by 1973, after the last major Arab-Israeli military confrontation and the OPEC attempt at empowerment, they declined rapidly. Nationalist and socialist movements in the Arab
world were held together during the 1980s primarily for two reasons: 1) the shared commitment to the Palestinian cause (which was used by most Arab dictators as a political tool); and 2) the shared opposition to imperialism manifested in the region by the U.S. and its allies through direct U.S. interventions as in Iran in 1953, Lebanon in 1958 and 1982, Iraq in 1991, and through the staunch U.S. support of repressive and criminal governments (e.g., Israel from the 1960s to the present, Iran under the Shah in the 1970s and 1980s, Iraq under Saddam in the 1980s). The imaginary significations of an entire generation, produced through a pan-Arabism that was supposed to provide equality and common goals, collapsed. Revivalist Islam not only filled the meaning gap, but also offered the only viable form of cultural resistance to neo-liberalization and the cultural hegemony experienced by the growing masses of impoverished and oppressed men and women.

At the same time, most Islamist movements, be they Shi’a or Sunni, were offering communist or socialist ideals as part of their goal of social justice. Starting in the 1980s and extending into the 1990s, Islamist movements went into the business of welfare and took over the responsibilities of Arab states by building hospitals and schools assisting the poor and the homeless, and providing cooperative stores with subsidized prices. The Islamic Brotherhood communities in Egypt own their own financial institutions and businesses, along with hospitals, cooperative stores, religious schools, etc. Hezbollah, in Lebanon, also has hospitals and schools and is engaged in helping the poor and needy (especially the Shi’a community in South Beirut and Southern Lebanon). Algeria’s current Islamic revolution, led by the FIS, has massive popular support and has generated cooperative efforts and quasi-socialist practices (e.g. resource sharing, social assistance, etc.), notwithstanding the occasional brutality in reaction to a repressive and terrorist government. All this is to show that religious movements and religious nationalism
replaced socialist movements and socialist nationalism across the Middle East and North Africa.

Similar reactions occurred in India and Pakistan, often in association with the creation of an “other” upon whom one could transfer the discontent with savage capitalism’s effects on local communities. After the socialist policies of Nehru and Indira Ghandi, resistance to neo-liberalization in India collapsed. The Congress party had resisted playing the divisive religious and ethnic card. However, a few old and new groupings, organizations, and parties started in the 1980s and the 1990s to make “Hindu nationalism” the backbone of their goal or platform; they aimed at re-creating an identity based on the demonization of the “Muslim” upon whom the ill effects of neo-liberalization and “globalization” could be projected: RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), VHP (Vishva Hindu Parishad), and lately, BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) (Van Der Veer 1994; Hansen 1999; and Bhatt 2001).

While the BJP was at the forefront of consolidating this enormous and powerful “religious nationalist” movement, the RSS nonetheless expressed a desire to build an “identity” opposed to global forces which it associates with multinational corporations. As a RSS pamphlet stated, “every morning we begin the job of cleansing our body with the help of products manufactured by these filthy companies which have a history of exploiting poor countries of the world” (Hansen, 1999: 170-172). Hindu radicalism thus creates an internal threat as it reacts to an external threat; its helplessness at reversing or affecting global forces associated with savage capitalism can only be repressed or compensated for through a campaign to create a strong and cohesive identity built on a tradition that is constantly threatened (and that does not adequately address the content of the tradition, be it in reformist or revivalist mode). This development is quite similar to that of Islamic radicalism, particularly in South Asia.

In Pakistan, Kashmir, Serbia, Bosnia, Afghanistan, a similar desire for religious or ethnic
independence reacts to global conditions that have created the impoverished masses and brings
these masses together under the banner of identity. In the core, such a transformation is reflected
in the extreme right and in the popular opposition to immigration and migrants—the transference
of local government’s failures on an “other.” Anti-immigration policies will become an
“occupation” of the jobless and resource-less masses who are offered the “other” as a bone: the
Vietnamese to the unemployed Australians; the Turks to the discontented Germans; the North
Africans to the disenchanted French workers, etc.

It is important however to point out that while we are trying to describe emerging sets of
forces we are associating with “religious nationalism,” these forces are not dominant, nor are
they unique to particular religions or regions. These forces co-exist and interact with numerous
other forces, including old nationalist or socialist forces, or ideological or religious forces. What
we are pointing to is that many social movements, potentially antisystemic or not, are
increasingly driven by a combination of religious and nationalist forces, especially in places
where socialist or liberal nationalisms are on the decline. This includes the various political
brands of religious nationalism, be them Christian (e.g., United States), Muslim (e.g., Pakistan,
Algeria), Hindu (e.g., India), or Jewish (e.g., Israel).

Some argue that this applies to China as well, where an official revival of
“Confucianism” was to lend legitimacy to a nationalist identity in transition from socialism to
“market socialism.” In the 1990s, the Chinese Communist Party leadership formally proclaimed
Confucianism as another “guiding principle” besides Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought
(Chan 1997:244). China is indeed a contested site, for while many in the middle-class or the
nouveau-riches may be driven by determinable beliefs or ideologies, it is difficult if not
impossible to assess what drives the majority of the Chinese peasantry as Robert Weil points out
The Tiananmen movement of 1989 revealed the increasing range of different and contradictory tendencies within the urban strata of Chinese society, from anti-statist and socialist orientations to staunch beliefs in the “democracy” myth and the “free market” gospel. With various countries moving from socialist orientations to neo-liberal experiments legitimized by free trade propaganda, it is difficult to project whether China will follow Eastern Europe and the former USSR in succumbing to the “American dream” of freedom and democracy or whether a new religious nationalism built on traditional Confucian ethics (or on racial superiority) may emerge there.

Identity Movements

As the survey above of the demise of socialist and nationalist movements and the emergence of new movements demonstrates, new forms of identity have increasingly come to define antisystemic movements. The term “identity” may be initially associated with those strata of populations whose empowerment accords with the effects of the early stages of the Chinese Cultural Revolution—whereby an “oppressed strata” gain privilege over a general class be it the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, or capital. There have of course been numerous “identity” movements that preceded the Chinese revolution or that were not influenced by it: the civil rights movements in the U.S. (especially from the 1963 March on Washington until the declaration of “Black Power” in 1965-1966 (Marable 1991)), the feminist movement (initially predominantly radical and socialist), as well as new radical environmental movements (from “Greenpeace” to “Earth First!”). Many of these are representative of a strand of movements whose anti-repressive struggles became inextricably linked to antisystemic activity aimed at undermining the world-system’s established hierarchies and exploitative mechanisms.
Along with these antisystemic forces should be listed anti-colonialist movements that could not only be called “nationalist” (notably Algeria, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Palestine, etc.) but were also combating social hierarchies based on identity (race, religion, ethnicity, caste, etc.). The late 1960s witnessed the proliferation of “identities” built around common interests, aims, occupations, ways of living, as well as around common histories and backgrounds not limited to ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups. These differences served to define one’s being and goals and provided the means of empowerment and liberation as well as a basis of cooperation. Ethnic or religious movements emerged initially as “identity” movements, from the late 1960s until the late 1970s (in Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines, Spain, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Nigeria, Morocco, China, Australia, and the United States). Many were soon transformed, especially after 1979, into movements that posed serious threats to the stability of the interstate system and, by rejecting the basic tenets of modernist capitalist values, acquired an antisystemic label.

While the peace movement that was linked to the anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s and 1980s is not based on an ethnicity or religion, it is an example of a phenomenon that redefines the identity of its participants: pacifists can be religious or lay people, but what links them together is their belief in peace and their opposition to war, and that is a “part” of who they are and what they believe in. So while the peace movement may have been—in the 1970s in the United States, or in the 1980s in Europe, or elsewhere—an organized mass movement opposed to the policies of the U.S. and/or that of the USSR during the Cold War, and while it may have included committed individuals united in one goal (peace or elimination of nuclear threats), over time it has become a manifestation of the fragmented identities of many in the core. The solidarity movement of the 1980s reflects a similar pattern: “SOS Racisme” in France, or the
variety of German coalitions and movements opposing anti-immigrant policies and/or practices, express an opposition while presenting an aspect of the participants’ “identity”—aspects that do not define that identity, but may be reflective of “parts” of one’s declared or assumed identity.

The relevance of 1968 and the primacy of consumption

While identity movements blossomed, ruling elites forged ahead with their own projects as well. In this respect the period 1945-1989 was a decisive one, with 1968 being at the center of it. Through the interaction of various forces, a major transformation of the system became manifest as ruling elites sought to address the social needs of their peoples. At the center of this effort was the increasing primacy of consumption as the domain of capitalist expansion and consolidation and the projection of “consumerism” as a basic societal need and a motivation for peoples everywhere. Through a very long process, extending as far back as the preliminary individuation forces carried through “Modernity” and “Enlightenment”, a major shift in economic, political, social and cultural forces was slowly able to establish purchasing power as a universal human value, making it the motivation equated with the social needs of populations around the globe.

This long and complex process allowed capitalism to establish its center within the production of subjectivities by producing global “consumer subjects,” rather than by relying on the state as its epicenter of power. That does not mean that the interstate system and the particular states forming it lost their ability to control the populace’s desires and needs but that the primordial forces controlling those desires and needs became “global” by permeating the “cultural worlds” at the basis of the interstate system and were thus able to directly influence the meanings and values embedded in the “material life” of various populations. This shift occurred
with the help of the expanding networks of communication and information that were disseminating “consumerism” (associated with the ideological banners of “freedom,” “rights,” and “choice”) as the way of living and relating to the world (Adorno & Horkheimer 1989; Marcuse 1966; Baudrillard 1970).

The years following 1968 also emboldened capitalism after vigorous and long-term mechanisms were implemented to circumvent the possibility of a takeover of states across the world. Those antisystemic movements that posed a serious threat were put in check in the U.S., Europe, Latin America, Africa, and in many parts of Asia, through targeted assassinations, covert actions, infiltrations, or the purchase of loyalties. These efforts ranged widely, from Iran (1953-54), Guatemala (1955), Cuba (1960s), Chile (1973), and the Cointelpro programs in the US to many other similar efforts.

At the same time capitalist powers launched a juridical effort to take over the international order and to depict it as “free”, associated with a discourse of “human rights” which intensified after 1968. While the various explosions of 1968 momentarily perturbed the order necessary for the functioning of some states, capitalism flourished as new markets were opened when targeted by “brands” and lifestyles that catered to the revolutionary demands of various groups. The revolution of 1968 suddenly became “hip.” Thus the media and integrated marketing strategies depicted their brands and products as directly associated with the life experiences of the sexual revolution, the hippie movement, the feminist movement, the peacenik movement, etc. It was soon the “product” that expressed one’s identity, and one’s individuality was expressed through the things that one consumed. This opened a vast array of possibilities for change and an incredible potential for an intensive proliferation of consumer goods without the actual need for geographic expansion (see Frank 1995, 1997, Featherstone 1991, Harvey
1990). “War by other means” became equated with a war of words and of control of interpretation and meaning. While the global media and its control of the flow of information has always reflected the moneyed elite in core countries (see Chomsky and Herman 1988 and Chomsky 1991 and 2001), “advertising” became the weapon of choice for capitalist infiltration first within the core, and later globally, undermining the European communist dictatorships in the process. The “advertising” we are referring to is not merely about selling goods, but about selling images, attitudes, lifestyles, attitudes, ways of living, hopes, dreams, and other significations associated with capitalist imaginaries. It is precisely the period around 1968 that marked the initial expansion of this kind of advertising power in the U.S., a power that has since reached unimaginable proportions, due to the expansion of informational and communicational flows that became global in reach (via various media conglomerates—including the film and music industries, cable and television networks, news, radio stations, print and internet media, etc.—and marketing and ads campaigns for products and services, international institutions and organizations, etc.).

Meanwhile the anti-Taylorist and anti-Fordist practices that became the norm in the 1980s and 1990s were transforming the face of “work” everywhere. Marx predicted (1977:449), “as the number of co-operating workers increases, so does their resistance to the domination of capital, and necessarily, the pressure put on by capital to overcome their resistance,” but he could never have imagined how capital would overcome such resistance. He dreamt of a “real subsumption” that, with increasing relativization of surplus-value extracted from labor, would create some “free time” for the development of the individual. As he wrote in *Grundriße* (1973:711-712): “The saving of labour time [is] equal to an increase of free time, i.e. time for the full development of the individual, which in turn reacts back upon the productive power of
labour as itself the greatest productive power. From the standpoint of the direct production process it can be regarded as the production of fixed capital, this fixed capital being man himself.” The transition from “formal” to “real subsumption,” as elaborated by Marx in Capital I (including the discarded draft of its sixth section), combined with Marx’s writings on “consumption” and “fixed capital,” have allowed a few scholars to discover in Marx an analysis of capital’s “production of subjectivities” (related to capital’s investment in the aforementioned “free time”) that is linked to the increasing importance of “immaterial labor”—that takes on the task of shaping and producing “fixed capital” (Read 2003).

Subjectivities are still produced through the web of social relations, but these relations are increasingly situated within the “immaterial” or “intangible” field that inhabits one’s “free time.” “Free time” is constantly expanding to encompass all other time, including “production time,” due to the decreasing relevance of assembly lines in factories, so-called cooperative efforts in the workplace and in the household, the increasing relevance of “individuation” in the workplace, schools, and households. Consumption and the desires and needs for consumption—of tangibles (e.g., consumer goods or material possessions) and of intangibles (e.g., representational or ideological constructs, including styles, identities, and illusions of proximity, of belonging, or of possibilities)—became productive of social subjectivities, as a major productive activity (physical and mental)—in the same way factory labor was one of the major productive activities in the 19th century. At the same time, and through this production of needs and desires, capitalist imaginaries are inhabiting, permeating, and transforming other social imaginaries and various aspects of the “cultural worlds” of the interstate system, through various direct (but mostly “indirect”) means including, the media, multiple information and communication networks, and global entertainment and marketing industries (that are producing and shaping people’s
activities, desires, needs, etc.). Consumption became a primary player in the transformed system of the late 20th century.

PART TWO: ANTISYSTEMIC MOVEMENTS 1989-PRESENT

1989 And Beyond: “Savage” Capitalism and U. S. Hegemony

The year 1989 witnessed yet another revolution: not that of the collapse of the communist bloc but the unleashing of the now hegemonic rhetoric of “globalization,” seemingly unchecked by opposing ideologies. The savagery of systemic forces culminated in the abolition of most elementary benefits that had been “negotiated” through the opposition of systemic and antisystemic forces in the preceding period. The interstate system thereupon consolidated itself on various fronts with the help of antisystemic forces associated with what came to be interpreted as “terrorism”; the banner of “security” that was raised along with that of “human rights” aided the creation of an ever increasing disciplinary juridical-political juggernaut that complemented (and supplemented) the consumerist system of control.

While finance and speculative capital moved to the fore at the expense of industrial capital in the 1980s, the 1990s brought new (and massive) concentrations of capital in the fields of information and communication and their corresponding technologies and applications. Paradoxically, the ever-increasing mutual awareness of the growing gap between the core and periphery did not deter the official abandonment of discourses of “development.” The goal of development, pursued in previous periods through an “enlightenment of the savages” and a belief in catching up policies following Rostow’s stages of growth (1960), was now discarded as the containment of Third World radicals was no longer considered a priority after the collapse of the Soviet Empire—which to many (radicals and conservatives alike) continued to embrace an alternative rhetoric until the very end. Disengaging from such “benevolent” policies showed the
extent to which capitalist centers were confident with their newly acquired powers of persuasion. “Freedom” had won and the late 1980s and 1990s reinvented the meaning of “free market” as a new ideology (while some see it as essentially a return to the 19th century paradigms of the night watchman state). Concurrently, the new dominant ideologies that were brought to the fore—post-Fordism and post-Keynesianism—exhibited a complete disregard for the basic needs of the world population, prioritizing instead the needs of the “economy.”

The increasing power of the upper middle class in core countries and the global elite in the periphery and semi-periphery coincided with the fall of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 and the subsequent transformation of the GATT into the WTO in 1995. The Eastern Bloc disappeared and new markets were offering themselves to capitalist speculation and investment. Social movements that were communal, religious, and/or ideological struggles were replaced with intermittent struggles for individual rights and/or group interests that did not threaten the interstate system (but rather consolidated it) or the economic system of production and distribution (where technological capital complemented speculative capital). Some antisystemic trends and orientations nonetheless created possibilities for antisystemic movements. Ethnic and religious wars emerged all over the world (from Rwanda to Kosovo, from India to Chechnya), fuelled by an economic hegemony that eliminated cooperation and increased pauperization.

Ethnicities and identities were further intensified through Cold War discourse on human rights through which new “international” wars were declared. The collapse of the former Soviet Union sent Russia and other Eastern countries hurtling towards a first-hand experience of “savage capitalism” (an expression of Kagarlitsky), as IMF policies destroyed whatever was left of their economy and disintegrated their social bonds, inviting the formation of mafias and gangs, prostitution rings and the development of human trafficking for slavery, while discontent
was drowned in alcohol, religion, and racism/anti-Semitism (following the model described above where the close “other” becomes the culprit for one’s misery). A few popular disturbances and clashes between workers and the police took place in 1998 and 1999 in Albania, Romania, Poland, and the Ukraine (Kagarlitsky 2001:52-66). In Russia, Orthodox Christianity re-emerged in importance as providing meaning and value, as did Islam in the Asian republics of the former USSR. Flexibility has always been an important characteristic of the capitalist world-system but by the 1990s, that flexibility had become malleable and permeable. The rigid structures of the state and the “societies of discipline” were, at least within the core, being replaced by “societies of control”—a kind of control that is non-coercive, non-abrasive, and non-apparent (Deleuze 1990 and 1995).

The U.S. economy is much weaker than when it achieved hegemonic status in 1945; not only are there problems associated with prolonged government deficits, rising unemployment figures, and stagnant economic growth, but its relevance to the global economy as a whole is shrinking (the U.S. economy is approximately 25% of the global economy) (Monthly Review Editors 2003). In this new era of “globalization,” the various multinationals and their highly visible owners wield much power and influence—including over the policies of the nation-state in which they reside and/or to which they declare allegiance. Besides taking into account state-based indicators, we also need to integrate into our measurements the individual capital of citizens. The U.S. picture would then appear less bleak as global capital measured in individual ownership is highly concentrated in U.S. hands (in 2002, 271 of 540 billionaires were American), not to mention the U.S.’ considerable military advantage over its competitors.

Furthermore, the control over the cultural aspects of the world-system and over the means of subjectivization around the globe should not be underestimated. Such control should more
properly be called “domination” of social imaginaries, in this case capitalist social imaginaries, where domination functions at the levels of desires, needs, drives and orientations that affect production, consumption, distribution, exchange, as well a vast array of social relations that do not fall under any specific category. This kind of domination, while not purely political or economic in the traditional sense, permeates the economic and the political through the intersecting “cultural” traits, drives, or meanings. Through a patient analysis of modes of historical control, ownership of the means of production, and diffused power in the processes of creating, valuing, interpreting, disseminating, and delivering capitalist social imaginary significations, it could be easily determined that, especially since 1945, various forces associated with this kind of domination have been U.S.-based and/or were, for the most part, appropriated by U.S. capitalists.

An international or rather “U.S.-led” community was thus constructed in the 1990s through the establishment of enemies of “freedom”; such enemies are necessary to re-create the optimal conditions of the Cold War, especially for international “defense” industries and for old-fashioned “industrial capitalism.” After Reagan’s direct military interventions (e.g., Nicaragua, Grenada, Lebanon), and those of Bush Sr. (e.g., Panama, Iraq), the U.S. administration believed that it had established its control over the international arena. The Clinton administration was acting as “primum inter pares” of the “free world” (see Snow 2002), while militarily intervening whenever it could use the rhetoric of “rogue states” (e.g., Iraq and Yugoslavia) (Parenti 2000), ignoring genocides whenever it seemed appropriate (e.g., Rwanda), and undermining popular movements by supporting dictatorships all over the world for its own benefit (e.g., Algeria, Nepal). At the diplomatic level, the Clinton administration showed its hegemonic control of international institutions through manipulation of the IMF, World Bank, and the United Nations.
It got rid of U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali when he wanted to reform the U.N., including making the U.N. Security Council more representative of the world’s population by adding permanent seats for countries with large populations (e.g. India, Brazil, Indonesia, Egypt, South Africa); Ghali was voted for a second term by 14 out of 15 UNSC members but the U.S. veto guaranteed his demise.

After stealing the presidency from Al Gore (Kellner 2001), George W. Bush formed an oligarchic government whose main goal was to look after those sectors of capital that supported him: defense contractors, oil companies, old industrialists and entrepreneurs willing to declare a “war on terror” where the demonic enemy is indeterminate—which guarantees the longevity of the war. The Bush government excelled at controlling information and interpretation, and has been producing “fear and anxiety” in order to direct the needs and desires of the American population. The White House capitalized on its control of the main means of information and of communication, shaping a majority of the 300 million Americans who are terrorized by it into submission (through terror alerts, the production of events such as the arrest of U.S.-based “al-Qaeda cells,” attacking “rogue” states, etc.). This was also applied at the diplomatic and international level; Mary Robinson, the top U.N. Human Rights official was forced not to seek another term because she dared to mention the “disproportionate” number of civilian casualties during the American air strikes in Afghanistan and the treatment of Taliban and Al-Qaeda prisoners and because she allowed documents to be presented at the United Nations Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa in 2001 that criticized the United States and Israel (Olson 2002). The U.S. success in using terrorism as one of its means of controlling and shaping subjectivities, and its ability to control the representation and interpretation of its policies and actions has limited the potential of antisystemic movements. Nonetheless, several other
movements and/or trends that have developed in the post-1989 period may carry antisystemic potential.

Post-1989 Movements and Trends with Antisystemic Potential

International Terrorism

After 1989, the incidents described as “terrorist” decreased in scope and were no longer merely the effects of desperate nationalist and socialist strategies (as in the 1970s and 1980s) but rather extended in the 1990s to the desperate strategies of ethnic, and especially religious, movements. For example, the first Palestinian intifadah of the 1990s was not led by FATAH or by the PFLP, but by Islamist organizations with local popular support: HAMAS and other small religious groups, later to be represented by Islamic Jihad. When the intifadah and subsequent peace negotiations led to an impasse and to worsening conditions and oppression, “terrorism” became the weapon of choice for those with nothing to live for.

Similarly, as the FARC guerillas in Columbia were suffering from extensive military strikes by the Colombian army, the U.S. army (which is using chemical and biological warfare to obliterate the “coca-fields”) and the right-wing paramilitary AUC (which handles the assassination of hundreds of trade unionists and outspoken Catholic priests), they started relying primarily on “terrorism.” Nationalist, socialist, religious, and ethnic forms of terrorism are still common, although they are not an effective threat to capital.

Terrorism was “international” throughout the 1980s, to the extent that its targets were disproportionately “core targets” (Onwudiwe 2001). Nonetheless, a different kind of “international terrorism” flourished after the 1990s as symbolic and targeted actions were aimed at capitalism and the U.S. as the hegemonic power. Numerous former antisystemic
tendencies proper to socialism and communism have been integrated into the radical outlook of a few religious or ethnic groups who view capitalism (and the U.S. or the “West”) as responsible for the decay of religious value-systems. But if the United States (or other countries) consider the Muslim as the demonic “other” (or reduces any other large group of people, such as Confucians, or Hindus, to sub-human “enemy” status), “international terrorism” as a consistent and continuous desperate reaction could bleed capitalism enough to pose a possible threat to its stability.

Already a serious form of “international terrorism” is manifested in the symbolic and targeted actions of mass populations across the globe that attack McDonald’s or other American chains or brands (as representatives of capitalist forces that detrimentally affect their lives or that of others), burn down hotels or resorts that were built at the expense of an existing ecosystem, blow up laboratories that experiment with animals, or burn down SUV dealerships, etc. Radical ecological groups (e.g. Animal Liberation Front) only resort to terrorism when their aims are not achievable through other strategies or tactics and they are confronted by violence. Squatters and anarchists started resorting to violence in the 1980s and 1990s when confronted by the state’s intransigence and oppressive treatment. European and American anarchists have invested themselves heavily in the anti-globalization movement, to fight the powers accorded to international financial institutions, their authoritarianism, and their disregard for individual liberty and equality. With oppression and pauperization accompanying capitalism, the reserve army of international terrorists is growing. However, through means of capitalist control, the desperate rage of many has been targeting constructed “others” upon whom capitalist forces are transferred.
Identity, Neo-Luddite, and Indigenous movements

Many “Identity” movements have also proliferated on the world scene after 1968, thus providing sites of association for groups and individuals who share common motivations, goals, or objectives. While the student movements, strongest in 1967-1968, came to an abrupt end with the “transformation” of the face of education worldwide, feminist movements, sexual liberation movements, ecological and environmental movements, international peace movements, as well as ethnic and religious movements thrived and continued throughout the last three decades. Each of these so-called “movements” is a rather complex grouping of different peoples with various orientations, some of which are concomitant or connected with, or radically opposed to, other orientations within or outside the “umbrella” designations that are not meant to point to any homogeneity. These movements were not only heterogeneous but also constantly transforming, permeating each other within the overall interaction of forces—situated within a particular social-historical intersection. Within the large umbrella of “identity” movements (post-1968 movements), there are movements with many connections and links with “new” movements that emerged in the late 1990s as antisystemic in orientation.

Squatters’ movements reached their peak in the core in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In Germany, West Berlin squatters, leftists, and anarchists had to defend themselves against police attacks (1987 Hafenstrasse; 1990 Mainzerstrasse) as East Berlin went through a period of increased street activism and demonstrations (1989-1993). In Paris, a combination of anarchists and illegal and poor immigrants were able to draw public attention to their cause when a judge approved “an occupation contrary to the law but dictated by necessity” in a challenge to the all-powerful property-rights (the case dealt with the “state of necessity” of
23 African homeless families)(Body-Gendrot 2000:68-74). However, this exceptional instance could not translate into a legal solution for those who are homeless across the core. In New York City and in Portland, Maine, major confrontations between squatters and the police developed into confrontations (Thompkins Square Park, 1989-1990) and demonstrations (1993). These voices were silenced and while squatting continues across the core, “property rights” are nowhere threatened in the core today.

It is somewhat different, however, in South Africa and Brazil. What scholars are calling “poor people’s movements” are creating situations with antisystemic tendencies as they threaten the sacred right of property. Some of these movements may be promising, but they may also be mere temporary re-adjustments for societies in transition (cf. Casanova 2004). South Africa’s poor, who live in horrific conditions unaided by the ANC’s liberalization and privatization drive, have been building “community movements” (Desai 2002). Brazil’s Landless Workers’ Movement (MST), one of the coalition movements behind the Labor leader and current Brazilian president Luiz Inacio da Silva (Lula), is trying to achieve what Zimbabwe is still struggling with, i.e. a re-distribution of land to landless peasants by occupying empty (or not) lots of land in a country where 20% of the population owns 90% of all arable land (while the poorest 40% owns only 1%) (Peter 2003). The MST’s empowerment strategies are definitely antisystemic in orientation and seem to inspire other movements; a movement for the homeless is starting to settle homeless families in vacant buildings in São Paolo.

These movements are typical of new “identity” movements, based on a commonality of situations and goals. Many of those that are antisystemic have inheritances from earlier anti-capitalist movements, opposing surplus production and the expansion of consumption,
commodification, and exchange, resisting technological and industrial developments, etc. Some neo-luddite movements aim at de-linking through various means of escaping the capitalist system, as in the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement in Sri Lanka (Sklair 1998: 291-311), while others try to counter capitalist forces by undermining the consumerist needs created through the suggestive powers of marketing and advertising. Identity movements could be communitarian or collectivist movements, but a few project (transfer meaning and significance) onto the “environment” (earth, animals, the globe, etc.). Most radical ecological movements can be considered antisystemic since they are against capitalist forms of extraction, exploitation, and the use of resources at the expense of the ecosystem (see below).

As for indigenous empowerment struggles, they directly undermine the racist and exploitative practices inherent in capitalist relations. Indigenous movements encompassed a wide array of struggles. Some aimed at self-determination or self-rule, associated with local government and control of natural resources: the Inuit in Canada, for example, have achieved some success in that regard when, on April 1, 1999, Nunavut was created as a new territory, governed by the Inuit, within the Canadian Confederation. The Nunavut Land Claims Agreement accords various other rights to the Nunavut Inuit, including 1.148 billion Canadian dollars in compensation, a share of royalties from oil, gas, and mineral development, and equal representation of Inuit with government on a new set of wildlife management, resource management, and environmental boards (Polarnet 2005).

The Maori of New Zealand struggled for the recognition of the 1830 Treaty of Waitangi, and through the Treaty of Waitangi Act of 1975, it was given constitutional status (Waitangi Tribunal 2005). More recently, the Maori have been trying to pursue (through legal means and organized demonstrations) claims to the natural resources (including oil)
extracted from what they claim to be Maori lands/seabed. The Zapatistas are one of those indigenous movements of the 1990s that carried within it links to other movements; it has been stated that the indigenous Indian majority were joined by remnants of the 1968 student movement crushed in the Tlatelolco massacre and by Maoist groups. Bishop Samuel Ruiz’s liberation theology also shaped the indigenous Indian communities whose uprising in Chiapas on January 1, 1994, started what would become an inspiring lesson on how to use information and communication in order to build coalitions between communities and movements (Castells 1997:74-81). Other indigenous movements, especially those in Latin America, are closely related to socialist or collectivist ideals that drive the politicization of indigenous populations in such places as Bolivia (where 71% of the population is indigenous), Guatemala (where 66% of the population is indigenous), Peru (where 47% of the population is indigenous), and Ecuador (where 38% of the population is indigenous). Indians of the Americas have suffered tremendously since the “discovery” of their lands, and since then have been victims of racism and discrimination as well as of the ideological wars of the 20th century, where over 200,000 Indians were killed in Guatemala and Peru alone between the 1970s and the early 1990s. A “political awakening” of indigenous people in South America has occurred, resulting in Indian rights being given a legal force through the “Convention 169” of the International Labor Organization (which required signatory governments to “guarantee indigenous people equal rights; participation in formulating policies that affect them; respect for their institutions, customary law and culture; and health and education”). It remains to be seen whether such movements may develop a specific antisystemic character.
New class structures, internationalists and anti-globalization movements

These latter developments are part of a new trend of “global egalitarianism” that has emerged to oppose global inequality and exploitation, a trend attributed by “anti-globalization” activists to the effects of multinational companies and entities such as the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank, among others. This trend is closely related to “human rights” discourses and can only become an effective antisystemic force when it facilitates the implementation of these rights on the global and inter-state level (between core states and states of the periphery and semi-periphery). Such endeavors appear to be aiming at an internationalist juridical-political transformation by which international institutions with enforcement capabilities would proclaim basic rights and needs (human, economic, and social) attributable to individuals and to groups of individuals (including states) as a means of obligating core states, multinational corporations, and wealthy individuals to provide for other, less privileged states (including debt elimination and redistribution of wealth via a global taxation system). Internationalists could be state actors, non-governmental organizations, or individuals.

Most historically oppressed groups have been active in developing this global egalitarianism. Feminists, now represented through various non-governmental organizations (as well as increasing mass movements in the periphery and semi-periphery, in particular India), were concerned not only with the feminization of poverty but also with all kinds of exploitation multiplied through savage capitalism (Naples and Desai 2002; Rowbotham and Linkogle 2001; Ray 1999). They launched international legal campaigns and women everywhere became active in supporting local struggles towards global equality. African states and Pan-African organizations instituted the international condemnation of apartheid as a crime against humanity and devoted themselves to dealing with the consequences of years of cold wars fought on
African soil resulting in poverty, famine, ethnic tensions, HIV/AIDS, and the reduction if not elimination of aid; they demanded reparations and aimed for empowerment, but also engaged with other states and entities in an attempt to eliminate Third World debt and the creation of more egalitarian and representative international institutions. The Gay and Lesbian rights movements, along with movements for indigenous rights, worked with reinvigorated labor and trade union organizations and remnants of socialism, as well as particular groups or individuals that stand for an “internationalist” agenda that does not necessarily preclude the importance of the “local,” on calling for global economic equality and for North-South solidarity, the elimination of “Third World” debt and the re-distribution of wealth on a world scale via reallocation or the restructuring of national and international resources. Certain sections of the so-called “anti-globalization” movement that oppose various international organisms for precisely such distributive goals (and not merely for self-advancement or for liberal-reformist aims) could be considered global egalitarians. Yet anti-repressive movements aimed at defining and defending human, social, and economic rights can only be considered fully antisystemic when their aim undermines the international division of labor and its corresponding class structure.

Indeed, the increasing global inequality is becoming the cornerstone of yet another massive differentiation and a continuously growing gap between rich and poor across the world-system: in 2002 there were over 540 “billionaires” (476 in 2003), over 70,000 “super rich” (with individual capital in the hundreds of millions), and close to 7 million “millionaires” around the globe, while the middle class in the core is getting poorer and the lower classes everywhere are becoming worse off (Pieterse 2002:1023-1046; Sutcliffe 2001; Journal of World-Systems Research 2002). A new class structure seems to be emerging that is as linked to the international
division of labor as to the primacy of consumption. This new class structure may be practically designated by the terms “global elite,” “professional class,” “casual laborers,” and “new slaves.”

This class structure is increasingly (but not effectively) challenged however by an increasing number of NGOs, institutions, and individuals associated with global egalitarianism, as depicted above, including North-South solidarity and anti-globalization trends or movements. As an example, we could look at the solidarity among Europeans in support of immigrants persecuted because of racism and xenophobia. In 1998 and 1999, these solidarity movements, especially in France, Germany, and Italy, developed into transnational networks in support of migration (Giraudon 2001). That movement in the core would join those in the periphery and semi-periphery who consider open migration as a type of equalizer (see below). As for “anti-globalization” movements, they date back to the late 1980s: in September 1988, 75,000 protesters gathered in Berlin to protest an IMF/World Bank convention. Those who take part in the historical protests and mass demonstrations associated with “anti-globalization” vary widely: from French farmers (who started their protests in Europe in 1992-1997 before some of them linked European unification to “globalization”) to Eco-feminists and Witches (e.g. Starhawk); from anti-sweatshop students (USAS) to ACT-UP, Lesbian Avengers, and Jacks of Colors (Shepard and Hayduk 2002); from “Reclaim the Streets” to The Black Radical Congress; and from the Independent Media Center (IMC) to the Direct Action Network.

The first major successful demonstration was in Seattle in December 1999, when 40,000 protested against the WTO; success was achieved merely in causing an inconvenience and in “getting the message out” (i.e. having media coverage that influences public opinion). That was followed by demonstration in Davos, Switzerland in February 2000, against the World Economic Forum, where a McDonald’s was trashed. In Washington, D.C. in April 2000, demonstrators
established a blockade at the World Bank and IMF talks. In Chiang Mai, Thailand in May 2000, an Asian Development Bank meeting was protested. In Prague in September 2000, 12,000 clashed at a World Bank-IMF annual meeting. In Melbourne in September 2000, activists barricaded delegates to a World Economic Forum conference. At Nice in December 2000, demonstrations disrupted a European Summit. In January 2001, the World Economic Forum was locked down and Zurich was trashed. In April 2001 at the Quebec City Summit of the Americas, witnesses reported police using tear gas and water cannons against demonstrators. In Barcelona in June 2001, the World Bank cancelled its conference while activists held their own. In Goteberg, Sweden in June 2001, 40,000 marched peacefully at an EU Summit but there was a confrontation with masked anarchists. Participants included: Italian anarchists “Ya Basta!,” Tutte Bianche (White Overalls) members from Italy’s 200 centers, the British equivalent WOMBLES (White Overalls Movement Building Liberation Through Effective Struggle), 600 “Global Resistance” demonstrators, and Anti-Fascist Action. There were also a few radical trade unions: French SUD and FSU, the Italian Cobas and the metalworkers branch of CGIL, the anarcho-syndicalist CGT from Spain, and the major Greek Unions (Ratnesar 2001).

Some serious organized opposition, at an international level, started with the creation of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2001—which consisted of 12,000 representatives from civil society organizations and political movements. This was followed by the Genoa Social Forum in July, 2001 and World Social Forums in January, 2003 (Porto Alegre, Brazil) and January, 2004 (Mumbai, India) which should be considered as part of the internationalist and global egalitarian trends. We need to add the Earth Summit Rio 1992, Johannesburg 2002, as well as Durban 2001 (UN World Conference Against Racism), and other meetings that allowed the opportunity to build coalitions and communities to oppose capitalist
forces and hegemonic powers. One last thing to add here is that we should not rule out possible coalitions of states, beyond the US and EU as possible future contenders for hegemony. Brazil is quite promising as a state actor in undermining economic and political hegemony, since its labor leadership has been successful at building on coalitions and has already brought close to it, and sometimes to each other, Venezuela, Cuba, Argentina, and a few other Latin American countries. Lula is also trying to form alliances with Arab countries, in order to create a sizable block of nations that can politically contest the hegemonic powers. Brazil also played an instrumental role in the WTO meeting at Cancun, in September 2003, by working together with India and South Africa (two equally important “rising” members of the semi-periphery) on pressing hard on the issue of U.S. and European state subsidies.

Ethnic and Religious movements

What is designated as “ethnic” and “religious” movements dominated the 1980s and 1990s, encompassing Malaysia, India, Thailand, Spain, Lebanon, Iraq, Nigeria, Belgium, Australia, Guatemala, and the United States, as well as Rwanda, Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, Iran, and Fiji, to cite just a few. Those movements which explicitly reject the capitalist tenets and “western” notions of universalism, human rights, freedom, and other discourses embedded in the liberal-modernist geo-culture, may pose an antisystemic threat in the near future. Such movements are quite different from those of earlier centuries (and should probably be called neo-ethnic and neo-religious) since they are reactive by nature and are produced as localized resistance to certain forces “external” to their ways of living and relating to the world or social imaginaries (that are becoming increasingly permeated and dominated by capitalist social imaginaries). One could include here renewed forms of
religious, ethnic, and nationalist orientations that are described as “traditional.” Some examples of these movements are: Christian, Hindu, and Islamic revivals in their different manifestations; Right-Wing and/or Conservative French, Spanish, and Italian, nationalisms; Chinese, Slavic and Russian nationalisms; Nigerian ethnic consciousness such as that of the Ijaw, Ethce, Ogoni; Indigenous Indian rights in the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and elsewhere; and other sects or groupings based on indigenous and ethnic lines such as the “Mungiki” sect in Kenya (a “multitude” of mostly Kikuyu, grouping many of the poor under an ideology that mixes socialism, Islam, and traditional beliefs).

Radical Environmentalism

The radical environmental movement has grown out of the earlier mainstream conservationist movement. The “major shift in worldview” (Jasper 1999:147) that occurred in 1968 was the basis of its transformation. In 1971, the now famous term “speciesism,” referencing the belief that one’s species is superior to another, was first used and reached a mass audience from the late seventies on (Singer 1977, Regan 1983). In many ways, 1968 provided a watershed for the launch of social and political ecological movements. A conference held in Paris in 1968 symbolically inaugurated the “Man and the Biosphere program,” while the Club of Rome was also set up in 1968. This was followed in 1972 by a UN conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, and the simultaneous publications of the Club of Rome’s shocking report “The Limits to Growth” (Biel 2000:140-141). The 1968 crisis effectively transformed the mainstream ecological movement—of which the “animal welfare movement” is just an instance—from a traditional reform-minded liberal and paternalistic club of well-intentioned middle class abolitionists and feminist activists into a radical antisystemic thrust that challenged
the commodification of nature as a whole and adopted a holistic view (the ecosystem) rather than a national one, thus creating a “deep green” movement (Sutton 2000, Goldfrank, Goodman & Szasz 1999). From the 1980s onward, not only did the movement crystallize itself in Green Parties across the globe, but it also initiated illegal activities in the United States as in the activities of the Animal Liberation Front (Finnsen 1994:98). In 2003, for example, a string of arsons committed by the Earth Liberation Front in the suburbs of Detroit, Los Angeles, San Diego, New York and Philadelphia, caused more than $100 million in damage (Hettena & Wides 2003). The growth of the more radical elements in the environmental movement are indicated by the fact that on June 10, 1990, 24,000 to 75,000 animal rights activists converged in Washington, D.C. for the March for Animal Rights (Finnsen & Finnsen 1994:72). Since the 1980s, the number of such organizations has increased substantially. In less than a decade, PETA’s members had grown to 300,000 during the “Green Revolution” (cf. Sale 1993). In the post-1968 period, “ecological resistance movements” such as Earth First! emerged in every zone of the world economy, albeit with different emphases (Taylor 1995) including post-1968 eco-feminism (Adams 1999; Adams & Donovan 1995; Donovan 1990). The typical environmental activist in the core originates mostly from within the middle class (Inglehart 1997 and Benton & Redfearn 1996), but in parts of the periphery it has encompassed a wide variety of grassroots support (e.g. the Chipko movement in India in the 1980s (Routledge 1993) or the Narmada movement in India in the 1990s (Kothari 2002; Khagram 2002)). Interestingly, the discourse of post-1968 radical ecological movements is no longer about “conservationism,” but instead challenges the commodification of nature itself. Thus, as pointed out by “deep ecologists” (Dobson 2000:40), natural resources are no longer considered mere commodities to be exploited at will (Jasper 1999:148).
The commodification of the natural world is an intrinsic element of the capitalist world economy. The “externalization” of costs (i.e. pollution of air, land, and water)—by means of passing on these costs to future generations—is as important a profit source for capitalists as the exploitation of wage laborers (Hornborg 1998; Ponting 1993) and a world-wide movement challenging this trend has gained considerable strength in the post-1968 period, forging new transnational alliances between the core and the periphery that hinge on the newfound social and political awareness of local indigenous rights movements (Martin 2003). The creation of such effective inter-ethnic environmental alliances across the different zones of the world-economy may have huge implications for the future.

Worldwide Mass Migration

Traditionally, migration has been looked upon as a massive incorporation of low wage labor by core countries (Boswell and Jorjani 1988: 169-171; Bolaria and Bolaria 1997:11) since immigration legislation has been traditionally influenced by the labor requirements of capitalist enterprises (Petras 1980:164). However, the continuing migration flow from the periphery to the core may undermine several fundamental aspects inherent to the stability of the world-system, such as the maintenance of the interstate system and the idea of progress embedded in liberal ideology. Historically, the creation of the welfare state in the core was linked with the creation of high barriers against the free circulation of labor and migration flows in general. In this respect unions, and their socialist political affiliations, had—despite their internationalist rhetoric—always been more nationalist than internationalist (Lucassen 1991:158-173). This is not surprising since welfare states in the core simply had to keep their borders closed to mass immigration in order to construct and maintain a welfare state in the interstate system (Freeman
1986:52). In addition, the notion of citizenship is by definition an attribution of legitimacy to human entitlements and rights within a specific territorial unit (a nation-state) of the world-system (Halfmann 1998: 523-524). A gradual undermining of the (welfare) state in the core caused by, among other things, massive (il)legal immigration, may very well contribute to weakening the entire system (Wallerstein 1999:57-75). Although the demographic “explosion” in the periphery certainly increases the potential of mass migration to the core in the near future (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1997:96; Rasmussen 1997:106), the demise of liberalism and the hope of steady progress through stages of national development is probably equally important in “triggering” a structural process of international mass migration out of the periphery (Wallerstein 1995) than the Malthusian variable in itself.

The myths of “stay-at-home development” (Martin 1992) and the possibilities for universal take-off have been painfully exposed in the officially de-colonized periphery especially after 1973. Due to the ever widening gap between the core and the periphery, and the increasing availability of information related to this reality (Rasmussen 1997:125-126; Baldwin and Martin 1999:24), citizens living in the periphery will no longer be misguided by misleading hopes about the prospects of a nation-state that is located at the bottom of the hierarchically structured worldwide division of labor. Essentially, “the only realistic long-term hope for reduction of international migration is broad-based, sustainable development in the less-developed countries, enabling economic growth [there] to keep pace with growth in the population and labor force” (Castles and Miller 1998:291). Yet, as the lure of modernization and development theories steadily diminished after 1968, the increasing disbelief in the feasibility of liberalism and reformism in the periphery may ultimately lead to gradually increasing and uncontrollable migration towards the centers of capital accumulation.
Yet increasing mass migration to the core, since the majority of it will likely be illegal, will not only challenge the welfare state (which has been devised to “take care” of a happy few in the capitalist world economy) but concurrently, the political legitimacy of its existence. Since mass migration can only be discouraged, at best, the credibility of the nation-state itself is now at stake (Vernez 1996:7-8). At the same time, when more migrants are on the move, more governments are downsizing their versions of the welfare state and intervening less on behalf of its poorest citizens, among whom immigrant ethnic minorities are over-represented. This trimming of the welfare state is in turn inherent to the pressures operating within the world economy (Martin and Schumann 1996), which induce states to a competitive race to the bottom (Greider 1997).

However, what started as a systemic force (the incorporation of labor on demand for certain sectors and firms) may effectively function as an antisystemic force on a global scale due to the contradictions of the capitalist system; mass migration may become as important an antisystemic pressure on the interstate system as the ecological factor. Indeed, it is often forgotten that the two are interlinked since increasing ecological crises are likely to impact mass migration in the near future (Ghosh 1998:48-50; King and Öberg 1993). As multiple ecological crises (environmental degradation, desertification, deforestation, soil erosion, salinity, and other effects of global warming) cause more migrations to occur (Lohmann 1996; Myers 1993), core states will attempt to keep these growing numbers of “ecological refugees” in the periphery. Yet traditional efforts of nation-states to control borders and to determine the numbers and types of people who enter and remain in their territory are no longer effective (Bigo 1998), resulting in a decline in sovereignty (Cornelius et al. 1994; Richmond 1994: 216-217). This is important since the sovereignty of nation states is a pillar of the capitalist world-economy (Wallerstein
Theoretically, the ever increasing migration of poverty from the periphery to the core can be interpreted as a symptom of a crisis in the world-system (Vandepitte et. al 1994: 147). The number of mass migrations is greater than it has ever been (Weiner 1997:97) and the widening demographic and socioeconomic gap between the haves and have-nots (Sorensen 1996:93) can only increase the potentiality of ever more migration to the core as the total migrant population today constitutes only approximately 2% of the entire world population (Faist 1997:187).

As “exclusive territoriality” is being destabilized by economic globalization and mass migration (Sassen 1996), the legitimacy of the nation-state is undermined in the long run. As immigrants keep moving in the highly stratified world-economy, using ingenious strategies of relying on various affiliations and networks to overcome the barriers created by the core states (Massey and Espinosa 1997), their fight to get “legalized” and to get the same (political, economical and social) rights as other citizens implies a double squeeze on the sovereignty and financial burden of various states. This is especially challenging to the democratic institutions that are maintained by core countries, as those who favor the protection of popular sovereignty (e.g. to bring about a redistribution of wealth within a nation-state) are increasingly confronted with “global egalitarians” (Weiner 1996:176), i.e. those who are concerned with global inequalities and the exploitation of (illegal) immigrants within core countries (Van Parijs 1992:163-164).

This creates very specific challenges for labor unions in the core. As Martens (1999: 226) argues, to what extent will unions and their political allies in core countries show solidarity with immigrants from the periphery since most people in the core are, after all, (indirect) benefactors of “transfer value” (Kohler 1999b)? This presents a dilemma: if mass migration can imperil the
right to economic security of people in the receiving (core) country, whose (human) rights have priority? The rights of those already residing in the core or the rights of (potential) immigrants? The answer to this question is likely to depend on whether one takes “our own country” or “our planet” as the unit of analysis (Sutcliffe 1998:335).

After having lured immigrants to the core during the boom years of 1945-1973, while hoping that they would be nothing more than a reserve labor army that would return to the periphery whenever the economic upturn ended (Obdeijn 1998:130; King 1996:48), capitalist firms from core countries have been *indirectly* inducing more immigrants to move from the periphery and semi-periphery to the core from 1973 onwards. This indirect lure is brought about by the fact that multinationals increasingly re-allocate themselves outside the core where (labor) costs are temporarily cheaper, and exploit young laborers there only to dismiss them after a few years when they become “too expensive” after unionization sets in. This “economic redundancy” converts these uprooted laborers thereafter into “a ready pool for future migration” (Portes 1996:165; Graham 2000:188). Peripheral countries have become slowly “remolded by the twin processes of corporate globalization and immigrant transnationalization” (Portes’ 1996:164). Thus, the exploitation of young laborers in the periphery induces them to migrate to the core while, once there, the above-mentioned (chain) migration networks are likely to facilitate more migration in the near future (Boyd 1989: 641; Gurak and Caces 1992:159; Simmons and Guengant 1992: 113).

Only the proposition of the transferability of social rights between states for immigrants (Baubock 1993: 45), resulting in universal entitlements and a “globalization of the welfare system” (Halfmann 1998:528), would be an alternative strategy by core countries to deal with the massive migration from the periphery. Yet to do so requires pushing liberalism and its
notions of progress and universal rights into practice and change the very nature of the capitalist world system. From a liberal ideological point of view, it is also difficult to construct even more barriers against immigrants; individual human rights, including the freedom of movement—as in the freedom of movement for capital, goods, technology and knowledge—(Lim 1992:139; Vernez 1996:6) and the right to the pursuit of happiness, can hardly be claimed by the capitalist entrepreneur alone (Emmer and Obdeijn 1998:12). The “very different regimes for the circulation of capital and the circulation of people” (Sassen 1998:66)—with the exception of wealthy entrepreneurs and tourists (Bauman 1998:89)—may not be defensible in the long run.

A continuing policy of exclusion and protectionism, which may “save” the core by maintaining a world order of “Global Apartheid” (Richmond 1994; Alexander 1996), is the complete opposite of the liberal ideology that is still defended by many parties in power. The rapid population growth in the periphery and semi-periphery (as opposed to the core) and the processes inherent to the capitalist world economy (in which multinationals exploit cheap labor in the periphery, only to pull out to other peripheral locations the moment wages rise) produce masses of workers in the periphery without jobs who have high expectations that cannot be fulfilled locally (Lim 1992: 135; 145). At the same time a growing number of ecological refugees, while primarily an immediate disaster to countries located in the periphery, may threaten the stability in the interstate system as a whole. Since core states are militarily, economically and technologically stronger than peripheral ones, it is the desperate masses of the latter that constitute the greatest threat to—and arouse the greatest fear of—core states in the world economy (King 1998:125).

Instead of looking at international mass migration as a threat, one should recognize it is an “expression of spatial inequality” (King 1996: 54) that could bring the system into
disequilibrium in the long run. Indeed, as convergence in socioeconomic conditions between core and peripheral countries is unlikely to occur (Coleman 1997:144; Kohler 1998, 1999), non-core countries increasingly become dependent on the revenues received from (illegal) immigrants working in core countries who send money home since the countries from which they originated are structurally incapable of creating enough jobs for their own population (Martin 1997:20; Hammar & Tamas 1997:6). Martin (1997: 23), for example, estimates that worldwide remittances of immigrants in industrial countries to their countries of origin were at least $75 billion per year, which outweighs the amount of official development assistance to “developing” countries and often exceeds the inflow of direct investment (Lorey 1999:164-165, Patnaik and Chandrasekar 1998:361) or national budgets (Menjivar et al. 1998:99). Once governments of peripheral and semi-peripheral countries finally decide to officially promote and support the (international) migration of all their “excess populations” to the core (Levy 1999:220; van Hulst 1995:86), both development and neo-liberal capitalist ideologies will face a severe crisis.

Alternative Currencies

Another potential challenge to the current stability in the world system, as new challenges to Davos occur (Houtart & Polet 2001), is the formation of alternative currencies. This no longer assumes any form of territorial “delinking,” as advocated by Samir Amin (1985) and others. The creation and multiplication of local exchange trading systems throughout small communities within the core (e.g. United States, Australia, Canada) such as “scrips,” “ithaca hours” and “time dollars,” illustrate the agency local communities have to resist and limit the power of large multinationals and their relative immunity to currency
fluctuations within the world-economy (Meeker-Lowry 1996). The very recent creation of “barter bucks” in Kansas, for example, despite their initial limited scope, could potentially recreate a sense of local de-linking from existing financial networks and a relative empowerment of Braudel’s sphere of “daily life” vis-à-vis the commanding heights of capital accumulation. There is potential, on this front, for a deliberate strategy to undermine the legitimacy and efficiency of existing currencies. In addition, the development of new measurements of progress separate from the GNP (Halstead & Cobb 1996), can only increase the awareness of the necessity to attempt to reinvigorate local and regional barter and alternative trading networks that benefit the community rather than multinationals operating from distant headquarters than can transfer all profits to distant shores. This movement has gained so much appeal that in 1997 the *International Journal of Community Currency Research* was created to academically scrutinize its impact across the globe. In addition, Alternative Investment Funds, microcredit, and other projects could fall into this category as trying to establish “self-sufficiency” that sometimes takes religious or ethnic colors (India, Egypt, China, etc.).

**Alternative Media**

Recognizing the importance of the media in shaping the “reality” of subjects, increasing coalitions of individuals and groups have been involved in providing alternative sources of information and of interpretation of facts and events, as opposed to the ones dominated by capitalist social imaginaries or by states intent on the control and manipulation of information. Linked to the new technologies, some of these alternative media are internet-based (e.g. IndyMedia), especially in the core and semi-periphery, and provide access to people across the
globe. Other sources, however, are print-based but are widely read and discussed. However, this proliferation of “alternative media” is specifically targeting misinformation campaigns by governments and is reacting to the hegemonic strategies implemented across the globe; its outcome may build an anti-hegemonic consciousness and not an antisystemic one—even though it may carry antisystemic orientations. It could have a potential antisystemic effect only when it becomes a major source not only of information, but also of values and meanings that could effectively counter-balance the dominant (and “global”) discourses of capitalist imaginaries—in the way that some religious or nationalistic discourses have been trying to do, as described above. Only a marked increase in the possibility of disseminating meanings and values, and of interpreting events and situations, would qualify alternative media networks as an antisystemic force.

New Technologies

Last but not least, new technologies created by the drive for ever increasing accumulation can also have antisystemic potential as in the case of cyberactivism (McCaughey & Ayers 2003), linking and uniting a multitude of diverging anti-repressive and other movements with each other across the globe, opening up new potentials of awareness, organization, mobilization and different forms of support that may result in antisystemic forces, events, or even new kinds of “movements.” The blending of culture jamming, semiotic terrorism and “hacktivism” could be newly emerging sites of antisystemic movements (Jordan 2002) paradoxically enabled by capital’s intrinsic need for ever growing speed of communication of information and transportation of commodities. The more sophisticated the forms of newly emerging technologies embedded within late capitalism, the greater the potential for their disruption,
causing unparalleled disruption of the space of flows. The efficiency of protests have increased as well; despite many similar protests throughout the 1980s and early 1990s against “globalization” (primarily directed against the G7 and EU summits, IMF, World Bank and GATT meetings), the 1999 protest in Seattle displayed for the first time an enormous disruptive potential and effectiveness (Yuen & Rose & Katsiaficas 2001), partially because of the above-mentioned newly available technologies appropriated for the organization of the demonstrations—also witnessed in Washington, D.C., Prague and Gotenburg (2000), Genoa (2001) and Firenze (2002). This enabled the anti-globalization movement to create newly unprecedented mobilizing structures and tools for counter-ideological space (e.g. ATTAC’s website) (Clark & Themudo 2003), at times culminating in innovative and tentative institutional settings such as the World Social Forum in Porto Allegre (Schonleitner 2003), the counterpoint to Davos. At this point it remains to be seen to what extent these divergent movements will be able to successfully challenge the existing status quo without being co-opted or suppressed by systemic forces. Yet in combination with the increasing tensions caused by the contradictions within the system itself, new post-1968 movements and their potential to disrupt the status quo should not be underestimated.

Conclusion: 20th century transformations of movements and the system

While Braudel’s tripartite division of material life, market economy, and capitalism is an adequate tool of analysis for the period that he was exploring (15th-18th century), the essential characteristics of capitalism in the 20th century have undergone changes that undermine the Braudelian division. Our claim is that by the 20th century, capitalism had invested itself in penetrating and permeating every aspect of the economy and of material life to the extent that
Braudel’s division no longer holds. There are still pockets of “non-economies” of subsistence and self-sufficiency and of routine elementary productive processes inherent in the daily life of populations across the globe (“vie matérielle”), but these can no longer be separated from capitalist civilization as independent spheres. Not only have such pockets been invested by capitalist values, but 20th century capitalism flourishes precisely in the sphere of production and consumption that Braudel associated with this lowest level of the economy (“rez-de-chaussée”), i.e., basic alimentation and drinking needs; shelter, clothing, and fashion; energy and metallurgy; etc.

Everywhere, consumption is becoming increasingly regulated through capitalist forces rather than by daily necessities and cultural spheres of influence. No doubt small shops, local markets, and various aspects of Braudel’s “économie du marché” subsist in many places, but market economies are no longer easily separated or distantly independent spheres but rather, struggling sites of resistance to the overwhelming capitalist forces that incorporated them in the “free market” drive through the global reach of capitalist imaginary significations and values and through intensive regulation and neo-liberal schemes. Finally, the capitalist sphere can no longer be limited to monopolies setting prices, or to banking, high finance, national or international regulatory or speculative markets, etc., since this highest level of the Braudelian division is much more involved today in the production of consumption and of the desires and needs that essentially define “material life.” As Braudel himself has noted (1979:542-552), all descriptive or analytical tools are artificial and last only as long as they are effective.

Due to informational and communicational flows that became more global in reach via media conglomerates and marketing and advertising campaigns for products and services, international institutions and organizations (McChesney and Foster 2003, Louw 2001), new and
effective modes of control and production of needs and desires started to develop in terms
previously unimaginable. The kind of control in question extends to producing individual hopes
and dreams in ways that make it possible for capitalist imaginaries to permeate and transform
various social imaginary significations. Imaginaries that defined success or happiness in terms of
honor, ancestral or filial piety, hierarchical and hereditary power, for example, were undermined
by capitalistic imaginary significations that are not limited to neo-liberal values and to the
ideological conceptual tools of the Cold War (“freedom” and “rights”). Desires, needs, and the
fabric of material life became the heart—or the “belly”—of capitalism. Material life everywhere
is becoming intertwined with the survival of capitalism and is no longer a marginal space where
revolutions may be bred.

The increasing dominance of capitalistic forces in the effective manipulation of localized
socio-cultural values and epistemologies made it possible for “identities”—initially reactions and
confirmations of asymmetries of power and empowerment of oppressed strata that are not
generalized as a “class”—to become co-opted (although never in their entirety). This re-
awakening of identities as localized groupings based on common interest, religion, ethnicity, or
“tribe” (Dunaway 2003; Amin 1998; Maffesoli 1996 (1988); Castells 1997) followed the vacuum
created by the weakening of ideological forces inherent in socialism, nationalism, and
communism, and shifted between larger formations (pan-Arabism and pan-Africanism, for
example, that failed to materialize as effective forces) to local ones (as more localized and
indigenized needs and desires became the bases for political movements). Also, the effects of,
and reactions to, challenges of migration intensify the trend towards “identity formation” and
build on vilifying and demonizing an “other” that becomes the sworn enemy of particular strata
of the populace, usually the lowest and hardest hit by post-Fordism and economic neo-
liberalization—while capitalism remains unreachable.

In sum, in the second half of the 20th century, subjectivities that were produced within the particular cultural domains of the World-System (including, but not limited to, the role of the social-historical imaginaries and institutions) were increasingly produced through dominant capitalist imaginaries associated with technological innovations and the “new” media of communication and information (that were reproducing consumer “values” at a global level). While national education curricula and other state policies and institutions are still effective mechanisms of producing political subjects, they are no longer as effective in counter-balancing the “global” forces of production and reproduction of meanings and values associated with the dominant capitalist imaginaries (not limited to capitalist multinational interests and ideologies and to consumption-centered significations and values conveyed through marketing, advertising, and public relations firms, international media conglomerates etc.). At the same time, the nation-state has not become obsolete; on the contrary, the reactions within the nation-state to these “global” forces are pregnant with possibilities for systemic re-orientations, “anti-incorporation” struggles, and antisystemic movements and activities. It is therefore no surprise that only after 1968 do protests and demonstrations no longer exclusively target capital or specific national governments, but rather institutions such as the UN, WTO, IMF, World Bank, international NGOs (or the equivalent international public relations, marketing, and consulting firms), and multinational companies. These have all become effective sites of control as well as sites of struggles for hegemony and increasing competitiveness between various forms of capital still centered in core—and some semi-peripheral—countries.

As for movements, they started to change as the system itself was transforming (together with the nature of social relations and social consciousness). After the 1970s, and increasingly in
the 1980s and 1990s, committed individuals with ideals and beliefs that stood for moral (sometimes defined as “universal”) values participated in demonstrations and in occasional or temporary actions that cannot yet necessarily be described as a “movement” but rather as a shared goal. These patterns of actions and demonstrations reflect the decline of movements where participants are committed to the achievement of “one” goal; they represent the transformation of traditional movements that offered a “package deal” with a unidirectional way towards the achievement of an ultimate goal that would bring about an effective solution to one’s problems and fulfill one’s life. The peace marches of 2003, or any demonstrations against or in support of specific issues, can only offer a limited opportunity for more individuated selves to express shared goals with others where these goals are distinct (like the participants) and that only address parts of demonstrators’ overall concerns. When Hasidic Jews, Quakers, Muslims, Catholics, African Americans, Latinos, Women from NOW, activists from ACT-UP, and others came together to demonstrate in Washington, D.C. in support of Palestinians, there was no “movement” in place (antisystemic or otherwise) but a popular expression that had only as much “power” as the media wanted to show (through the numbers of participants and through coverage of the topic, etc.).

All these demonstrators lack control over the effectiveness of their action, since they can only aim for temporary media exposure and depend on the powers that be to “interpret” their actions—accept them, reject them, or ignore them. Unlike movements aimed at the takeover of the state, these new manifestations of movements are merely aimed at lobbying policy-makers or affecting public opinion and they reveal the transformations at work in the 21st century world-system. Movements that are organized towards a specific goal with antisystemic aims are becoming the exception to the rule. While some call repeated demonstrations a “movement”, it is
only when there is a long-term institutionalized and organizational infrastructure that one can achieve results (beyond appearing on the news, signing email petitions and depending on the “interpretation” of political power) and can speak of a genuine “movement”. Because of their increased power during the 1990s, the media have become a center of attention for oppositional forces, acting as a buffer that translates actions—and opens them to specific interpretations. Concurrently, 1990s “movements” tried to find support in such events but could rarely control or sustain the effective power of their actions unless it had consistent and recurring components to it. This is why our previous analyses dealt with trends and orientations, with reference to events and situations, where “movements” were not always at the forefront.

Identity movements were built on common interests, aims, occupations, ways of living, as well as around common histories and backgrounds not limited to that associated with ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups. That in itself made these movements distinct groups that contrast with the traditional “unidirectional” movements that worked towards the achievement of a general (rather than a particular) goal through generalized means. The takeover of the state that was the explicit goal of socialist movements, for example, could only be realized through the takeover of the means of production. Through collective action which needed to confront existing political structures, traditional movements promised “power” and at that time power resided in the state. After the 1980s and the 1990s, the aims of movements were more specific and particular and rarely entertained the possibility of the overhaul of the political and economic system through collective action. This development occurs in tandem with the transformations at work in the structures of knowledge across the world-system, and with the concurrent new technological advances in informational and communicational possibilities, that provided imaginary significations which undermined linear and determinate “realities” for more complex
and multiple ones. In other words, from a purely Marxist perspective, the more complex the social experiences, the productive activities, and the mechanisms of production of subjectivities (no longer limited to simple forms of acculturation, socialization, and individuation), the more complicated and diverse will be the “social consciousness” of social actors. In a world where one is bombarded by constantly changing significations, meanings, images, and where one is involved in diverse forms of activities, one’s “social consciousness” could no longer be that of a “worker”—be it produced in the factory, the village, or the metropolis. If the word “globalization” means anything at all, it should designate the conditions that produce today’s subjectivities that lend themselves easily to multiple aims, numerous goals, and an almost infinite number of strategies.

Thus, with the withering away of the state as the “promised land” of traditional movements, social movements aimed at gaining power wherever they could locate it. And while “power is everywhere” for some philosophers and “nowhere” for others, political action necessitates localizing power sites and/or empowerment mechanisms. Few were the “agents” that could still fathom a localized and attainable “power” in itself; “empowerment” became the aim of most movements in the 1990s, a process reflecting the individuated, fragmented, and dispersed needs and desires of post-Modern subjects. Empowerment could be attained differently, and sometimes through many means and numerous paths. Agents were no longer participating in “one” movement; instead they were participating in as many commitments as their social consciousness called for. While we could talk of different strategies and tactics of empowerment, it would be impossible to outline contemporary movements based on their “identity,” “adversary,” or “societal goal” (as Castells and Touraine suggest, e.g. Castells 1997: 71), for such criteria could not elucidate the nature of movements but would rather “construct” it.
At the forefront of strategies of empowerment were concerted efforts at influencing and shaping public opinion (via information and communication), catering to the media and to a culture of numbers (polls, surveys, and votes) proper to certain so-called “democratic processes” (by organizing demonstrations, massively attended marches or events, etc.), and demanding transparency and more open participation (so that more diverse “interest” groups could lobby and influence policy setting). Other strategies included escaping the overall political (and sometimes economic) processes, by choice or by necessity, in order to pursue particular forms of empowerment (through a lifestyle, a belief system, etc.). Many other empowerment strategies could be listed, from the basic construction of a shared “identity” (ethnicity, religion, ideology, cult, etc.) to engagement in coalition and cooperative activities aimed at achieving a specific goal (anti-war demonstrations, boycott of certain brands, voting for a candidate, pushing for a project, etc.), but what interested us here is to situate some of those that could be called “antisystemic” or that displayed strategies of empowerment that could have antisystemic tendencies. Thus those strategies (some of which were described above) that may either carry remnants of old antisystemic strategies and tactics or create new ones, may pose an increasing threat to the equilibrium of the capitalist world-system. What we could still call “antisystemic movements” should have an organizational infrastructure that would sustain the effective power of consistent, recurring, and threatening actions. Many contemporary movements, as we have pointed out, however, are disempowered through the capitalist control of the same processes and means of communication they aim to influence or shape, and through the ways by which capitalism has learned to flourish and ignore “pockets” of resistance (or de-linked sites) that do not pose a plausible threat to its viability. It remains to be seen how the world wide interaction between these different – indeed often divergent - forces will have specific impact on the system in the
years to come. We can only hope that this analysis may contribute to rethinking current paradigms and traditional strategies for political action.

Endnotes

1 Following the Annales School and Fernand Braudel, and in line with contemporary philosophical reassessments of the human and social sciences, “History” will be approached here as stratification and permeation—at varying levels and degrees—of multiplicities of layers not only of events and interpretations but of the fabrics of material life, of the conjunctures of crises and of antagonisms, and of other contingencies—that become necessary. Transformation is inherent in any historical system, and methods of analysis that are based on determinacy, linear causality, and teleology are inadequate and inept when it comes to studying historical change. The World-System, as a historical system, is in continual transformation and it is only through epistemological lenses based on determinate ontologies that one can subscribe to the inevitability of cyclical patterns and rhythms as integral to its “functioning” or that one can describe “modes of production” that are a stagnant totality. The indeterminate “totality” we are interested in describing though, is a World-System where the interplay between the domains (or what Braudel calls “ensembles” or “sets”) arbitrarily called “economic,” “cultural,” “political” and “social,” reflects a constant interaction between and within “forces” (sometimes qualified as “economic,” “cultural,” “political,” or “social”). These forces are embedded in histories that are in themselves indeterminate but determined (and always determining) sets of multiple permeations and stratifications of complex events and interpretations, of tangible and intangible conditions related to various antagonisms, and of manifold processes that cannot be contained within the above designations that we consider as practical categories (and not universal ones) but that are embedded in “material life,” in “institutions, and in “social imaginary significations,” among other indeterminate domains, ensembles, or sets. Our methodological approach cannot be considered physicalist, logicist, or both (e.g. structural-functionalism) because of how we define “forces”: 1) forces are elements that are not determinate and thus cannot be
clearly distinct and individual; 2) there is no finality or goal attributed to their activity; and 3) there is no logical necessity inherent in the process of interaction between forces but only a contingent necessity related to the arbitrary change in levels and degrees by which certain forces are more effective and/or influential than others in shaping social-historical conditions.

2 The term “social imaginary” as used throughout this paper is meant to go beyond the limited significations associated with such concepts as “social consciousness” or “ideology.” The term accentuates forces or powers associated with imagination rather than images and representations, and is intricately connected to discourses across time, space, and disciplinary boundaries. The concept of “social imaginary” has been specifically used by political philosophers and social scientists to indicate the signifying social forces that drive the beliefs and practices of populations beyond the theory-practice distinction as reflected, for example, in the Marxist dichotomy of “base-superstructure” or “productive forces-ideology.” Our use of the term “social imaginary” is closest to that of the late political philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis (1987 [1975]).


5 Various manifestations of Islamist movements that can be described as antisystemic are also reflected in other religious traditions, from Christianity to Hinduism. Varied reactions to neoliberalization can be described as: “fundamentalist” (going back to the fundamentals of a religious teaching through over-reliance on recognized texts), “revivalist” (rekindling interest in
a religion as a basis for a renewed identity and as a guide for how to live within a community of shared beliefs), and “radical” (rejection of the dominant social, political, and economic environment as incompatible with religious beliefs AND commitment to radically alter these dominant conditions in a variety of ways). See Choueri 1997.

6 The majority of strikes in the U.S. (around 2560 in 1968) were short-term and mainly concerned with the improvement of workers’ conditions. The CGT in France stopped its major strike in 1968 after concessions by Pompidou. The days when workers controlled the means of production expired with the last breath of the self-management movements that flourished in factories throughout Europe c. 1968-1971. Self-management and “autonomia” movements were predominant in countries like Italy, inspired by anarchists and extreme-left radical groups, while the less numerous factory-based experiments in self-management in England, France, and West Germany were led by Trotskyist and Maoist groups with some influenced by student movements. This trend, however, was quite limited and soon expired as the communist or socialist party line, or the major labor unions, decided to limit their free ride on the wave of popular discontent and social upheavals. Eastern European reactions, especially the thwarted reformist efforts in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary left their mark in new forms of labor organizing, reaching their peak in Poland’s “Solidarity” movement in the next decade.

7 The case of de-colonization demonstrates how a linear approach to historical development impedes understanding the transformative processes of the world-system. It is insufficient to look at colonial struggles as only antisystemic movements; it is equally important to look at such movements’ systemic potentials. Thus creating independent production spaces may go hand in hand with becoming a full-fledged partner of the interstate system and creating new spaces for consumption, new identities, new ethnicities, and new “free” markets.
This development may mark one of the most important transformations in 20th century capitalism. This transformation consists in the change of modes of control of needs and desires that effectively contributed to the deep infusion of capitalistic values into the various cultural words and the different manifestations of “material life” at the basis of the World-System. This was achieved through various means not least of which were the proliferation of immaterial labor, the commodification of “free time,” the increasing dominance of capitalistic forces in “global” processes of production of human desires and needs—through images, significations, communicational and informational flows, etc.—and of transforming localized socio-cultural values and epistemologies.

These “classes” designate somewhat separate domains of different fabrics of “material life”—that still intersect and where “purchasing power” is presented as the value dominating social relations in a world where everything is commodified, including human life. While such differences are not absolute, they are substantial enough to warrant a different material development of social relations and of a socialization connected to integrated global networks of information, communication, and the media.

There are four principal new classes relevant to today’s new movements. First, a new global elite has emerged that engages very little productive activity, and if any, it would be managerial or organizational. In terms of social interaction, this class deals with the professional class in the productive realm. In the realm of leisure and entertainment, education and training, however, this class is self-enclosed and interacts in closed circles that are nonetheless global in scope. The households of the global elite reproduce a “private sphere of freedom” that is idealized by both the professional class (in a tangible way, as its realization may be possible) and by the working class (in an intangible way, as there is very little chance of realization). The global elite can be determined not through income levels but by the amount of assets (and it
encompasses the world’s “billionaires” and many of the “super rich”). Second, a new professional class is marked by an engagement in an occupation that provides for “basic necessities” and more through credit and enhanced purchasing power. Basic necessities vary from core, to semi-periphery, to periphery. Wage earners, farmers, peasants, workers, or anyone engaged in an occupation that provides for more than basic necessities belongs to this professional class. As long as credit is high and basic necessities include paying enough for debt and more, the person is professional. Lower level professionals differ in that their disposable income after basic necessities (including credit payments) is lower and they have less purchasing power and less status; in the periphery and semi-periphery, “status” may function more effectively than “credit.” The professional class is always upward looking but being the most cautious class, rarely takes risks and knows its limits. It has been the largest growing class in the core (the folding of the upper and lower middle class, or white and blue collar) and has grown fast in many semi-periphery and periphery countries through the growth of entrepreneurs rather than bureaucrats and administrative officials. The professional class household is the “consumer subject” par excellence: cable, electronics, internet, games, gadgets, etc., are essential to the household, as are fashion, style, and access to information. A third class grouping is provided by casual laborers who cannot regularly provide for their or their household’s basic necessities, and who depend on external aid and support, governmental or otherwise. Casual laborers have no access to credit, more debt than income, and little if any disposable income. The measure of casual laborers is their irregularity of income and the constant fear of being downsized. Ironically, this class is the one that is most affected by the consumer culture that brings it closer to consuming without having to purchase goods as the proximity offered through the media guarantees a certain satisfaction of needs while accentuating the desire of belonging to the upper
classes. Criminality, prostitution, drug dealing, and other “miracles” (e.g., lotteries) provide the only possible way of “striking it big.” Farmers, peasants and workers who rely on exchange, charity and assistance, are included in this class, as well as the homeless in the core and refugees and the unemployed lower strata who rely on governmental aid. Sports and entertainment are a major “cultural” occupation for this class and it is more easily convinced of political and ideological rhetoric than other classes. A fourth group may be termed “the new slaves.” This group includes those who are forced into the long-term abuse of the sexual trade or other occupations such as sweatshops or criminal activities. Such use is not based on labor power (use-value or exchange-value) but on the construction of human commodities (disposable bodies) through direct coercion (kidnapping, buying, etc.) or indirect coercion (luring, repaying an indeterminate debt, or under threat of violence to oneself or to others). Usually these slaves are spatially restricted and are stripped of any “purchasing power.” While this class mainly includes those who are kidnapped, purchased or lured into closed spaces in order to perform productive or instrumental roles, it also encompasses all those who are indentured laborers who, through coercion or threat of violence, have to work in less circumscribed spaces but within similar situations where there is no “free time” or “purchasing power” accorded to them. International trafficking in women and children has become one of the most profitable trades and provides a generous supply of sex workers and victims, sweatshop workers, and mercenary soldiers, including coerced youth. Privatized prisons within the core also now provide cheap “forced labor.” This class may also include “illegal” laborers (victims of “migrant schemes”) that are underpaid and overworked and who are not allowed any “free time” and are not provided with enough compensation to cover their “basic necessities.” Even those that may benefit from some kind of physical mobility can rarely move up the echelons of class hierarchies since they cannot
risk spending a dollar on a lotto ticket; they have no time, no surplus, no dreams, and no way out. Those who are homeless, hungry, who have to fight on a day-to-day basis for food and subsistence, shelter, basic necessities, for themselves or their households, especially in the periphery and semi-periphery, and who do not receive assistance from NGOs or governments, could also be qualified as “new slaves.”

Bibliography


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