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Abstract

This article examines the flood of resistance movements in today's Latin America. It places them in the context of the great economic changes that have swept the world since the end of the Cold War, what is often called "globalization." Analysis focuses on the "newness" of our contemporary period, especially the importance of the transnational political and economic order. This essay illustrates how social scientists attempt to understand this moment of change, and emphasizes the limitations to their theory. Special emphasis is on the utility of New Social Movement theory as a tool for understanding today's resistance movements as well as the potential paths for radical change.

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A wave of popular resistance is a defining feature of today's Latin America. Bolivia, in 2003, witnessed the ousting of a president by indigenous people, a process that brought the country to a standstill in September and October due to anti-government protests.[2] Argentina, in December 2001, experienced an economic meltdown, mass protests, and government collapse. In 2000, Mexico saw the defeat of a ruling party that had held power since the 1920s, largely due to emergence of civil society and an indigenous uprising in Chiapas.[3] Ecuador's indigenous people toppled a president in 2000.[4] Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori was forced to resign in 2000 after several days of massive street protests. While these were political events, they all were rooted in deeper currents of popular resistance. In Brazil, the landless movement (MST) has several hundred thousand people. They carry out a people's land reform by taking property without asking anyone's permission.[5] In Ecuador, communities in the Andean mountains organize against massive mining projects that would destroy cloud forests. Colombian indigenous battle oil companies that rape their land.[6] Indigenous communities in Mexico create their own, autonomous police force because the state police are unable to provide justice and security.[7] Soup kitchens, childcare, schools, and health clinics are provided by community organizations in every city, because the state has failed to do so. Hundreds of thousands of people migrate within their home countries and to far away places to secure additional income

for their family and community. This is only a short list of resistance movements throughout the hemisphere.

Analysis of contemporary resistance movements may appear to be an inappropriate topic for the historian to undertake. For many historians, the present is best left to the social sciences. As our primary concern is with the past, consideration of contemporary resistance is a misguided intervention into the present, even a highly politicized form of academic activism. To the contrary, the study of the present is a legitimate domain for the historian. Our contemplation of the past, after all, is also a concern with the problem of change over time, which necessarily involves the present. The historian's intervention into the present is particularly important today, because the depth and intensity of change is immense, especially since the end of the Cold War and with the global embrace of free trade economics. Our departure from the political and economic realities of the Cold War calls upon the historian to engage in the debate about the present. This article offers a preliminary exploration to a history of the 21st century. It invites us to think about great moments of change, how such moments influence our understanding of the human condition, how the interaction between the global and the local drive change, and the place of resistance in that process.

An abundance of social science analysis highlights the depth of change we are in. There is, however, a problem. Social science theory we use to understand the present is designed to explain problems past. It is significant that we attach the prefix "post" to our explanations of the present. Post-industrialism, post-Marxism, post-structuralism, post-modernism indicate that the present does not have a paradigm free of prefix and hyphen, but is always framed in relation to the past. We do not have words free of prefix to describe our new historical moment. Times past, people invented new words to capture their new realities. With modernity, for example, "capitalism" became the word for post-feudal economics, or "democracy" for post-monarchy politics. Today's vocabulary is in formation, but remains anchored in meaning to modernity because of the post prefix. This problem of the posts suggests part of the process of change is formulating new paradigms for understanding our new contexts.[8] Sonia Alvarez and Arturo Escobar explain, "as historical contexts change, so do people's ways of seeing and acting in the world, as well as the theories that seek to explain both actions and their contexts."[9] This article begins with consideration of the changed context that defines the time of the posts, what many call globalization.

Speaking to students at DePauw University, James Clarkson, a Korean War Marine Corps pilot and former CEO of Boeing Corporation, declared there was one book everyone had to read. He held up Thomas Friedman's *Lexus and the Olive Tree*, calling it the CEO's "bible" for globalization. It was the first explanation of globalization for the general public; a simple to understand guide to the great changes since the

collapse of the Berlin Wall. Without Cold War walls, argues Friedman, the forces of capitalism were liberated to bring prosperity to those who embraced free trade economics. The end of the Cold War was accompanied by the information revolution caused by faster computers and the Internet. The information revolution reworked time-space relationships, overcoming previously insurmountable barriers to capitalism's conquest of every last place on earth. Today's world is defined by the depth, breadth, and intensity of free trade capitalism's global spread. The impact, as Friedman tells through countless antidotes, is a reworking of how global humanity behaves. While there are any number of problems with Friedman's analysis and conclusions, he gave direction and meaning to a world without Cold War certainties. From his perch at the *New York Times*' international desk, he explained to us how and why we live amidst a time of great change. As he boldly states in the book's opening lines, the world was born anew in 1989.[10]

More sophisticated approaches to globalization understand it is not new to humanity. World systems theorists, for example, think globalization is a process of interaction between regions and peoples of the world, one that reaches back to the earliest moments in human history.[11] As a continuous historical process globalization has key moments of transformation when the macro systems produced by human interactions cross thresholds, called "tipping points" or the "edge of chaos," and become new systems.[12] This article argues that we are now experiencing such a phase in the long history of globalization. To help us see why, we can turn to David Harvey's examination of post-1945 capitalism.

Harvey illustrates how contemporary globalization originated with the shift from post-1945 Keynesian policies to classic economic liberalism, what we now call "neoliberalism," which places free market capitalism at the core of economic thinking. In this transformation, the working relationship between labor and capital termed "Fordism" was ruptured. In the Fordist arrangement capital yielded high wages and benefits to labor in exchange for labor's subordination to capital. In Europe, the United States, and parts of Asia, Fordism produced high rates of consumption as healthy wages and benefits transformed large segments of the working class into the middle class. Complementing Fordism was massive state spending on social welfare, subsidization of key economic sectors, a growing public sector, and a large military. Deficit spending in this arrangement sustained economic growth and dramatic levels of consumption during the 1950s and 1960s. A large, active state regulated the entire system. Fordism, Harvey argues, fell apart with the global economic crises of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The costs of the Vietnam War disrupted global finance to the point of crisis, which happened with the oil shock of the early 1970s. Policymakers responded by reversing Keynesianism. They undid the Fordist arrangement by liquidating the welfare state, cutting state expenditures, and reducing taxes for the rich. This undoing

is the neoliberal project, a gradual, decade-long transition to free market capitalism. Neoliberalism, as David Korten shows, also enhanced the ability of corporations to externalize production costs, especially environmental damage, onto society, especially the poor.[13] It first became a reality in Margaret Thatcher's Britain and Ronald Reagan's United States, but eventually became the dominant economic policy for every capitalist nation. These changes predated Friedman's twin agents of globalization, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Internet.[14]

Structural change caused by contemporary globalization happened with dramatic speed. Time-space compression has never been greater, although such measurements are relative; each generation thinks its experience with change is revolutionary. Frederick Douglas, for example, stated in 1852, well before air travel and the Internet, "Oceans no longer divide, but link nations together. From Boston to London is now a holiday excursion. Space is comparatively annihilated."[15] Time-space compression's tipping point, can be seen in the "new economy," which appears something like the alchemist's dream. In the new economy, speculators produce value by using computer programs to trade currencies. A trillion dollars a day is exchanged in what Friedman aptly calls the "electronic herd." In seconds, the computers can cause the herd to run, destroying national economies and prompting global economic instability. Distanced from the transactions is capitalism's traditional measure of value, labor. This change leads some to think that the nature of capitalism has tipped toward a new economic system. The emergence, potentially, is a new means and relations of production.[16]

Another indication of systemic transformation is the free market's extension beyond the confines of the nation-state. Free market advocates extended the rights and powers enjoyed by corporations in the United States to every part of the world, especially in the area of trade, patents, private property, and investment. Agreements such as North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), gave corporations remarkable power to trump the sovereignty of nation-states. Transnational institutions – the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO) – work in concert with multinational corporations to extend the global reach of neoliberalism.[17] A leading international banker, Walter Wriston, once described the impact of global free markets by stating, "it's a new world and the concept of sovereignty is going to change."[18] William Robinson demonstrates this change was ushered in by a small group of global elites, mostly statesmen, bureaucrats, academics, corporate CEOs, and the super rich. They are a global ruling class, less loyal to their respective nation-states than the class interest they hold or serve. The transnational elite, Robinson argues, dominant the new global system in a fashion that subverts the sovereignty of nation-states and the will of the people.[19] A former Chairman of Citicorp stated that currency trading, Friedman's electronic herd, is "a kind of global plebiscite on the

monetary and fiscal policies of the governments." In 1992, in a world of nearly 6 billion people, 200,000 traders carried out the plebiscite.[20] They had accumulated "extraordinary power," according to Philip McMichael.[21] The shifting of sovereignty results in what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri term "empire."[22] Its concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the few is a fundamental departure from modernity's history of progressively extending the democratic revolution to more sectors of society.

The transnational nature of systemic transition took an interesting turn after September 11th. The Bush Doctrine, known in the early 90s as "The Plan" by its main advocates, Dick Cheney, Richard Perle, and Paul Wolfowitz, calls for a unilateral and pre-emptive policy of military intervention aimed at creating the unquestioned global dominance of the United States. It presents the daunting reality of a nightmare scenario: the convergence of neoliberal economics with neoconservative diplomacy.[23] The convergence, William Tabb writes, is "global dictatorship of the U.S. And core corporate governing elites."[24] The Bush Doctrine is the realization of Thomas Friedman's 1997 statement for how US militarism guards the new transnational order: "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist – McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15; And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."[25]

The transnational elite brought neoliberalism to Latin America in the early 1980s, a time of economic crisis owing to an inability to pay massive debts. Economic planners, many trained in United States universities where free market thinking dominated, confronted the crisis with reforms.[26] They had few alternatives because transnational financial institutions, especially the IMF, made new loans conditional upon their implementing policies known as structural adjustment policies (SAPs). Planners used SAPs to eradicate Latin America's state-centered capitalism. They eliminated import and export tariffs; privatized the public sector; cut state subsidies; attacked the rights of labor; slashed social welfare; and placed state programs on a diet of austerity. By the 1990s the neoliberal reforms had visited every Latin American country except Cuba.[27] As Sandor Halebsky and Richard Harris state, the scope of change included the "productive base, natural environment, domestic markets, international trading relations, monetary and banking systems, distribution of income, management-labor relations, job structures and working conditions, the structures of rural society, the quality of life in the urban areas, as well as the direction of economic development in Latin America."[28]

The transnational elite complement SAPs with fantastical development projects. In Mexico, for example, they have a Faustian dream of a mega-development project known as Plan Puebla Panama (PPP). It would construct a transportation, power, and communication infrastructure in a

network designed to integrate southern Mexico with Central America, as well as supplementing the antiquated and inefficient Panama Canal by building a "dry canal" – a railroad complex – across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The infrastructure would enhance resource extraction for the developed world, especially in the Mesoamerican ecological corridor, and build a grid of assembly plants, called "*maquiladoras*." PPP has the additional aim of combating the economic causes of migration by providing the rural poor with jobs in the *maquiladoras*. The plan also aims to neutralize the Zapatista rebellion by pulling indigenous from their communities through urban migration and proletarianization.[29] Similar projects, such as the Andean Initiative's aggressive development program aimed at negating the temptations of the cocaine production in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia, exist throughout Latin America.

These plans should be understood within the historical context of development programs, as analyzed by Escobar. His work illustrates the subjective nature of concepts like "development" and "underdevelopment." Academic and institutional experts produced a discourse about the "third world" that became the dominant norm for thinking about Latin America. They presented the Latin Americans as "imperfect" and "abnormal" in relation to the developed world. Their discourse measured Latin Americans relative to the Western ideal. Developmentalists transformed the masses of Latin America into neocolonial objects for the colonial subject to act upon.[30]

The development paradigm, however, failed to accomplish stated goals of ending poverty. Development, using E. Bradford Burns's memorable phrase, is "the poverty of progress."[31] The human tragedy of Latin America's poverty statistics reveals the scope of failure. One Latin American observer, writing in 1993, summarized: "In Latin America today there are 70 million more hungry, 30 million more illiterate, 10 million more families without homes and 40 million more unemployed persons then there were 20 years ago."[32] Carlos Vilas estimates 200 million people live on two dollars per day.[33] Brazil has a workforce of 90 million people, and 55 million labor in the informal sector. In Sao Paulo, unemployment reached 20 percent, and 1 out of 3 people earn the minimum wage or less. Their minimum monthly salary in 2002 was $65. The minimum wage, according to the government, is one-sixth of the amount necessary for a family of four in Sao Paulo. The wealthiest 50 percent earns nearly 90 percent of Brazil's total income, while the bottom half earns 10 percent.[34] In Bolivia, the Western Hemisphere's second poorest country, SAPs led to amazing scenarios. In Cochabamba water was privatized. When Bechtel Corporation purchased rights to supply drinking water, people earning a monthly minimum wage of $67 started receiving water bills of $20. When oil was privatized in 1999, it resulted in a 15 percent increase in gas prices. SAPs left Bolivians worse off: in 1975 per capita income was $1,200, but today it is only $884.[35] In 2002, the World Bank's Mexico

office estimated that 40 million Mexicans lived in poverty. It concluded that conditions for the poor were either equal or worse than it was in 1994–1995, when Mexico's poor endured a 60 percent currency devaluation.[36] Journalist Stephen Kinzer estimates that in Nicaragua half the "population lives on less than $1 per day, malnutrition is widespread, and jobs are all but impossible to find."[37] These few examples are only the tip of the Latin American impoverishment iceberg.

Over 200 million people in Latin America confront the reality of structural violence, a political and economic system that denies them the fundamentals of human existence. "Faced with extreme poverty," Elizabeth Jelin writes, "how can we be sure that we are still within the realm of humanity? Isn't extreme poverty a sign of dehumanization? Exclusion and indigence lie at the opposite edge of democracy, implying the denial of fundamental rights." Globalization's structural violence "does not seem to be a passing, frictional phenomena but rather part and parcel of a process of structural marginalization." Those excluded are what Negri and Hardt call the multitude, the 2 billion plus people on earth with no place in the neoliberal system. Our new world is defined by the production of marginalized people to a degree unseen in history. This reality is a defining feature of the 21st century, and our understanding of it is highly imperfect.[38]

Neoliberals, at least in their public statements, anticipated the elimination of poverty, and with it the termination of Latin America's social tumult. The brutality of the reforms, however, resulted in not just a continuation of poverty, but also protest as communities from Argentina to Mexico organized in resistance. These responses surprised free market reformers. Ideological blinders prevented them from foreseeing the recalcitrance of those they had impoverished. Neoliberal blindness happened because their understanding of the present and future was shaped by what Francis Fukuyama calls the "end of history." The present, he argues, constitutes "the unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism." The "triumph of the West" was in the ideological domain, and history is the unfolding of competing ideologies for global dominance. Liberal capitalism's triumph meant the socialist alternative was relegated to the dustbin of history. As there are no "viable systemic alternatives to Western liberalism," neoliberals think history has ended.[39] When applied to Latin America, the "end of history" meant the era of armed revolutions was over. Ché had lost.[40] Popular challenges to market reforms were an absurd proposition because the popular classes could offer no alternative present and future history to modernity.

Complementing this thinking was the way market reforms made the poor invisible to neoliberals. As 200 plus million Latin Americans are simply too poor to shop at Wal Mart they are irrelevant to the free market agenda. They are part of the 80 percent of the global population that Philip McMichael estimates to "live outside global consumer networks."[41]

Disarticulated from state welfare, subsidies, and clientelism, the multitudes have few means for claiming citizenship within the free market system.[42] Neoliberals only see the poor as the "social problem": the street children, the homeless, the street vendor, the shantytown dweller, or the beggar. From the neoliberal's "end of history" perspective, the multitudes are not capable of effective organizing, political action, or rebellion. Blinders are also the result of the neoliberal's criminalization of the poor. The social action of the dispossessed is seen as socially deviant activity. Ecuadorian communities in resistance to mining, for example, have been called "eco-terrorists" by those in favor of mining. When social protest boomed in the 1990s elites reduced resistance to mindless protest, a pathological, phobic response to sound political economy.

Neoliberal blinders are part of the tensions and contradictions of the present's post-development reality. Policymakers acknowledge the failures of development, but continue its application with even grander scale. The transnational elite embrace schemes designed to make the multitudes modern. Yet, the same elite construct ideological frames that discard those they aim to modernize. These tensions prevent them from seeing the nature and reality of local resistance. Given development's failure, Alvarez and Escobar argue, "one might be surprised to find any significant degree of struggle and organizing on the people's part." With poverty so deep, "one might expect the population to be so overwhelmed by the tasks of daily survival and so fragmented and downtrodden by the intensified exclusion, exploitation, and, in many cases, repression that it would be practically impossible for people to find the time or energy to mobilize and fight for a better life."[43] Yet, there is widespread resistance to development under the neoliberal order.

Leftists were also surprised by the new waves of resistance. Mexican intellectual Paco Ignacio Taibo II, for example, tells the story of how he responded on January 1, 1994 when the Zapatista army seized control of towns throughout Chiapas. He dug through newspapers looking for early signs of their revolt. Sure enough, the signs were there for all to see.[44] The Left was surprised less because of the reality of resistance – they were keenly aware of the struggle of Latin America's poor during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s – as against the state of thinking within the Left. They had bought into the end of history argument, and despaired of any chance for revolutionary change. Their loss of hope equated to loss of vision. And, when they began to see the Zapatistas, they encountered a new revolutionary path, something very different from what gave them hope and vision in the past.[45]

To illustrate this point, we can consider the Zapatista caravan from Chiapas to Mexico City in March 2001. It was designed by the Zapatistas as a mechanism to pressure the Mexican Congress to approve a new indigenous law. When they arrived in Mexico City, the Zapatistas held a triumphant gathering in the Zocalo, Mexico's central plaza and most

important political space. Several hundred thousand people packed the plaza and received the Zapatistas as heroes. It was an intense, emotional, and somewhat bewildering moment. It showed how the Zapatistas have turned our understanding of revolution on its head. In Latin America's past, revolutionary armies only arrived in the capital city after having defeated the state. So it was during the first Zapatista movement, when Emiliano Zapata led Mexican peasants into Mexico City, and so it was again when Ché Guevera and Fidel Castro led Cubans into Havana in 1959, and once again it was so in 1979 when the Sandinistas took Managua and power from the Somoza dictatorship. The Zapatistas, however, are a different kind of rebellion. They arrived in the capital without the use of violence, they did not come to overthrow the state, and similar to the first Zapatista movement they returned home without taking state power. With the Zapatistas we have a departure from the modern history of Latin American revolution. Yet, our understanding of what the new history is remains unclear. "To put it simply," writes Jen Couch, "our theories of such movements are underdeveloped, overly abstract, orientated away from praxis, oblivious to Western bias and generally inadequate for a full comprehension of struggles in the global South."[46] Couch's argument might be overdrawn; the literature on the Zapatistas draws from the depths of social science thinking. Of course, in the time of the posts, that may be the problem.

Roger Burbach was one of the first academics to explain the Zapatistas. He called them the "first postmodern revolution."[47] Several followed, as postmodernism appeared to match much of the style if not substance of the rebellion.[48] Zapatista use of the Internet, clever language, symbolic subversions of power, and theoretical sophistication, appealed to many postmodern academics, especially those searching for a revolutionary movement to fit their ideas. Several observers, however, find nothing postmodern in the actions, targets, and objectives of the rebellion.[49] They emphasize Zapatista continuity with revolutions past, especially the material reality of poor people's struggle for liberation from capitalism.[50] Understanding the debate requires our exploring the importance of the new social movements (NSMs) of the 1970s and 1980s, and the social science theory they produced. This analysis shows how NSMs were precursors to today's resistance, and how theory used by social scientists to understand the NSMs anticipated today's movements, especially the Zapatistas.

The (NSM) proposition is the product of what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe declared to be a "crossroads" in "Left-wing thought." The crossroads is the departure from classical Marxist thinking that privileged the industrial working class as the revolutionary agent in capitalist society.[51] This crossroads came at the time of crisis within global capitalism, especially the global tumults of 1968 that were driven by a diverse range of liberation struggles. As Nelson Pichardo writes, these movements were

"not well explained by social theories that saw the working class as the site of revolutionary protest." Comprehending why actors like students became the "vanguard of protest" was a central concern for social scientists. They saw a shift in social movement goals from resource mobilization and economic equality issues to those of quality of life and identity.[52] The student movement, the anti-war movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the women's movement, the gay-lesbian movement, and the environmental movement were overwhelmingly middle-class and from Western Europe and the United States. They focused on bourgeois concerns, and sought a place at the table of capitalist society for their advocates. While the NSMs constitute multiple points of progressive change, they were not revolutionary in the sense of seeking the overthrow of the state or capitalism. Their concerns, as Barry Adam explains, were reformist and seldom connected with the other social movements.[53] NSMs were the product of a certain period of social, political, and cultural formation within the logic of late capitalism, a period that predates neoliberalism and contemporary resistance movements.

Despite Western origins, social scientists embraced NSM theory as a tool for understanding Latin American social movements during the 1970s and 1980s.[54] NSM theory helped us to break away from dependency theory, which dominated thinking about Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s. Social scientists departed from its structural approach in favor of human agency, especially the cultural domain of everyday life, as the way to understand the flood of grassroots social action 1970s and 1980s.[55] During this period, social movements resisted bureaucratic authoritarian regimes and the initial stages of free market reforms. They contended with the horrors of the "dirty wars," the wave of military repression that fell upon Latin America during this period. The dirty wars created a void in Latin America's social and political arena. Non-traditional political actors filled the void. In Argentina, for example, the resistance to a brutal military dictatorship came not from labor unions and progressive political parties, but from the mothers of the disappeared, those who desperately sought answers to what happened to their children and demanded accountability from the state.[56] David Slater argues these social actors were not just in response to the military regimes, and need to be understood as "rooted in the *contemporary social development of capitalist society*."[57] Soup kitchens, shantytowns, squatters on unused rural lands filled the void created by the authoritarian and increasingly neoliberal state.[58]

To understand the importance of NSM theory, we need to consider its socialist critics. While socialists concede the prospects for working class revolution are currently slim, they do not think NSMs have revolutionary potential, because only the working class is in position of antagonism with capital. Ralph Miliband made the argument to the original NSM theorists: the working class is the "gravedigger of capitalism." His words merit further citation:

> And if, as one is constantly told as is the case, the organized working class will refuse to do the job, then the job will not be done; and capitalist society will continue, generation after generation, as a conflict-ridden, growingly authoritarian and brutalized social system, poisoned by its inability to make humane and rational use of the immense resources capitalism has itself brought into being – unless of course the world is pushed into a nuclear war.[59]

According to critics of NSM theory, the Left's task is to create the conditions necessary for the working class to fulfill its historical mission of overthrowing capitalism. NSMs constitute a significant detour from this agenda.

NSM theorists take a different approach to the question of revolutionary change. It happened because scholars like Alberto Melucci could not find a place for their social actors within traditional social science theory. "The truly important question," he states, is

> whether in contemporary societies there are relations and social structures that can no longer be explained within the framework of industrial capitalist society as defined by the classical models of sociology. Therefore, what theoretical tools, what concepts are available to us to explain this possible discontinuity, this possible nonreducibility of certain features of contemporary phenomena to the historical and analytical model of industrial capitalism?[60]

Asking these questions allowed scholars like Aníbal Quijano to think very differently about radical change. His analysis of popular movements in Ecuador, for example, shows how "identities in gestation begin to develop new forms of understanding and questioning the state, not from the vantage point of the power of the state, but, on the contrary, from that of the *construction of a different social power*. To this extent, their goal is not to replace the state but to construct an alternative society."[61] Likewise, John Holloway emphasizes that today's resistance is a movement to "change the world without taking power." This revolution is to be done by rejecting "power over" – the taking of state power – in favor of "power to." For Holloway "power to" is about empowerment, the ability to act as a full citizen.[62] Any revolutionary move must begin with the basic agenda of empowerment for its participants before it can undertake a radical transformation of society. For 200 million people excluded by neoliberalism, this path of revolutionary change begins with the struggle to have "the right to have rights." This battle takes place in the domains of everyday life, and begins the process of expanding what we understand to be the political. Slater argues that the new political spaces are radical, because they allow "a more open and pluralistic form of democracy" in opposition to the neoliberal's centralization of power, the failure of the state to provide basic services, and the decreased legitimacy of governing institutions.[63]

The NSM revolutionary path reflects a departure in how we think about power. Consideration of Michael Foucault's notion of "capillaries

of power" helps us to understand this departure. He illustrates the importance of de-centering analysis of power by looking for power at "its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary, that is, in its more regional and local forms and institutions."[64] The de-centered, outer reaches, most local, and immediate domains of power are the crucial locations of resistance NSM theory helped us to see, especially within the context of Latin America's extreme levels of marginalization. Understanding power's uneven and limited nature, its vulnerability in the capillaries, and its inability to be omnipresent is fundamental to comprehending the revolutionary capacity of non-working class actors. Mexico's indigenous, for example, have the ability within their particular capillaries to contest regimes of domination, challenge hegemonic structures and relations of power, and pursue alternatives to elite projects.[65] The capillaries are the domains of everyday experience; it is where human action forges the structures that govern our lives. If we understand culture to be the domain of agency, then the capillaries are the spaces of culture. NSM theorists argue that culture is the core of resistance.

In making the cultural resistance argument NSM theorists take from Antonio Gramsci. The key contribution from Gramsci is his theory of hegemony, which places primary importance on how culture shapes the political. With the cultural constituting the political, revolutionary change becomes a cultural process. "Revolution is no longer conceived as an insurrectional act of taking state power," explains Evelina Dagnino. "As revolution is envisaged as the process of building of a new hegemony, which implies a new world conception, the role of ideas and culture assumes a positive character." The Gramscian cultural turn places emphasis on human agency in making radical change possible.[66] The distinction between "war of position" and "war of maneuver" further defines the revolutionary potential of the NSMs. The latter means a revolution accomplished by the overthrow of the state, presumably by Miliband's working class vanguard. The former addresses the strategic problem of what to do when conditions do not favor a war of maneuver, our current predicament in the time of the posts. The war of position is fought to change power relationships, especially in domains where state and capital do not always have a monopoly, such as Foucault's capillaries. The war of position chips away at the "common sense" of state and capital's hegemony, subverting their legitimacy by exposing the injustices they cause or exacerbate. As the Zapatistas have shown us, it is a discursive battle, a war of words and ideas fought in the domain of culture.[67] The war of position establishes "counter publics," places and spaces within the structures of domination where alternative domains thrive. This concept is also known as "autonomy."

Autonomy might best be understood by thinking about how it answers the most basic question: who has the power to decide.[68] The autonomous

answer is the embrace of the most radical expression of the Enlightenment, the fundamental revolt against concentrations of power in the domains of a few individuals, institutions, corporations, and the state. As the most radical construction of the Enlightenment, autonomy is a revolutionary proposition, one fundamentally opposed to the realities of the 21st century's transnational order. Autonomy aims to destroy concentrations of power and replace them with horizontal forms of democracy, a radical, true, participatory democracy that provides a voice to everyone in the decision making process.[69] Autonomy penetrates every domain of life, not just the political or economic. It is a way of life that connects community to land, environment, religion, as well as language in a complex web of economic, social, and political relations. Autonomy's focus on reconstitution of community answers the question of "who decides" as communal control over land use, water rights, oil, minerals, trees, as well as indigenous knowledge about the environment. Deeper, autonomy is the ways of living, being, thinking, seeing, that cannot be turned into commodities for the capitalist market. Autonomy means the community decides what to do with resources and not the Mexican nation-state, not the World Bank, not the United States Department of Treasury, and not consumers in the first world.[70] Autonomy constitutes a domain of sovereignty that negates neoliberalism. Realizing that sovereignty is a revolutionary act.

Resistance to neoliberalism is largely a battle of where sovereignty should reside: with the people, the nation-state, or transnational elite. It is the central question of the 21st century. As Negri and Hardt illustrate transitions in the primacy of sovereignty's domain took place with modernity, principally the shift in sovereign power from the individual to the monarch and finally to the nation-state, under the guise of constitutional, republican democracy. They point to the nation-state's loss of sovereignty as consequence of the shift in decision-making power from the nation-state to transnational institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, as well as multinational corporations.[71] As "states lose capacity as sovereign rule makers,"[72] they lose legitimacy and become increasingly exclusionary and repressive.[73] With fewer resources, the neoliberal state is weaker, less able to attend the needs of society especially the masses.[74] Neoliberals point to the increase in formal democracies throughout Latin America as evidence of free market reforms' positive impact. Their claim, however, is the minimal, representational democracy of electoral competition between political parties for power.[75] Some call it "low intensity democracy."[76] Today's resistance seeks to bring sovereignty back to the community through an inclusive, participatory, radical democracy.[77]

Sovereignty, as a hegemonic process, is unstable due to contestation between and within divergent and competing domains. Contemporary resistance aims to leverage contestation within domains of sovereignty. The changed nature of the nation-state – its loss of legitimacy, inability

to provide services, reliance on repression, exclusion, and lack of participatory democracy – becomes the battlefield in the war of position over sovereignty. The changed nation-state offers the potential for a relocation of sovereignty to the commons, the formation by those in resistance of "subaltern counter publics."[78] The Zapatista concept and practice of autonomy, for example, relocates the domain of sovereignty from the nation-state to the indigenous commons in a radical reworking of the relations of power between indigenous communities and the nation-state, as well as transnational regimes of capital.[79]

An important feature to contemporary resistance is their novel ways of articulating local struggles for sovereignty with transnational networks of resistance.[80] Scholars who have examined the growth of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) suggest that we need to focus on how local resistance movements operate in the same globalization context as transnational institutions, corporations, and elites. They argue that the communication revolution empowered local resistance movements to participate in global networks.[81] In Ecuador, for example, grassroots resistance to mining projects is possible because communities learned about the mining political economy by using the Internet. It also helped them to find support from international NGOs. Transnational institutions, such as the United Nations, provide universal norms that local resistances can leverage. As Stephen Gil and David Law suggest, the transnational elite's quest for hegemony lacks "moral credibility." They are vulnerable to attack by NGOs and resistance movements on the "ethico-political level."[82] International NGOs provide mechanisms for communities with alternative development projects, such as fair trade coffee, to secure transnational markets. Local resistances participate directly in the "anti-globalization" movement, and are protagonists at major protests throughout the world.[83] As Naomi Klein observes, "what is emerging is an activist model that mirrors the organic, decentralized, interlinked pathways of the internet."[84] Events like protests, workshops, *foros*, and *encuentros* routinely converge multiple, transnational communities of resistance in one location. These convergences stimulate the growth, sophistication, and depth of local resistances' counter-publics and productions of sovereignty.[85]

Annual meetings of the World Social Forum and protests at the transnational meetings, however, are a far cry from confronting the vast power of the transnational order. The transnational elite also fights the war of position, and has phenomenal resources to do so. Its capacity to co-opt transnational resistance is well documented. The World Social Forum has become increasingly sophisticated in presenting a progressive, democratic, poor-friendly image to the world through media campaigns and use of pop stars like U2's Bono. Transnational institutions establish collaborative programs, provide generous grants, and extend technical assistance to the grassroots as a means to bring them into the developmentalist fold.[86]

Alvarez demonstrates how a diversity of feminisms are absorbed by a process of "NGOization" and through the agendas of "dominant cultural institutions, parallel organizations of civil society, political society and the state, and the international development establishment."[87] Transnational corporations are skilled at subverting local resistance by stealing their social justice message and packaging it as new product lines. Starbucks, for example, now markets its coffee as "fair trade." When these subtle mechanisms of containing resistance falter, the transnational order can rely upon nation-states to implement favorable policies through exclusion and repression. In the example of the Zapatistas, for example, Chase Manhattan Bank advised Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo: "the government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and of security policy."[88] Economic warfare, psychological operations, harassment from security forces, and direct violence from death squads are frequently employed by the neoliberal state to counter the insurgency of local resistance. In Ecuador, for example, mining companies and the state use death threats, misinformation, disruption of mail and phone service, and surveillance against the local resistance to mining in Intag region. These strategies suggests that state repression has evolved into even more sophisticated methods of defeating resistance. Slater is right in asking how can "democracy be extended and generalized when the apparatuses of state repression have not been dismantled?"[89]

There is a symbiotic relationship within the interaction between resistance and transnational power. A cycle of move and counter-move within the war of position is an important driving mechanism to 21st-century history. It is one possible exit from the time of the posts. Despite modernity's multiple escapes from dire contradictions, complex systems theory reminds us no system lasts forever; they either collapse, cataclysmically, or become new systems. When complex systems transform and approach tipping points a liminal state exists. The time of the posts is one such liminal state. We are no longer truly modern but not yet the new system. The war of position between resistance and domination is a factor in systemic transformation. It may lead us to the tipping point, and provide a revolutionary moment of emergence.

This article has highlighted several characteristics of our time of the posts. First, contemporary globalization concerns the transition to a free market system. A key part of the transition is the information revolution, which constitutes a potential departure from the capitalist mode of production. These changes have resulted in a concentration of wealth and power within a transnational system of corporations, institutions, and elites. This concentration of power changes the role of the nation-state by reducing its power and ability to provide services to citizens. The changed nature of sovereignty compromises the legitimacy of the nation-state, which is aggravated by the recognized failure of development projects, and inability to devise effective alternatives. These changes in economy

and politics amount to an abrogation of the social contract that marginalizes millions of people. This radical departure is the context for understanding the wave of resistance throughout Latin America, and its uniqueness to previous forms of revolutionary struggle. Today's resistance focuses on the right to have rights, radical democracy, and autonomy. These are different approaches to radical change as they do not aspire to state power. Today's resistance is also defined by transnational networks of resistance. The new resistance, however, has met with new mechanisms of state repression that range from cooptation to low intensity conflict. These trends have stimulated academic debate about theory and action for our time of posts. The resulting academic turmoil and instability in our paradigms is a central feature to the liminal state of being in the time of the posts. How it all turns out is the history of the 21st century.

Notes

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