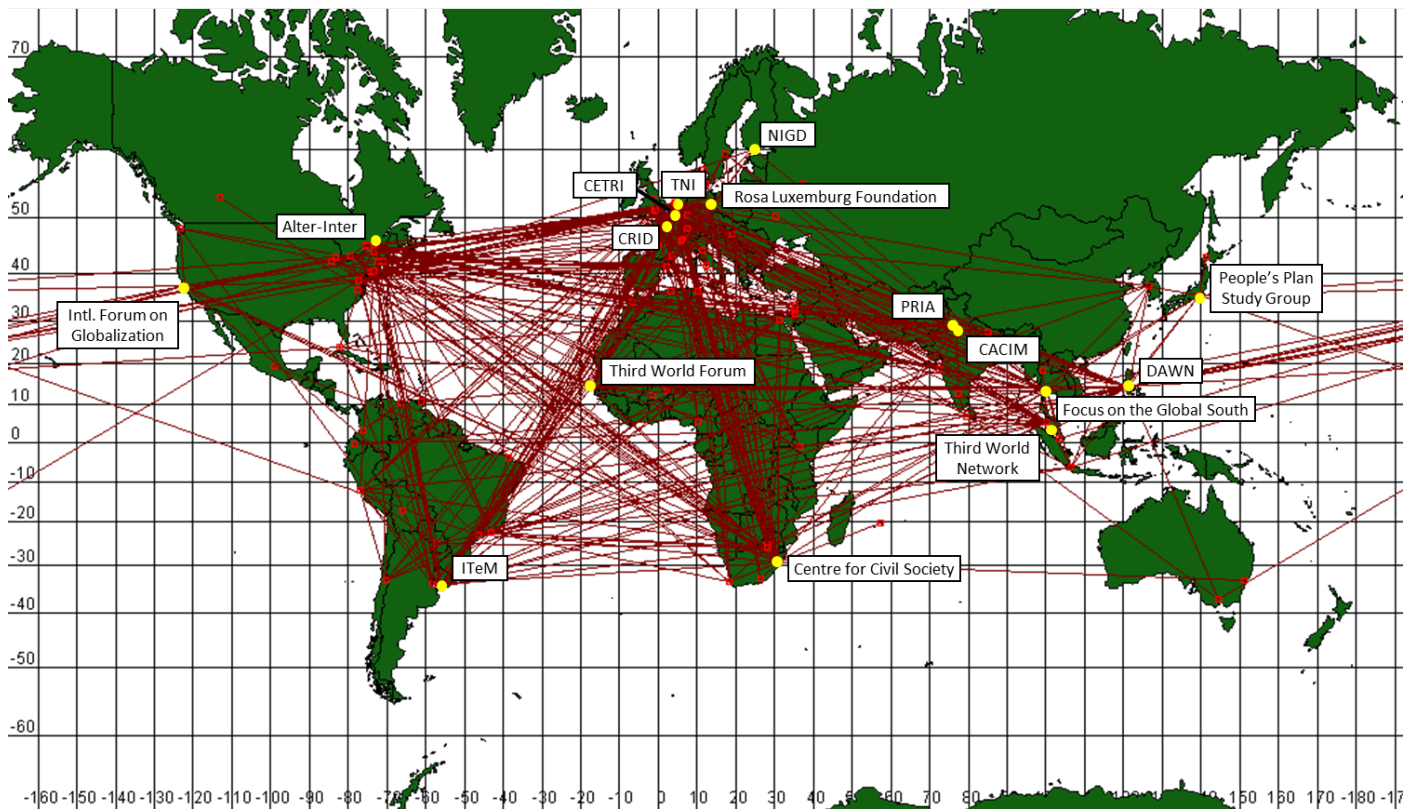


*Expose, Oppose, Propose:*  
*Transnational alternative policy groups and global civil society*



**William K. Carroll**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**University of Victoria**  
[wcarroll@uvic.ca](mailto:wcarroll@uvic.ca)

**January 2014**

## *Table of Contents*

Tables and Figures.....	2
Preface .....	3
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	6
Chapter 2: Challenges and responses .....	16
Chapter 3: Alternative projects and cognitive praxis.....	48
Chapter 4: The repertoire of alternative knowledge production and mobilization: modes of cognitive praxis.....	65
Chapter 5: The repertoire of alternative knowledge production and mobilization: a compendium of practices .....	114
Chapter 6: Convergent visions: the ends of alternative knowledge.....	131
References .....	142
Appendix 1. Interview guide .....	147
Appendix 2. A statistical profile of participants.....	150

*Cover illustration:* Transnational alternative policy groups and their immediate neighbors as a global network, from Carroll and Sapinski (2013: 221).

## Tables and Figures

### Tables

<i>Table 1. Groups participating in this study</i>	10
<i>Table 2. Projects and constituencies of 16 participating TAPGs</i>	13
<i>Table 3. Some accomplishments ('a-list' TAPGs)</i>	17
<i>Table 4. Modes of cognitive praxis</i>	66
<i>Table 5. Types of alt knowledge practices cited by participants</i>	114
<i>Table 6. Relative incidence of research and analysis practices</i>	115
<i>Table 7. Relative incidence of training and learning practices</i>	116
<i>Table 8. Relative incidence of outreach practices</i>	119
<i>Table 9. TAPGs and the types of media they produce</i>	120
<i>Table 10. Addresses for TAPG websites</i>	122
<i>Table 11. Relative incidence of networking practices</i>	124
<i>Table 12. Relative incidence of action practices</i>	126
<i>Table 13. Features of green transformation (after Candeias 2013: 15)</i>	140

### Figures

<i>Figure 1. Relations between TAPGs and nine movement domains</i>	15
<i>Figure 2. Conceptual map from CRID transversal capitalization, 2012</i>	102
<i>Figure 3. A graphic from PRIA's Practice in Participation portal</i>	103
<i>Figure 4. TNI's 'The Great European Fire Sale' Infographic, March 2013</i>	105
<i>Figure 5. IFG's 'Kochtopus', May 2013</i>	106
<i>Figure 6. Predominant modes of cognitive praxis used by 16 TAPGs</i>	112

## Preface

This volume is addressed to concerned citizens, activists, students, intellectuals and practitioners interested in ‘changing the channel’. The tightly scripted programming of neoliberal capitalism positions us as consumers in a hypermarket where money talks. For those with funds or credit, the program offers a seductive formula for ‘amusing ourselves to death’ (Postman 1985) – particularly as continued overconsumption portends global ecological disaster in what is now a clearly foreseeable future. For the majority world, those with little to bring to the global marketplace, neoliberal capitalism offers little more than precarity and immiseration. Either way, the need for fundamental change is visceral. But to change the channel is not only to break from the dominant ideological framework; it is to produce viable alternatives, in knowledge and in practice, which might catalyze political and social change in our troubled world.

The six chapters that follow offer insights gained from roughly two years of intensive research into the production and mobilization of alternative knowledge. In year 1 (May 2011-April 2012), I identified the principal centres for such initiatives: transnational alternative policy groups (TAPGs) active in global civil society today. I completed a case study of each group using available sources from the Internet and elsewhere, and a network analysis of how the groups link up with each other, and how they are embedded in a broader field of social relations within global civil society. This work gave rise to several articles that have recently been published or that are forthcoming soon. Chapter 1 draws upon that initial spadework. It presents the 16 transnational alternative policy groups that have participated in this project, along with a basic conceptual framework for understanding them as producers and mobilizers of knowledge for social transformation. Although each group is distinctive in its vision, practical priorities and ways of producing and mobilizing alternative knowledge, on the whole TAPGs converge around a ‘master frame’ that advocates and envisages global justice and ecological well-being, and that resonates with the concerns of alterglobalization or global-left activism.

Chapters 2-6 are based on 91 individual interviews with protagonists in the 16 participating transnational alt policy groups, conducted during the second year of the project (May 2012-May 2013). While on sabbatical leave, I was able to make site visits to 10 of the participating groups, five in the Global North and five in the Global South, and to interview key people at each location. Not unexpectedly, the interviews were very rich. They generated approximately one million words of text, which were imported to an NVIVO database. From late June through September 2013, I grappled with the nearly intractable problem of how to do a qualitative analysis of such a vast quantity of nuanced, information-rich text.

Chapter 2, *Challenges and responses*, begins with an acknowledgement of some of the accomplishments that transnational alternative policy groups have been able to wrest from what often appears to be an intransigent reality, but it mainly takes up the challenges TAPGs face as counter-hegemonic actors, and the ways in which they have responded to these challenges. Comparison with the knowledge-producing projects of conventional think tanks highlights a number of specific hurdles that TAPGs face. Alternative knowledge is holistic and historically sensitive; and it typically is produced with the active participation of grassroots communities, activists in critical social movements and others who are excluded from institutional power or who support critical movements. Mainstream think tanks mostly work within the silos and enclosures of conventional thought; their task is to produce pragmatic knowledge, not critical knowledge. Typically well-connected to the relations of ruling (including the media mainstream), they strive to solve specific problems in the management of existing institutions, but do not connect the dots between apparently separate issues like food, climate, trade, economic inequality and health. For perennially under-resourced TAPGs, the challenge is to do more with less, particularly since major funding sources – corporations, foundations – are uninterested in bankrolling their critics. For TAPGs, the organic crisis of capitalism (a double crisis, both economic and deeply ecological, symbolized by the 2008 financial meltdown and the total failure from Copenhagen 2009 onward of ‘global governance’ institutions to even begin to address the climate crisis) has

intensified funding issues, and has raised further challenges. But the crisis also opens some opportunities for alternative thinking and action. Based on interview responses, this chapter recounts how TAPGs have dealt with both the longstanding barriers to counter-hegemonic praxis, and the recent challenges stemming from the global crisis.

Chapter 3, *Alternative projects and cognitive praxis*, presents mini-case studies of the 10 groups at which I carried out field work and interviewed as many as a dozen practitioners. The chapter develops an analysis of the alternative knowledge project each group has taken up, and the strategies and practices these projects imply. Each group addresses, and works with, a specific constituency – a combination of movements, counterpublics, general publics and subaltern communities – but also aims its communicative efforts at ‘targets’ that may include mainstream media, states and inter-governmental bodies. How transnational alternative policy groups produce and mobilize knowledge for different readers and audiences is a topic at the heart of this study, and in this chapter the contrasts among different groups are front and centre. What we find is that, as they have pursued their distinct projects, TAPGs have devised a wide array of approaches to (co-)creating alternative knowledge (often in partnership with allies) and to mobilizing that knowledge for social change. In this way, each group makes a distinctive contribution to alternative knowledge formation and transformative politics.

Chapter 4, *The repertoire of alternative knowledge production and mobilization: modes of cognitive praxis*, examines in depth the collection of practices upon which TAPGs draw as counter-hegemonic knowledge generators. Just as movements for global justice have developed and deployed their own collection-action repertoires, TAPGs, as organic intellectuals to the contemporary global justice movement of movements, have created, in parallel, a repertoire of alternative knowledge production and mobilization (alt KPM). These are ways of supplying intellectual fuel to global justice activism and oxygen to subaltern counterpublics. Given the (frankly, overwhelming) richness of the interview data, I have divided the analysis of this repertoire into two chapters, for which the case studies in Chapter 3 set the stage. In Chapter 4, I present, at some length, eight *modes of cognitive praxis*, and discuss how they interlink in the work of alternative policy groups. The modes of cognitive praxis summarized in Table 4 (page 66) are posed at the level of strategy rather than tactics. In combination, they can be seen as promoting a dialectic of knowledge production and social transformation: striving to produce transformative knowledge concomitantly with knowledge-based transformation. These eight modes of cognitive praxis are not sealed off from each other, but overlap and interpenetrate. Indeed, effective alt KPM typically means that a group combines various facets in a coherent initiative. This chapter closes with a brief comparison of the 16 participating groups, highlighting the main modes of cognitive praxis each group employs (see Figure 6, page 112). Although the comparison shows diversity in how transnational alternative policy groups go about their work, we can also find tracings of a *double dialectic* in the cognitive praxis of alt policy groups: a dialectic of theory and practice and one of dialogue. I conclude that it is in a forward movement, combining *dialogue* among well-informed publics with the iterative *integration of theory and practice*, that alternative knowledge can not only thrive, but have a transformative impact.

Chapter 5, *The repertoire of alternative knowledge production and mobilization: a compendium of practices*, pursues a more fine-grained and concrete analysis and presents a compendium of alt KPM practices. Interestingly, the most widely cited type of practice is *networking*, although many participants cited practices of *research and analysis*, *training and learning* and *outreach* (see Table 5, page 114). These four categories of practice are very much at the centre of the work that transnational alternative policy groups do. In a sense, they distinguish TAPGs as a type of organization within the global left that has a characteristic repertoire of practice. We can see in this nucleus both knowledge production and knowledge mobilization: research and analysis are important, but TAPGs devote a great deal of attention to spreading alternative knowledge through outreach, training/learning and networking, and in emphasizing all these

forms of knowledge mobilization they help build stronger solidaristic relations within and among movement communities. Mobilizing counter-hegemonic knowledge leads TAPGs into a wide range of activities, as producers of alternative media – print, audio-visual, electronic, social etc.

The types of KMP practice reviewed in Chapter 5 specify how the modes of cognitive praxis analyzed in Chapter 4 gain traction on the ground. It is through various creative combinations of these modes and types of praxis that transnational alternative policy groups co-create counter-hegemonic knowledge, and help put that knowledge into practice within movements, subaltern communities, counterpublics, state and inter-governmental bodies and (last but definitely not least) general publics.

Chapter 6, *Convergent visions: the ends of alternative knowledge*, proceeds from recognition of the fact that alt policy groups fashion their strategies and practices not only in response to what are seen as problematic features of extant reality, but on the basis of social visions – conceptions of a feasible and desirable future. In responding to a question I asked about whether their group has a shared vision of the kind of world they are striving for, many participants chose to invoke values or strong images of an alternative way of life, which we can glimpse in practices, relations and sensibilities that already exist. Some pointed to specific but wide-ranging radical reforms that have the potential to bridge into a transformed future. The visions seem convergent, yet far from homogeneous. They include: substantive fulfillment of the human rights agenda; plural social forms (i.e. There Are Many Alternatives); a world of diverse voices, knowledges and public discourses, of participatory democracy, of a decolonized humanity where the spirit of Ubuntu thrives, of open, democratic socialism, of the commons reclaimed, of *buen vivir*. These convergent ends shape the means of alternative knowledge and the political practices informed by that knowledge, or they should. That is, the actual process of socio-political transformation needs to prefigure its end – which is why participatory, dialogical, democratic, empowering methods are so integral to alternative knowledge production and mobilization. A counter-hegemonic project that integrates many convergent visions into an alternative paradigm has been presented recently by Mario Candeias, a project participant at the Institute of Critical Social Analysis in Berlin. Mario's vision is that of a socio-ecological 'green transformation' (see Table 13, p. 140). I feature it at the close of this volume because the alternatives it advances directly address the unprecedented, double crisis humanity faces, in a way that incorporates many of the values and visions of participants in this project. Engaging with proposals like Mario's can build a basis for dialogue, mutual aid and collaboration among transnational alternative policy groups – and that can strengthen the movements, publics and communities with which these groups engage.

### *Acknowledgements*

This research program has been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Without Janet Laxton's tireless transcription efforts and research assistance from J.P. Sapinski, this work would never have been written. Brendan Harry and David Huxtable also made contributions as research assistants in an earlier phase of the project. I also appreciate Mitsuki Fukasawa's assistance as interpreter during several of the interviews in Tokyo. This project has four international collaborators, namely Elaine Coburn (Centre d'analyse et d'intervention sociologiques (CADIS), Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris), Christopher Chase-Dunn (Department of Sociology and Institute for Research on World-Systems, University of California at Riverside), Vishwas Satgar (Department of International Relations, University of Witwatersrand and Co-operative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC), Johannesburg) and Yahiro Unno (Professor Emeritus of Economics, Kanazawa State University, Japan). Elaine Coburn conducted the French-language interviews and did a considerable part of the transcribing and translating of them. Many thanks to all.

Bill Carroll

## Chapter 1: Introduction

In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, humanity is living a paradox of truly epoch scope. Those with a discerning eye see that the reigning way of life – globalizing, neoliberal capitalism – is incapable of serving as an organizational framework for resolving the deep ecological and economic crises which it has conjured into existence. Bank bailouts and ‘austerity’, worship of ‘free’ markets dominated by a few transnational behemoths, endless dead-end negotiations around the climate crisis – these are no more than a cruel joke, whose punch-line is visited upon the most vulnerable. Fueled by anger and desperation, protests and occupations rise up in resistance to a regime that relies increasingly on a preponderance of coercion over persuasion. Yet such outbreaks stall. The problem lies only partly in the sophisticated machinery of state repression. Resistance is not enough, and retreat into the self-limiting lifestyle politics of urban gardening and the like offers no more than personal solace. The opposition lacks the organizational and communicative infrastructure, and the radical vision, that might sustain cumulative movement toward a real alternative to ‘business as usual’. Meanwhile, ‘business as usual’ means that the 1% (actually, the .001%) continue to over-accumulate private wealth while ‘the people as the rest of us’ (Dean 2012: 18) cling, at best, to past gains in a deteriorating ecosystem. The situation is unsustainable, on multiple levels.

Thus, the dangerous paradox, expressed most concisely eight decades ago by Antonio Gramsci: ‘the old is dying and the new cannot be born’ (1971: 276). Among the challenges faced by those interested in creating an alternative future is that of producing and promulgating *counter-hegemonic* strategies and visions capable of winning broad popular support, and of serving as cognitive and cultural resources for a political shift: a transition from episodic, defensive resistance to responsible, radical proactivity. In an era when an unprecedented dual crisis of economy and ecology opens space for a renewed radical imaginary, for a clear alternative to neoliberal globalization, where are the sites for such collective imagining, and how might their activities be integrated with the agency of democratic movements?

This work’s objective is to identify and investigate such sites within global civil society. Since the mid-1970s, but particularly since the 1990s, *alternative policy groups* have generated important ideas, both visionary and strategic, for a ‘globalization from below’ in which transnational social movements have been leading protagonists. The analysis that follows has taken shape dialogically, through engagement with the 107 protagonists in alternative policy groups who generously gave their time and provided many brilliant reflections on their practices of alternative knowledge production and mobilization (alt KPM), or ‘cognitive praxis’.<sup>1</sup> It highlights knowledge that was co-produced, mostly within open-ended interviews, during field work I conducted between May 2012 and May 2013. The project has had a *participatory* dimension: insights gained from the field work are shared in dialogue with participants, to help them clarify their own work by seeing it in a broader, comparative context. This volume incorporates participants’ comments and reflections on a first draft I circulated in September 2013. I am open to ideas from readers about how the dialogical process might be taken further, and how producers of alternative knowledge might collaborate to their mutual benefit – as co-learners, sharing resources, dividing their labours, etc.

---

<sup>1</sup> On the concept of cognitive praxis see Eyerman and Jamison (1991:55) who hold that ‘it is precisely in the creation, articulation, formulation of new thoughts and ideas – new knowledge – that a social movement defines itself in society.’ In this report, cognitive praxis and alternative knowledge production and mobilization are used interchangeably.

This study already has several companions, aimed primarily at academic readers, which are just now being published. These articles are based on information that was gathered from websites and other sources, before the field work began. A key article (Carroll and Sapinski 2013) was published recently in the *Journal of World-Systems Research*.<sup>2</sup> It presents in some detail a social network analysis that situates the *transnational* alternative policy groups (TAPGs) that have been participating in this project as embedded actors within broader ‘neighbourhoods’ of global civil society.

This chapter introduces the 16 participating groups<sup>3</sup> and offers some reflections on the distinct niches they occupy within a movement of movements for global justice that is sometimes conceptualized as an incipient ‘global left’ (Sousa Santos 2006). As a preface to that, let me provide some terminological clarification.

- *Global civil society* can be defined as ‘the realm of non-coercive collective action around shared interests and values that operates beyond the boundaries of nation states’ (Glasius, Kaldor and H. Anheier 2006: v). It is, in my view, not a collection of ‘the good guys’ but a field of contention, distinct from the global economy and the inter-state system yet internally related to both. Reflecting the superior material and cultural resources of a dominant class, this terrain has long been dominated by a cosmopolitan bourgeoisie (Van der Pijl 1998).
- *Hegemonic policy groups* such as the Mont Pèlerin Society and Trilateral Commission have been the object of extensive research, underscoring their importance as *sites of conventional knowledge production and mobilization*, sometimes known as ‘policy-planning’ (Domhoff 2006). By the twentieth century’s closing decades a new breed of ‘advocacy think tanks’ (Abelson 1995) were actively shaping the neoliberal project of market-centred society (Macartney 2008; Stone 2000).
- *Neoliberalism* has been the dominant policy paradigm, but particularly since the global financial crisis of 2008, it is vulnerable to deep critique. Widely implemented in the 1980s and 1990s as the political complement to economic globalization, neoliberalism tended to increase economic disparities and to degrade public goods (Teepie 2000; Harvey 2005), while thinning the social basis for political consent and expanding the range of disaffected social interests (Cox 1987; Gill 1995). By the mid-1990s neoliberal policies had provoked a variegated grassroots politics of ‘alter-globalization’ – resisting the ‘corporate agenda’ but also putting forward democratic alternatives (Carroll 2003; Coburn 2010; Smith 2008; Stephen 2009).
- *Counter-hegemonic, or more simply, alternative knowledge* is a crucial resource for alter-globalization or global justice politics. Groups participating in this project aspire to counter-hegemonic KPM. At the beginning of each interview, I offered the following definition of ‘alternative knowledge’:  
analyses, strategies and social visions that *challenge predominant ideas* about how our lives are organized and lived, and that *point to and advocate alternative practices*, values, institutions, and so on.

In chapters that follow, I will report on the various analyses, practices, strategies and social visions that comprise the alternative knowledges produced by the 16 participating groups. It is not difficult to see how

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.jwsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Carroll\\_Sapinski\\_vol19\\_no2.pdf](http://www.jwsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Carroll_Sapinski_vol19_no2.pdf), accessed 17 September 2013. Other works from this project include Carroll (2013 and 2014).

<sup>3</sup> The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is a 17<sup>th</sup> participating organization, and is included in the distribution list. With David Huxtable, I have prepared a separate report for the CCPA, based on field work and interviews that were completed between May and July 2012. I presented that report at the June, 2013 CCPA board meeting in Ottawa. Two papers based on it are currently under review.



important such knowledge is to global justice politics. If another world, a better world, is possible, creating it will require both *critique* of dominant political-economic practices and relations and the *construction and advocacy* of alternative strategies, policies and visions that, as taken up in practice, might foster a cathartic shift from the episodic, fragmented resistances typical of subalternity to a shared ethico-political project that can become ‘a source of new initiatives’ (Gramsci 1971: 367). All transnational alternative policy groups seek to provide such intellectual leadership, in dialogue with the critical social movements that are the central protagonists in global justice politics. But they do so in different ways, and these differences open further possibilities for productive dialogue among the groups themselves.

- *Globalization*, as the imagery of ‘from below’ and ‘from above’ suggests, is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon – the emergent product of various practices and processes involving flows of goods, services, ideas, technologies, cultural forms, and people, and operating on many scales (Jessop 2002, 2007; Kellner 2002). In view of this complexity, Leslie Sklair’s concept of ‘*transnational practices*’ – ‘practices that cross state borders and do not originate with state actors or agencies’ (2001: 107) – offers some precision as an organizing construct for empirical work, and distinguishes transnational practices from both national and (state-centred) international ones. However, to engage in transnational practices does not remove agents from local settings, nor does it mean that their work is ‘global’ in some totalizing sense of placelessness (Carroll 2012).
- *Transnational alternative policy groups* are transnational in a double sense: they produce and mobilize knowledge about issues that transcend national borders, for constituencies in global civil society who transect national borders. TAPGs engage in practices of alter-globalization by addressing political, economic and cultural issues that transect national borders and by operating in social spaces that also cut across borders –i.e., their work is significantly transnational in both content and form.

Transnational alternative policy groups are the counter-hegemonic response to such well-known transnational hegemonic initiatives as the International Chamber of Commerce, European Round Table of Industrialists, Trilateral Commission and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (see Carroll and Sapinski 2010). We can conceptualize think tanks of the left and right as sites of cognitive praxis embedded in opposing historical blocs or as Smith (2008) puts it, global networks. In conjunction with aligned social forces, each organization develops and deploys knowledge, with the strategic intent to make its bloc more coherent and effective. Concretely, this entails quite different practices of alt KPM. Conventional think tanks may advocate change (the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s and 1980s and the current push for a ‘green economy’ are exemplars), but they are committed to reproducing a distinctive way of life centred upon capitalism and hierarchy as principles of economic and political organization. As such, their work fits readily into existing institutional structures, both national and transnational: their messages, strategically focused on well-formed policy networks, are routinely conveyed by corporate media that share the same world views and values (Hackett and Zhao 1998). TAPGs, in contrast, face the challenge of reaching a massive, diverse potential constituency, of creating new political methodologies that go against the grain in giving shape to emergent oppositional practices and of participating in the *transformation rather than replication* of identities, social relations and institutions (cf. Carroll 2007).

### *Introducing the participating TAPGs*

Each group participating in this project satisfies three criteria, which define the concept of transnational alternative policy group as a distinct agency of knowledge production and mobilization:

- (1) the group’s core function is *production and mobilization of knowledge*, including research, that challenges existing political-economic hegemonies and that presents alternatives, creates new paradigms etcetera;

- (2) a significant part of that cognitive praxis takes up *transnational issues* and speaks to *transnational counterpublics*;<sup>4</sup>
- (3) the group engages a wide range of issues, i.e., it is not specialized in one domain (such as water, trade or capital-labour relations).

Participating groups were selected from a larger set of 84 international organizations engaged in research and knowledge production. The 84 were compiled from my own knowledge of the field plus a number of keyword searches in the online version of the *Yearbook of International Organizations*. The 16 participating organizations met the three specified selection criteria particularly well, compared to the other organizations,<sup>5</sup> and in combination they ‘represent’ major regions of the Global North and South.

In the first few months of 2012, I contacted each of the selected groups and requested their participation in this project. I was heartened by the typically enthusiastic response I received.<sup>6</sup> However, I was also daunted by the prospect of studying 16 TAPGs in some depth. Recognizing my own limitations as a single researcher, I decided to focus on 10 groups, an ‘a-list’, at which I would conduct site visits and interviews with least five individuals. For the other six groups (the ‘b-list’) I relied on single interviews with key people, often executive directors or founding leaders. *The ‘a’ and ‘b’ distinction expresses a limitation of this research, not a limitation of any of the participating groups.*<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> In her theoretical reformulation of the ‘public sphere’, Nancy Fraser distinguishes a field of *subaltern counterpublics*, consisting of ‘parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs’ (1990: 67).

<sup>5</sup> For instance, Amnesty International produces knowledge for social change, but it is primarily a social movement organization engaged in ongoing, information-rich political campaigns. Much the same holds for Friends of the Earth International, the world’s largest network of grassroots environmentalist groups, which engages in extensive alt KPM but is focused on political action. University of Sussex-based Institute of Development Studies produces knowledge that occasionally challenges existing political-economic hegemonies and presents alternatives, but more typically holds fast to the political mainstream. Montreal-based Centre for Research on Globalisation serves more as a website for alternative journalism than as a centre for research. Moscow-based Institute for Global Research and Social Movements orients itself primarily to activists and developments based in Russia and only incidentally to other audiences. Vermont-based Global Justice Ecology Project takes up global ecological issues with a focus on forestry and climate change, for a largely American activist community. These kinds of groups are ‘near-TAPGs’. The line between them and the 16 groups I have selected for close examination is admittedly blurry.

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, Massachusetts-based ZCom did not respond to repeated requests, and was dropped from participation in this project. In some respects, ZCom is more akin to a site for alternative journalism and other communication than for alternative knowledge production *per se*; however, its leading role in the development of ‘participatory economics’ (PARECON) and more recently in founding the International Organization for a Participatory Society recommended ZCom as a participating group. For further discussion of ZCom and the production and mobilization of alternative knowledge see Carroll 2013 and 2014.

<sup>7</sup> One group, the Third World Network, was simply too busy to participate as an a-list organization; however, its Director, Yoke Ling Chee, provided rich insights in a lengthy interview she gave by Skype from Beijing, where she is based.

In all, 91 TAPG protagonists were interviewed individually, using a schedule of open-ended queries (see Appendix 1). The interviews ranged in length from half an hour to five hours, with the vast majority falling in the 1-2 hour range. For the ‘a-list’ groups, I aimed to conduct between eight and ten interviews. In each case, I tailored the actual number of interviews, on the basis of each group’s size and my own judgments – once in the field – of the extent and range of current activity. Relatively large organizations with many active initiatives such as the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RosaLux), Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and the Transnational Institute (TNI) were each tapped for 11 or more interviews; smaller groups (People’s Plan Study Group (PPSG) and the Third World Institute/Social Watch (ITeM)) provided five interviews.

*Table 1. Groups participating in this study*

<b>Est’d</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Number of participants<sup>a</sup></b>
1974	Transnational Institute (Amsterdam)	TNI	11
1975	Third World Forum (Dakar)	TWF	1
1976	Tricontinental Centre (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium)	CETRI	1
1976	Centre de recherche et d’information pour le développement (Paris)	CRID	8
1982	Participatory Research in Asia (New Delhi)	PRIA	12
1984	Third World Network (Penang)	TWN	1
1984	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (Manila)	DAWN	7
1989	Third World Institute/Social Watch (Montevideo)	ITeM/SW	5
1990	Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (Berlin)	RosaLux	12
1994	International Forum on Globalization (San Francisco)	IFG	7
1995	Focus on the Global South (Bangkok)	Focus	10
1997	Network Institute for Global Democratization (Helsinki)	NIGD	1
1997	People’s Plan Study Group (Tokyo)	PPSG	5
2001	Centre for Civil Society (Durban)	CCS	8
2005	Alternatives International (Montreal)	Alter-Inter	1
2005	India Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement (New Delhi)	CACIM	1

<sup>a</sup> Does not include twelve interviews with staff at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (a national alternative policy group participating in this study) and a focus-group interview with four RosaLux staff at the Johannesburg office.

Four groups formed in the mid-1970s, at the culmination of the 1960s protest wave, and as the initial crisis of the post-war era (1973-75) set in. The Transnational Institute (TNI), initially the international branch of the Institute for Policy Studies (based in Washington DC), was created in 1974 as ‘an international network

of scholar-activists committed to social change,<sup>8</sup> but its first undertaking was an international conference on and protest against Chile's 9/11 – the Pinochet coup of 1973. The Dakar-based Third World Forum (TWF) emerged in 1975. It has pursued a proactive political agenda, informed by Samir Amin's Marxist reformulation of dependency theory and emphasizing the crucial link between development and democratization. Belgian-based Tricontinental Centre (CETRI) and Paris-based *Centre Recherche et d'information pour le développement* (CRID) also were established with Third World foci, expressing the strong anti-imperialist thrust of the 1960s protest wave.

In the 1980s, four groups based in the Global South formed. The Delhi-based Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) started up in 1982 as a centre for participatory action research, and has broadened its project to embrace participatory democracy as a guiding vision of governance. The Third World Network (TWN) and DAWN – Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era – were established in 1984, the former in Penang, Malaysia, the latter initially in Bangalore, India (currently based in Manila). The TWN grew out of a national consumers association; DAWN was established as a global network of feminist activist intellectuals of the South. The 1980s was prime time for consolidation, in much of the Global North, of neoliberalism and the so-called Washington Consensus (Beder 2006), which subjected Southern countries to IMF-led austerity programs, which in turn spurred the formation of TWN, DAWN and other progressive initiatives. DAWN in particular drew upon women's entry into the public sphere of paid work, hastened by the Structural Adjustment Programs of the late 1970s and 1980s. Later in the decade, the end of military dictatorship in Uruguay created an opportunity to establish the Third World Institute (ITeM) in Montevideo, with ties from the start to the Third World Network. For movements in the North, however, the 1980s was for the most part a time of defensive, nationally bound campaigns, whether by British miners resisting Thatcherism (1984) or by popular groups in Canada opposing a free trade deal with the US (1987-88). These largely unsuccessful efforts resisted the neoliberal tide without advancing forward-looking alternatives to it. Yet in 1990, amid the ruins of the Stalinist state, Berlin-based Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RosaLux) was formed, initially as a small political group called the 'Social Analysis and Political Education Association.' It has since acquired a large organizational presence in Germany and globally, with offices worldwide, and a close institutional affiliation to Germany's democratic-socialist Left Party (Die Linke).

In the mid-1990s transnational alternative policy groups proliferated, as an intellectual aspect of the gathering global democracy movement, but also as responses to the crises and contradictions of neoliberal globalization. The world of transnational alternative policy groups gained its first major North America-based outfit in 1994. An intellectual outgrowth of the struggle against NAFTA and the Uruguay Round that begat the WTO, San Francisco's International Forum on Globalization (IFG) continues to describe itself as a North-South research and educational institution critiquing the impacts of economic globalization. A year later, Focus on the Global South (Focus) formed in Bangkok and began to develop its extensive policy-oriented research and solidaristic relations with grassroots movements in southeast and south Asia.

In the nine years after 1996, five more TAPGs were founded. These late risers have framed their projects around the critique of capitalist globalization and the call for global alternatives, often emphasizing the need for an empowered global civil society, as do the Network Institute for Global Democratization (NIGD, based in Helsinki, established in 1997) and the Centre for Civil Society (CCS, based in Durban, founded in 2001). People's Plan Study Group (PPSG), established in Tokyo in 1997 as a network of social movement activists and action-committed intellectuals, searches for democratic alternatives to global capitalism and has hosted research groups on transborder alliances and globalization, social movements, and other themes.

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.tni.org/page/history>, accessed on 3 October 2011.

Finally, two groups were founded in 2005. Montreal's Alternatives International (Alter-Inter), with ties to the Parisian complex of NGOs, emerged as a network of 'global justice' organizations dedicated to fostering solidarity and mutual understanding. The India Institute for Critical Action - Centre in Movement (CACIM), based in New Delhi, came directly out of the World Social Forum (WSF) process and has emphasized 'building and maintaining real and virtual spaces for fundamental research and critical reflection, exploration, action, and creation in the field of movement.'<sup>9</sup>

As social movement theorists have emphasized, activism has a cyclical character that is expressed in 'cycles of contention' (Tarrow 1994). In terms of groups founded per year, Table 1 suggests two waves of intense TAPG formation, one from 1974-76 (1.33 groups founded per year), and other from 1994-98 (0.8 group founded per year). These eight years account for half of the groups that formed over the 32-year period. The two waves appear to be articulated with the major cycles of activism over the past half-century. From the perspective of movement formation, we can see the invention and proliferation of transnational alternative policy groups as an intellectual aspect of these waves. The first (which actually continued through the first half of the 1970s) is identified in the collective imaginary with Paris 1968 (Wallerstein 1989); the second (which began to build in the 1990s) is identified with Seattle 1999, and took a far more international character (McNally 2006). As transnational actors, TAPGs that formed in the first wave (mid-1970s) responded to the injustices and social crises engendered by the 'development of underdevelopment,' including in the case of TNI the Pinochet coup of 1973. TAPGs emerging in the second wave responded to the injustices and crises of neoliberal globalization, a recurrent motif in the political frames through which IFG, Focus and other groups understand their projects. However, it is important to note the formation, during the 1980s, of four key Southern centres of alternative knowledge production and mobilization, as neoliberal austerity and democratization of the state (in the case of Uruguay) presented different combinations of threat and opportunity to activist intellectuals of the global South.

In Table 1 we can also see that continental Western Europe has held the largest clutch of groups (five of 16). North America – heavily over-represented as a favoured site for conventional think tanks<sup>10</sup> – is comparatively under-represented in the world of TAPGs. This may in part reflect the relatively disorganized state of left politics in North America. In selecting groups for possible participation, I was mindful of the importance of balancing representation of Global North and South; hence both the 'a' list and the 'b' list are equally apportioned between these two vast and variegated macro-zones. That said, relative to the distribution of world population, TAPGs of the South are vastly *under*-represented – the legacy of the material and cognitive injustices of colonialism and imperialism (Sousa Santos 2006), which is also evident in an overall distribution of international NGOs that heavily favours the Global North (Beckfield 2003).

The *regionalized* character of alt KPM is expressed not only in the location of TAPGs, but in the scope of their work. Some groups aspire to a fully 'global' purview – TNI, IFG, NIGD and RosaLux are exemplary. That all these groups are based in Europe and North America suggests a continuing strain, within the world

---

<sup>9</sup> <http://cacim.net>, accessed: 28 July 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Of the 400-odd 'free market' think tanks that make up the global network supported by the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, 177 are based in the US and Canada and 85 are based in Europe.  
<http://atlasnetwork.org/global-network-directory/>, accessed 3 April 2012.

Table 2. Projects and constituencies of 16 participating TAPGs

Acronym	Project	Main Constituency
Alter-Inter	Creates networks, promotes innovative initiatives in movements for economic, social, political, cultural and environmental rights; supports citizen action and WSF processes moving toward sustainable societies.	NGOs and activists of the Global North and South, through an extensive network of NGOs
CACIM	A networked association between individuals and organizations that cultivates and nurtures a culture of critical reflexivity and action.	Scholars and activists in India and internationally
CCS	Through critical scholarship, information dissemination and teaching and/training, advances eco-social justice by developing knowledge, dialogue and partnerships within civil society aimed at capacity-building.	Activists, scholars, students in Durban, Southern Africa and globally
CETRI	A centre for studies, publications, documentation and ongoing education on the development of North-South relations; promotes solidarity with the South and critique of neo-liberal developmentalism/globalization.	NGOs and activists primarily in Europe
CRID	A network of French NGOs for international solidarity, CRID stimulates the development of new proposals and capitalization of experiences, facilitates working groups and supports the WSF process.	Primarily French-based NGOs and activists, and international partners
DAWN	A network of feminist scholars, researchers and activists from the South working for economic and gender justice and sustainable and democratic development, through research, analyses, advocacy and training.	Women of the Global South and their allies
Focus	Combines policy research, advocacy, activism and grassroots capacity building in order to generate critical analysis and debates on policies related to corporate-led globalization, neo-liberalism and militarization.	Activists and scholars globally, with emphasis on Asian issues
IFG	A North-South research and educational institute of leading activists, scholars, and researchers providing analysis and critiques on the cultural, social, political, and environmental impacts of economic globalization.	Activists, students and scholars in North America and worldwide
ITeM / Social Watch	Through communication and education activities, promotes citizen involvement in global decision-making; Social Watch documents social inequities through a grassroots network and advocates for social justice.	Activists in 80+ countries, human rights advocates worldwide
NIGD	A 'coming-together' of researchers and activist projects promoting global democratization. Activities include: research, publishing papers, organizing workshops, seminars and conferences, and consultancy work.	Activist-scholars of North and South, many of them active in the WSF.
PPSG	A network of activists and action-committed intellectuals, searches for alternative, human-centred social, economic, and cultural systems.	Activist communities mainly in Japan
PRIA	An international centre for learning and promotion of participation and democratic governance; key initiatives focus on capacity building, knowledge building, participatory research, citizen-centric development.	Advocates of democratic governance, grassroots activists, CSOs and policy-makers in India, Asia and globally
RosaLux	A political education institution, affiliated to the democratic socialist Left Party. Acts as a think tank for political alternatives, organizes dialogues, supports progressive movements through offices worldwide.	The left in Germany, Europe and globally
TNI	An international network of scholar-activists committed to social change combined with a critical research institute that produces knowledge for popular and official audiences, on a wide range of policy issues.	Activists, policy experts, scholars – North and South
TWF	A network of politically-engaged intellectuals concerned with problems of development and democratization; aims to identify alternatives and craft policy recommendations in areas in which it conducts research.	Intellectuals and movement leaders primarily in the Global South
TWN	A network that conducts research and publishes on issues pertaining to the South, organizes meetings and provides a platform for Southern interests.	NGOs, activists, policy experts globally, emphasizing the South

system's North Atlantic heartland, of cosmopolitan universalism in the framing of counter-hegemony. On the other hand, a number of mostly Southern-based TAPGs often focus their efforts on issues and publics

that are transnational yet also regional. For instance, CCS trains its efforts to a considerable degree on southern Africa; Focus concentrates on south and east Asia; DAWN, TWN, ITEM and TWF all take the Global South as the target for their cognitive praxis.

Importantly, transnational alternative policy groups are not all of one piece in their political projects. For instance, Focus has placed the ‘paradigm of deglobalization’ at the centre of its social vision; other groups such as NIGD (also IFG), hew more closely to a vision of democratic globalization, explicitly contrasted with neoliberal globalization; TWN trumpets Third World resurgence– reminiscent of the 1970s movement for a ‘new international economic order’ that was choked by the rise of transnational neoliberalism (Bair 2009). Despite this diversity, some overarching points of convergence can be discerned, suggesting a ‘master frame’ (Snow and Benford 1992) that bridges across single issues and informs the practice of TAPGs. The frame includes five key analytical and value elements:

- (1) the critique of neoliberalism – of the class power and disparities it reinforces and the problematic implications of endless, unregulated accumulation by dispossession;
- (2) the importance of social justice and ecological sustainability as paramount values – a nascent social vision of global justice and sustainable human development (Magdoff and Foster 2011);
- (3) the belief that such an alternative future can be achieved only through grassroots democratic movements;
- (4) the ethical and strategic importance of North-South solidarity;
- (5) the value of critical analysis that can inform effective and appropriate strategies for creating change.

In a very provisional way, these elements of a master frame help specify the *content* of counter-hegemonic knowledge, as produced and mobilized by transnational alternative policy groups. This volume offers detailed insights on both the commonalities and distinctiveness of the projects pursued by these groups, as sites of cognitive praxis in the service of progressive social change. To be sure, regional specificities and limited resources shape the scope and content of projects and practices. In later chapters I will take these issues up at length. For now, to continue the task of introducing the groups included in this project, consider the basic descriptions in Table 2.

The distinct projects that TAPGs pursue and the constituencies they serve position them in specific locations within the field of global justice politics. In our recent article, JP Sapinski and I mapped this field by depicting the pattern of linkages between TAPGs and other international organizations, categorizing the latter in terms of their predominant political projects or ‘movement domains’. By aggregating TAPGs’ network neighbors into meta-nodes representing predominant domains, we can get a rough representation of how alternative policy groups connect with the broad segments of global civil society in which they are embedded. This mapping is shown as Figure 1. The black boxes in the sociogram contain sets of international organizations linked to our 16 TAPGs. Each set groups five or more organizations within a predominant political project.<sup>11</sup>

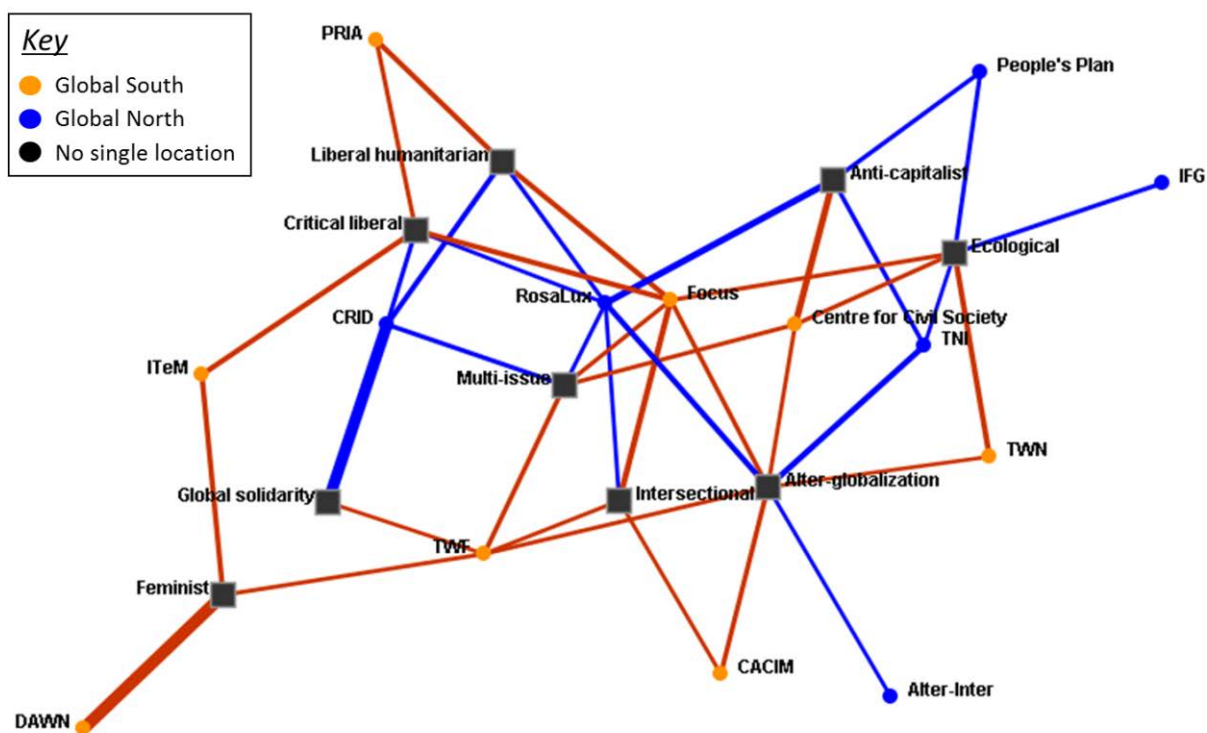
In the social space, TAPGs mediate *across* movement domains. Focus and RosaLux each mediate among six different domains (including the liberal-humanitarian sector), with RosaLux showing relatively extensive ties to anti-capitalist groups, of which it is an exemplar. Third World Forum maintains ties to five movement

---

<sup>11</sup> These projects represent distinct political strands, such as ecological and anti-capitalist. In all, 208 organizations are grouped into the nine thematic sets. For methodological details see Carroll and Sapinski, 2013, pp. 230-2.

domains. The Centre for Civil Society, also with extensive links to anti-capitalist international organizations, mediates among four different domains (including critical liberal groups), as does CRID, whose connections with global solidarity groups are particularly profuse.<sup>12</sup> Viewing the sociogram from the perspective of movement domains, eight TAPGs connect extensively to the alter-globalization domain, six articulate with the ecological domain, five are tied to groups with multi-issue frames and five are tied to the critical-liberal (human rights) segment. Additionally, four TAPGs link to groups whose political projects can be described, respectively, as anti-capitalist, intersectional or liberal-humanitarian. This configuration suggests that, as they produce and mobilize alternative knowledge, *TAPGs mediate among a plurality of movement sectors and political projects*. Their cognitive praxis positions them to speak to multiple counterpublics, with the possibility of fostering a convergence across difference. The ideological frameworks with which transnational alternative policy groups engage extend from liberal-humanitarian to radical anti-capitalist, but the most profuse ties lead to alter-globalization and ecological movement sectors.

Figure 1. Relations between TAPGs and nine movement domains



The analyses I have presented in this prefatory chapter are rather schematic and cursory: they rely only minimally on the rich insights I gained in the field from interviewing project participants. It is time to shift attention to what I learned from the practitioners.

<sup>12</sup> It is well to note the specificity of DAWN's project. The group's network is understandably feminist-focused, but DAWN's own praxis brings a strongly intersectional analysis to that network, linking gender oppression to other forms of domination. Also note that CETRI does not have links to any domain above the cutpoint density of 0.1 and thus does not appear in the figure.



## Chapter 2: Challenges and responses

Transnational alternative policy groups can claim a host of important accomplishments (see Table 3 for some examples). Yet these have been wrested from what often seems to be an obdurate, entrenched institutional structure. The victories are hard won, and not irreversible. To complicate matters further, these are trying times. They present very sharp challenges, both longstanding (the lack of funds for groups that challenge established hegemonies) and emergent (the 2008 financial crisis and its continuing ramifications, the decrease in last decade or so of institutional support for a ‘global civil society’ that includes vibrant democratic movements). Interview participants offered many valuable observations and commentaries on the challenges they face and their responses to them. It is this chapter’s task to review these.

We can see in Table 3 that transnational alternative policy groups have made some important contributions to the movement-of-movements for global justice, particularly since the 1990s. Some of the most high-profile accomplishments have occurred in tandem with major meetings of the global ruling class, if I may use quaint but accurate terminology. The most famous of those was no doubt the 1999 WTO Ministerial in Seattle. But one can discern counter-hegemonic contributions right up to the 2012 UN conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the 2013 BRICS summit in Durban. An instructive contrast is between the IFG teach-in in Seattle, just before the WTO Ministerial, and the launching, by TNI and partners of the Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity campaign at Rio+20. The former was part of a focused, disruptive action that stalled the WTO’s project of writing a constitution for transnational neoliberalism. Along with other groups, the IFG contributed critical analysis for activists intent on stopping the WTO in its tracks, with impressive results. The latter was timed and sited to coincide with a conference that trumpeted ‘the green economy’ (aka green capitalism) as a new project for global governance. The campaign to Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity involves the coordinated efforts of many groups in a long-term initiative in transnational movement building, popular education and critical policy analysis.

The comparison suggests a *double transition* from the 1990s wave of alter-globalization politics, when it was possible to mount successful defensive actions, and to hot-house the mobilization of alt knowledge within on-site teach-ins. In the current situation, alternative knowledge is developed and mobilized (1) in a more sustained effort continuing beyond immediate acts of resistance that involves (2) less of a defensive critique and more detailed articulation of alternatives. The shift from short-term disruptive tactics to longer-term strategy reflects both the tactical innovations of global elites, who have securitized their meetings to prevent disruption (think of the 2010 G20 meeting in Toronto) and the increasing capacity, within the global justice movement, to develop alternative perspectives, analyses and practices. Transnational alternative policy groups have played an important role in building that capacity. But their contributions have been made under difficult conditions and with very limited resources.

### *More with Less: TAPGs vs mainstream think tanks*

Some of the challenges facing TAPGs arise immediately from the project of producing knowledge that contests hegemony. Early in each interview, I posed the following question:

Conventional think tanks like the Brookings Institution or the International Crisis Group create knowledge for managing the *status quo*. In your experience, *are there particular challenges* in attempting to produce knowledge that has *transformative potential* for social and political change? *How does your group deal with such challenges?*

Table 3. Some accomplishments ('a-list' TAPGs)

Acronym	Accomplishment
CCS	BRICs From Below Counter-summit in Durban brings local and international activists together. <a href="http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/default.asp?11.65.3.2894">http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/default.asp?11.65.3.2894</a> (March, 2013).
CRID	Convergence of ecological, labour and international solidarity movements, facilitated by CRID: a decade-long tendency concretized in a joint paper at Rio+20 (June 2012).
DAWN	GEEJ (Gender, Economic and Ecological Justice) and other DAWN training institutes have brought young Southern feminist activists together for intensive participatory education in interlinkage analysis, fostering transnational networks of alumni (2003 to present).
Focus	Focus-sponsored Climate Space enables a productive dialogue at WSF between proponents of <i>buen vivir</i> , the Happiness Index, defense of the commons, de-growth, de-globalization and food sovereignty (March 2013); popularization of 'deglobalization' as an alternative paradigm (2002ff).
IFG	IFG teach-ins provide activists with critical analyses of capitalist globalization, most notably at the 1999 Battle in Seattle (1995 to present). IFG, leads an informal coalition in outing the text of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), precipitating the collapse of secret international negotiations at the OECD (1998).
ITeM/SW	Social Watch, whose secretariat is based at ITeM, mobilizes a vast international network of 'Watchers', whose monitoring of states on issues of poverty eradication and gender justice helps build international awareness and solidarity (annual Social Watch Reports from 1996 to present).
PPSG	PP21 (loosely, a predecessor to PPSG) organized the international activist conferences for transborder democracy that partly inspired the WSF (1989-2002). Through publications and meetings, PPSG helps bridge the massive 'generation gap' in Japan, bringing young activists together with the older generation, and links activism in Japan to transnational movements (currently).
PRIA	PRIA bridges practitioner and scientific knowledge, creating dialogical engagements that empower marginalized people while promoting participatory-democratic practices and policies among social professionals transnationally (1990s to present).
RosaLux	Through the International Centre for Dialogue and Cooperation, collaborates with local movements in 25 countries to build capacity and foster unity through dialogue; in Germany, research at the Institute for Critical Social Analysis ( <i>IfG</i> ), strategizes 'left politics and democratic-socialistic transformation of the current capitalistic society' (2008 to present).
TNI	Drugs and Democracy engages with IGOs and progressive governments, promoting harm reduction policies; with allies, TNI develops strategies for 'alternative regionalisms', advocates remunicipalization of water and other privatized goods; co-launches the Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity campaign at Rio+20 (currently).

The most obvious challenge was clearly put by IFG's Executive Director, Victor Menotti:<sup>13</sup>

It's Godzilla versus Bambi. They've got all the money in the world to deploy, to delay the phase-out of carbon fuels, and we're working with college interns and researchers here; and

<sup>13</sup> Participants whose statements are directly attributed to them agreed to this practice.

groups are scattered and all over the place and can't agree on priorities and competition for scarce funding among those groups.

Other participants agreed. 'The most dominant challenge is resources,' said PRIA's founder, Rajesh Tandon. There are few if any big funders for TAPGs; thus the work is often the labour of many volunteers, and/or of staff who work long hours for relatively modest pay.

The challenges of resource scarcity are amplified by the nature of alternative knowledge and how it must be produced. Alternative knowledge is holistic and historically sensitive; it endeavors to situate issues in their fullest context, and it typically is produced with the active participation of grassroots communities, activists in critical social movements and others who are excluded from institutional power or who support critical movements. Mainstream think tanks typically work within the silos and enclosures of conventional thought; their task is to produce pragmatic knowledge, not critical knowledge.<sup>14</sup> They strive to solve specific problems in the management of existing institutions, but do not connect the dots between apparently separate issues like food, climate, trade, economic inequality and health. Like other TAPGs, 'PPSG has to deal with almost all of the areas – politics, economy, gender, environment, military – so we cannot give people deeper knowledge just as conventional think tanks can do' (Hibiki Yamagushi). The challenge is to do more with less. Moreover, and again unlike conventional think tanks, TAPGs typically work collaboratively and dialogically with civil-society groups. I will have much more to say about the particularities of these practices in a later chapter. For now, I want to emphasize that these methodologies of cognitive praxis are especially labour-intensive and time-consuming. As TNI's Hilary Wainwright reflected, producing critical, alternative knowledge

involves long term relationships; it's not just being able to move in there, take a picture, and move out. For example, recently I've written something about something in Greece,<sup>15</sup> but I was able to do it because of relationships built up over a long period with movements and political activists in Greece. That is expensive. It involves also long term relationships, ways of working that are collaborative and egalitarian, none of [which] would appear on the agenda of conventional think tanks.

The challenge of doing more with less is further amplified by differences in institutional positioning. As Hilary further noted, hegemonic knowledge does not exist in some sort of cloud; 'has a social base, a social context and it's the product of power relations; but they're the dominant ones, so they are kind of taken for granted.' Indeed, conventional think tanks form part of a hegemonic structure that includes the state, mainstream media and educational institutions.<sup>16</sup> As such, they enjoy taken-for-granted access to

---

<sup>14</sup> Robert Cox (1995: 31-2) distinguishes two kinds of systematic knowledge, or theory, in terms of whether the intent is to maintain the existing order or to change it. 'Problem-solving' theory 'takes the world as given (and on the whole as good) and provides guidance to correct dysfunctions or specific problems that arise within this existing order.' 'Critical' theory, in contrast, is concerned with 'how the existing order came into being and what the possibilities are for change in that order. The first is concerned with specific reforms aimed at the maintenance of existing structures, the second with exploring the potential for structural change and the construction of strategies for change.'

<sup>15</sup> Hilary's article, 'Transformative Power: Political organisation in transition', published in the 2013 *Socialist Register*, is available at <http://www.tni.org/paper/transformative-power-political-organisation-transition>.

<sup>16</sup> On the concepts of hegemonic structures and projects see Jessop (1983), Joseph (2002) and Carroll (2006).

apparatuses of political and cultural power. Daniel Chavez of TNI observed that for the Brookings Institution and similar organizations

it's much easier for them to get funding, it's much easier for them to get access to the big media. It's much easier for them to access development organizations, so if they want to talk with UNDP or UNICEF or the World Bank, it's much easier for them to access the top people in these organizations.

Participants cited a number of exclusionary practices that keep TAPGs at the margins of public discourse and policy formation. At the extreme, exclusion takes the form of stealth practices of political and economic power, which largely foreclose opportunities for oppositional knowledge to gain any traction. For instance, in its work on trade policy in the Philippines, Focus confronts a situation in which technocrats in government, often working closely with corporate lobby groups, formulate policy with very limited participation from civil society. Practices of secrecy during negotiations allow public access to the official texts of trade agreements only after they have been signed, narrowing the window for engaging in a debate to the realm of Senate ratification (Joseph Purugganan). Similarly, TNI's efforts to produce critical knowledge on land-grabbing come up against the fact that one of the key players, 'finance capital – hedge funds and pension funds', operates in tight secrecy, as Jun Borras explained.

Conventional think tanks are the beneficiaries of decades of astute initiatives by what TNI Chair Susan George has called the Gramscian right. Unlike many post-modern leftists of the 1980s and 1990s, the Gramscian right has understood that in order to prevail, ideas must be rooted in material infrastructures and they need to cohere as a persuasive hegemonic project. 'Defining, sustaining, and controlling culture is crucial: get into people's heads and you will acquire their hearts, their hands, and their destinies.'<sup>17</sup> As key sites where the component parts of neoliberalism are produced, refined and reworked, conventional think tanks form elements of a dominant order that is vivified by neoliberal cadre in academe and media who promulgate 'the current mantra' of global corporate power as the only means of maintaining or achieving prosperity (Brid Brennan).

But the challenges for alt KPM go far beyond structural disadvantages; they find parallel expression in limited cultural and psychological capacities for mass-based radical politics. If knowledge always has a social base, the practices I have reviewed above keep the base for counter-hegemonic knowledge thin. For TAPGs, this means that a major challenge is that of winning 'credibility' in the public sphere. In Paris, CRID's president, Bernard Salamand, told us that 'we are faced with a lack of credibility from the representatives of the system or their allies, especially the corporate media.' As a result, for Alternatives, in Montreal,

When we say something, by definition it is portrayed in the mainstream media as 'these people are against everything' – they say that all the time. We tell them 'no, *you* are against everything and everybody, not us,' but we don't have the main mic, I would say, so at the end they are winning on that level (Michel Lambert).

The net effect of this predominant messaging, particularly in the Global North, has been to remove from mainstream public discourse the option of a radically transformed world. In Germany, 'a lot of people don't think that some sort of transformation is possible' (Mario Candeias); in the US the same phenomenon surfaces as 'people's resistance' to the very idea that they could live their lives differently. Ironically, a barrier that IFG faces in the US is *popular resistance* – not to corporate and state domination, but rather, to alternative ideas: the widespread 'first instinct to peg the knowledge in a certain category, like "oh, those are

---

<sup>17</sup> Susan George (1997). 'How to win the war of ideas: Lessons from the Gramscian right.' *Dissent* (summer): 47-53.

just those socialists; or those are just communists.” (Anjulie Palta). In France, CRID’s efforts to press for change often meet with the refrain, “You are dreamers, you idealize how the world works, and you don’t understand that it is impossible for us to change as individuals,” leading Bernard Salamand to conclude that ‘perhaps our biggest adversary is fatalism.’

In many ways, then, TAPGs, like the alternative media organizations to which they are kin, occupy a field on which they must ‘play uphill’ (Hackett and Carroll 2006). As they seek to win space for alternatives, TAPGs are presented with dilemmas that stem from the uneven and tilted lay of the land. At TNI, Daniel Chavez grants that

if you want to be taken seriously, you also have to publish in high quality social science journals. But even if we want to do that, it’s not always easy because we want to ... produce knowledge in a different way that is not just isolated research or work in an ‘ivory tower’. What we try to do is research in partnership, in cooperation,...[to] be entirely engaged with the people we are doing research about.

Similarly, at PRIA Rajesh Tandon reflected on the ways in which participatory methodologies of knowledge production contradict traditional positivism and elite policy formation, undermining the credibility of alt knowledge:

...the theory is that change happens from the top, and this is the only place where knowledge can be produced. Now PRIA’s perspective is that change also happens on the bottom. Yes, it requires the top, but the top alone can’t bring about change. And the modes of production of knowledge are different at the bottom.

The result is that, in the hegemonic perspective, PRIA is not visualized as a research-producing institution. As a third instance, Steffen Kuehn explained that RosaLux’s project of promoting transformation as a process that moves in many small steps toward new paradigms is continually subverted by a mass-mediated Hobson’s choice:

sometimes we are kind of forced to reproduce certain things that are part of the problem themselves. If you want to be heard and if you want to be accepted by the media ... you need to bring things up in a very tabloid way ... or you use scientific language that is excluding many of the people.

In each of these scenarios, TAPGs must perform a balancing act that incorporates practices of conventional think tanks in combination with more alternative modes of cognitive praxis. In striking a balance between producing professional-scientific knowledge and popular education, between ‘insider’ approaches that centre upon institutionalized power and ‘outsider’ approaches at the grassroots, between media representations that either trivialize or obfuscate new paradigms of political thinking, TAPGs risk, alternatively, cooptation and marginalization (more on that below). The danger in all this is that in the pursuit of success in the world of policy analysis, *you become Brookings*, as Focus’s Andrew de Sousa put it:

For me, one specific challenge is to *not* become Brookings or one of those guys. I think that’s a big one, because when you spend your time immersed in the reports and in that world, you start to become part of that arena or that planet. I think it’s a constant struggle for us.

Apart from the tenacity of activist-researchers themselves, what prevents this from happening is what Jun Borrás called the ‘subjective forces’ comprising diverse constituencies for alt KPM and counter-hegemonic politics – the movements and counterpublics that themselves generate new frames for understanding the world and its possibilities. Without these subjective forces, alt policy groups would have no real social base.

Indeed, although TAPGs attempt to influence the mainstream, they are often much more active in striving to build counterpublics armed with critical analysis. On this score, there are again challenges unique to alt knowledge. In the first place, how to connect with progressive people? For Nicole Bidegain of DAWN, a group that not only produces alt policy analysis but trains activists in feminist interlinkage analysis,

...the first and the most important challenge is to find people who have this kind of holistic approach of what should be done and that are able to think from an interlinkage analysis and perspective. Because our education systems are so divided in silos, and you are experts from this very narrow part of the reality, who are not able to think outside the box. And DAWN is really that: it's really connecting everything that it's possible to connect, not just a melting pot but really thinking how this impacts this and that.... [W]e want to reach more people and we want that other young people and women can join DAWN. But we really need to start from the social movement – how we can find people that are interested and not afraid to leave their comfort zone and explore other knowledges and the need to think from this interlinkage perspective.

Another side to this challenge of 'finding people' is reaching out to broader publics that encompass great numbers who may be open to more critical perspectives. This can mean jettisoning some of the investments and significations of the old left. As TNI's Pietje Vervest observed,

I think one of our key challenges is to go beyond our own circles and to find a language which is acceptable and understandable by those we would like to influence. This is a key challenge, I think. I can see the way, you know, when we have a public event and someone is chairing and they say, 'welcome comrades' – it's completely out of context.

Another challenge to highlight in these comparisons between TAPGs and conventional think tanks has to do with the praxis of alt KPM. Conventional policy knowledge takes as given what already exists and, within that, seeks to solve specific problems, or to make limited improvements. The deeply structured relations that ground neoliberal hegemony – the market, the capital-labour relation, the liberal state – are already regnant in the global formation. The neoliberal project is primarily to rework, to repackage and to reform, to validate, to demonstrate global capitalism's continuing viability, to deflect calls for social justice by insisting on the plain justice of the market, to suggest pragmatic solutions that add up to a passive revolution – a series of carefully managed transformations from above. Conventional think tanks, like the hegemonic governance institutions they serve, follow a 'logic of replication'<sup>18</sup> that reifies and serves to reproduce the dominant paradigm.

Transnational alternative policy groups take a much more open-ended position on human capacities and possibilities. A crucial element of alt knowledge has to do with transformation, not only past transformations, but future ones, not only transformations of 'objective reality', but of ourselves. Yet as already intimated ('You are dreamers', etc.), this position is not easily established. One of the more open-ended groups participating in this project is CACIM – India Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement. Active from its inception with the WSF, CACIM has put 'open space' at the centre of its praxis: it refuses to make political demands or to present an analysis of the contemporary world, let alone a vision of another world. In consequence, as CACIM founder Jai Sen told me,

---

<sup>18</sup> For more on this see my 2007 essay 'Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in a Global Field', re-posted at TNI's website: <http://www.tni.org/inthedia/hegemony-and-counter-hegemony-global-field>, accessed 28 August 2013.

The formulation of CACIM is obscure for many people. For many activists, it's obscure. It's at one level, a little bit self-evident, parts of it, but then it doesn't look like anything else they know. It doesn't go out and say 'we are an alternative think tank – we are an alternative to the authorities'. We don't go out and say anything like that. We don't talk about social justice, overtly. We don't talk about peace agenda, whatever, whatever, whatever.... We don't even talk about power structure. We talk about transformative potential – what the hell does that mean? In what? In yourself. In yourself, okay, but what does that have to do – and we don't spell out, I think, any of this. So I think that's been the biggest challenge of comprehension, of translation.

At RosaLux, a group that has gravitated more to the 'movement of movements' current within the WSF, a similar concern for praxis – viewing social reality, both objective and subjective, as radically open-ended – is prevalent. As Lutz Brangsch explained, the old-left view of contradictions as objective and systemic – 'out there' – must be rejected in favour of a reflexive sense of the dialectic which places self-change at the centre. Radical collective agents – whether Die Linke or RosaLux – are not heroic instruments of system change; they must themselves participate in transformation, and they must recognize their own shortcomings as 'part of the problem'. For transnational alternative policy groups, the challenge is one of discerning what initiatives are feasible in the circumstances, while organizing an ongoing process of self-change. RosaLux and its cousins are

part of the solution, ... but part of the problem too, as we must see what are the limitations we are confronted with, which limitations we can overcome, which limitations we must accept because we have no possibility to overcome it now. And of course, how we organize the process of self-change – how to change ourselves. What are the conditions, what are the ways, and what are the directions of this process of self-development, self-criticism?

Needless to say, these are issues that conventional think tanks never consider.

My query about TAPGs and conventional think tanks provoked a number of responses that elaborated upon how the former deal with the unique challenges of alt KPM. Jerry Mander, founder of the IFG, told me, 'we call ourselves a *think and do tank*.' Mainstream think tanks often rest content with producing documents that are fed into elite policy networks and sometimes given play in the corporate media. But an alternative policy group like the IFG has, as part of its mandate 'to activate large movements':

We're not just satisfied with exposing what is crappy about the world; we want to try to do something about it. ... The information is for a purpose, and the purpose is movement building for change.

Other participants would agree with this statement, but some might add that for movement-building to accompany alternative knowledge production the knowledge needs to be developed in close dialogue with the movements. For instance, here is part of what Pablo Solon, Executive Director of Focus, had to say on the same issue:

Well, we are focused on producing knowledge, but also on building social movements' power. Our main goal is not to produce knowledge as knowledge, because we think if you speak about transformation, transformation is going to be done by these different social movements. So we work very much with them and we learn from them, so we don't think that it's only a problem of having an alternative that is very good. An alternative that is very good is also an alternative that is followed by social movements, so you cannot have an approach to alternative knowledge that doesn't deal with the reality of action. In that sense, the approach is of course very different than the approach of other think tanks that you have that are

progressive, but are mainly think tanks of knowledge and of course very different than think tanks that are more from the establishment.

Focus's approach can be seen as lending a certain kind of validity to alt knowledge, which often eludes the knowledge produced in elite circles, Movements, after all, are carriers of great practical and ethical wisdom. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Indigenous movement, where participatory approaches can empower people to produce their own reliable knowledge. Vicki Tauli-Corpuz, Executive Director of Tebtebba Society, Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education, and a longtime board member of IFG, reflected on the struggle against enclosure that Indigenous communities have waged, with the support of Tebtebba and IFG:

if [conventional think tanks] perpetuate the knowledge systems that just entrench the status quo, then I think the way that we can really contest or challenge that is by doing the research ourselves. We have to really do our own research and present this to challenge some of the dominant thinking that has been perpetuated all these years. So that's one of the things: we help our groups do that research themselves and we have published this research. Then we also use the results of this research to influence decisions nationally as well as globally. ... For instance, in the use of medicinal plants -- we challenge the patenting of the knowledge that they [corporates] have actually generated from Indigenous people's knowledge systems. So those are some of the things that we push that we are able to document, for instance, how these plants have always been used by our ancestors since time immemorial; and therefore these scientists who claim that they are the ones who developed this knowledge will have to be challenged.

Similarly, Nathalie Pere-Marzano told me that, in contrast to conventional think tanks, at CRID alternative knowledge arises out of dialogue with partners in Africa, Asian and Latin America, on 'issues they have to deal with and on which they need help' in widening reach and visibility. And at TNI, according to Brid Brennan who coordinates the program on Alternative Regionalisms, there has been a strategic effort to take an 'initial insight', such as Susan George's analysis of the predatory impact of debt on the Global South in *A Fate Worse than Debt* (1988), and follow it up, from other angles, to create a '*sustained insight*'. As a sustained insight, the knowledge is retained in movement praxis. It thereby becomes 'a sustained conviction that something is really wrong if the world is geared like this and continues to be geared like this.' Sustaining an insight requires continuing, rigorous research on the issue, which over time uncovers fresh ideas and avoids simple repetition. In this way, TNI has been able to maintain a focus on debt as a major political issue, over several decades. We see in these instances how transnational alternative policy groups produce and mobilize knowledge in close concert with movements, and in forms that have strategic value for movements.

As mentioned, many conventional think tanks enjoy regular access to policy circles and mainstream media. TAPGs, on the other hand, struggle to get their messages into the mainstream spotlight. To deal with the access deficit, CRID and other groups link their cognitive praxis to 'citizen campaigning', creating public events that attract journalists and sometimes oblige politicians to appear on panels, thereby opening communication channels. In general, transnational alternative policy groups need to create such *communicative spaces*, since neoliberal capitalism does not automatically offer them up.

The spaces vary according to the content of the issues being pursued. The TNI's Drugs and Democracy program is perhaps unique in its very sharp strategic focus on policy makers in progressive administrations, where the failed policies of the 'war on drugs' have been critically re-examined. As program director Martin Jelsma remarked, Drugs and Democracy directs attention to



countries where things are on the move, ... we're always on the lookout for the opportunities – the opening doors; and then [we] also focus the research, the publication to accelerate incipient change processes that we then try to analyze, try to feed with arguments and with dialogue.... There has to be an opportunity for change.

A key aspect of this approach is the convening of informal 'dialogue groups' that include government officials and other stakeholders. These groups are not publically profiled; instead, they offer an opportunity for TNI to conduct carefully pitched policy briefings in a dialogical mode, and to have an open, off-the-record discussion which may lead to new political initiatives. Currently, the countries of Latin America's 'pink tide' present the most propitious openings for progressive policy dialogues, but it is not inconceivable that the other opportunities may appear in years ahead.

More typically, TAPGs create communicative spaces on the outside of state power, in alliance with social movements and civil society organizations (CSOs). For nearly two decades, IFG has been using its teach-in methodology, borrowed from the 1960s American new left and often timed and sited to coincide with major high-profile events such as the 1999 Seattle Ministerial, 'to make the connections' across issues and movements and to contribute directly to movement mobilization, as IFG Treasurer Bing Gong told me. The role of transnational alternative policy groups in building cross-movement understanding and solidarities was also noted by Hibiki Yamagushi, who pointed out that the process of *convening* social activists from a wide range of areas including militarization, feminism, human rights and homelessness can have a catalytic impact (more on this later). 'By getting together, by connecting these kind of people who otherwise could not meet each other,' PPSG has offered a critical analysis of 'the state of the world' and has proposed 'a different way of thinking, a different mindset to ordinary people.' Such a strategy is especially important in places like Japan, where a strong 'inward-looking' culture, reinforced by the media mainstream, offers little scope for global justice politics. Although severe resource constraints and language barriers prevent PPSG from operating on a fully transnational basis, the group always endeavors to promote transnational thinking at the grassroots by showing how daily life in Japan 'is connected to the daily lives of other people in other parts of the world.' Alongside the cultivation of communicative relations across movements, an important constituency is progressive academics. Some TAPGs, such as CCS and Focus, are housed in universities, affording them opportunities on a continuing basis to create synergies. Others have established promising initiatives such as PRIA's joint programs with the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and with the University of Victoria, and TNI's popular (and free) web-based courses on participatory democracy and public service, offered within Atilio Boron's Latin American Programme of Distance Education in Social Sciences (PLED).

As a final point of comparison with conventional think tanks, my own research on the latter has mapped the dense networks through which mainstream centres of KPM communicate and collaborate.<sup>19</sup> A particularly stunning example of this close coordination is the Atlas Economic Research Foundation Network, an outgrowth of Friedrich von Hayek's Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS). The Atlas network is a vast formation of more than 400 market-oriented think tanks in more than 80 countries, most of them nationally-focused and founded with the help of at least one MPS member. The Atlas network takes its name from the novel *Atlas Shrugged* by uber-libertarian Ayn Rand. Founded in 1981 by Antony Fisher, who studied with Hayek at the London School of Economics in the 1950s, and funded by wealthy individuals and corporations, Atlas envisages 'a free, prosperous and peaceful world where limited governments defend the rule of law, private property and free markets' and attempts 'to strengthen the worldwide freedom movement by identifying, training, and supporting individuals with the potential to found and develop effective independent

---

<sup>19</sup> See Carroll and Shaw 2001, Carroll and Carson 2003, Carroll and Sapinski 2010.

organizations that promote our vision in every country.’<sup>20</sup> In 2012 the Atlas Leadership Academy (ALA) was launched as way of accelerating and expanding the reach of Atlas’s training and mentorship programs around the World. ALA ‘enrolls the world’s most visionary and committed intellectual entrepreneurs and provides the tools and individual growth they need to effectively advance the cause of liberty.’<sup>21</sup>

Not only are vast networks like Atlas well established; these collective intellectuals of corporate capitalism continue to proliferate, and they are complemented by many overlapping memberships across the governance boards of the world’s major conventional transnational policy groups. My own research on multiple board affiliations that knit together 11 leading organizations of this kind (circa 2007) shows that

a remarkable number of individuals – 81 in all – serve on multiple policy boards. Tellingly, 49 of these policy-group networkers also hold directorships with 76 of the 500 leading corporations in the world. Through interlocking corporate directorships those 76 companies are directly tied to another 184 leading firms, so that 260 of the world’s 500 major corporations have board-level ties, directly or at one remove, to the 11 transnational policy groups. The policy board network is a highly integrated configuration that is deeply embedded in the broader network of the transnational capitalist class. By linking profusely with each other at a governance level while pulling top corporate directors onto their boards, transnational policy groups play especially integrative roles in shrinking the social space of the global elite – linking business leaders to intellectuals and leaders from other fields and creating a unified voice within a discursive field enriched by the diverse transnational initiatives of the policy groups (Carroll 2013: 659).

In comparison, the network that knits together the main protagonists in transnational alternative policy groups is quite sparse. As of late 2011, among core activist-researchers, most of the groups participating in this project had no overlapping memberships with other participating groups. In fact, individuals with cross-memberships numbered just five, compared to the 81 interlocking board members that connect the hegemonic policy boards into a connected network. The five core activist-researchers with multiple group-affiliations knit six of 16 groups into a connected network; in comparison, all 11 hegemonic policy boards were linked through membership overlaps into a connected network, and 72% of all pair of boards were directly connected, compared to only 5% of TAPGs.<sup>22</sup>

There are obvious reasons why the network supporting neoliberal globalization is far larger and more coherent than its alternative. Resource disparities combined with a hierarchical mode of organization that makes elite integration a common practice are powerful factors that work to the advantage of the hegemonic bloc. Still, transnational alternative policy groups and aligned social movements have resources and organizational means of their own. Within the counter-hegemonic bloc, dialogical venues such as the World Social Forum – both as open space and as movement of movements – enable TAPGs to participate in more

---

<sup>20</sup> See Plehwe 2009: 35. Quotation from <http://atlasnetwork.org/blog/2010/01/mission/>, accessed 2 August 2013.

<sup>21</sup> <http://atlasnetwork.org/blog/2011/11/atlas-leadership-academy/>. For an interactive map showing the 400-odd think tanks that comprise the Atlas network, go to <http://atlasnetwork.org/global-network-directory/>, accessed 2 August 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. The six TAPGs that do form a connected network are ITeM/SW, DAWN, TWN, IFG, TNI and Focus. They are interconnected by virtue of the multiple affiliations of Walden Bello, John Cavanagh, Meenakshi Raman, Roberto Bissio and Celita Eccher.

episodic, loosely organized networks spanning across many political domains, as in the Assemblies of Convergence that conclude each Forum. Such networking can help launch more durable processes of alt KPM and movement-building. It is worth noting that eleven of the 16 groups participating in this project belong to the International Council of the WSF.

Still, there is a definite need for transnational alternative policy groups and kindred groups to invent modes of mutual aid and collaboration. Can the global justice movement make gains while ‘playing uphill’? According to CRID’s Bernard Salamand, ‘it is indeed possible to win if, first of all, we set things up collectively and with the drive of solidarity and not that of competition.’ To rise to the challenge posed by a well-integrated hegemonic bloc that promotes neoliberal globalization, TAPGs need to heed the advice of Nick Buxton of TNI, who told me, ‘I think some of the progressive knowledge producers need to get systematically together, strategically together, and combine forces.’

### *Mainstreaming and marginalization*

A common dilemma in transformative politics, closely related to the insider/outsider dilemma, is that between going to the mainstream or remaining on (or perhaps being relegated to) the margins. The former offers the possibility of real and immediate influence and impact through the state and the dominant institutions, but it risks incorporation of one’s project into those dominant structures, in a form so diluted as to be unrecognizable as a challenge to hegemony. On the other hand, disengaging from hegemonic structures and ideologies, characteristically in the practice of a prefigurative politics of radical alterity, can enable a generative politics that creates new practices and relations, or at least creates proposals for them; but it risks marginalization and confinement to subcultures that lack visibility and influence, or are easily deviantized in the mainstream perspective.<sup>23</sup> To explore how this dilemma is lived in the practices of alt knowledge, I asked project participants the following question:

In producing and mobilizing alternative knowledge, *do you experience a tension* between ‘mainstreaming’ and ‘marginalization’ – between initiatives that may reach large audiences but fail to challenge entrenched power, and initiatives that do challenge power but reach only small audiences? Are there ways that your group attempts to *mitigate* this tension?.

The question was intentionally provocative, and perhaps a bit cheeky in posing a sharp dualism, which some participants artfully deconstructed. Others accepted my framing of the dilemma and pointed to strategies they have devised to deal with it. Among the many insightful responses to this question were a few that stood out for their sharp clarity.

Some participants looked into what is at stake in the mainstreaming/marginalization contrast. In Alternative’s Michel Lambert’s perspective, the question is how far to buy into hegemonic discourse in framing one’s project. In a world dominated by property titles and markets, a readily accessible framework is that of ‘rights’. Positioned at the centre of liberal philosophy, rights-talk can be stretched toward a vision of social and even radical democracy, as in the insistence that rights be not merely formal or civil but substantive and social. Yet it can also trap activist-intellectuals in a cul-de-sac. Michel reported that a constant debate within Alternatives International is whether to speak of North-South issues in terms of ‘rights’ or ‘imperialism’. ‘You want to keep people in the discussion,’ but how to do that without diluting

---

<sup>23</sup> See Adamson, Briskin and Yanz (1988) for extensive discussion of this issue in the context of feminism in 1980s Canada.

the language, and the analysis? How ‘to come with the real in-depth analysis and make all the links so that people can understand the world in two paragraphs...?’

Finding appropriate and effective language is also an issue in bridging activist cultures to mainstream opinion and institutions. In her reflections on the mainstream and the margins, Satoko Kishimoto, coordinator of the Water Justice project at TNI (a joint initiative with the Corporate Europe Observatory) said,

even if we can reach our messages to the potentially like-minded water providers, still ... we use different languages. They don't like to hear the activist's language, that's kind of 'ideological'. ... We need to deliver very concise information that triggers their interest. We cannot use the same language [as used] towards water operators, practitioners, and policy makers.

To be effective with the technically-minded managers of water utilities, which in many cases is the immediate route to undoing neoliberal privatization in this field, one must adopt a technical discourse; to do otherwise is self-marginalizing.

Yet in a different program – on Agrarian Justice – TNI Fellow Jun Borrás noted problems in how the most ‘convenient reasoning’ for middle-of-the-road progressives constructs a ‘win-win’ political position akin to Corporate Social Responsibility. Land-grabbing, within this mainstream discourse, is likened to the proverbial genie who has escaped the bottle: ‘it's here, so we cannot stop it, so we just go with how to make it more beneficial to the poor’ or transparent, etc. On such polarized issues, with so much at stake,

many mainstreaming initiatives actually not only fail to challenge entrenched power but help to reinforce already entrenched power. So actually, many progressives working on land-grabbing, despite their good intention, actually reinforce land-grabbing by their so-called mainstreaming initiatives. The problem, of course, is that you can have your most politically correct positions and slogans and everything, but it can reach very small audiences.

Comparing Water Justice with Agrarian Justice, two TNI programs that take different approaches to the mainstreaming/marginalization question, we can see the wisdom of Nick Buxton's observation that the proper resolution requires sensitivity to the issue-specific character of politics and of the audiences one addresses. ‘It's just a question of where we focus our energies and somehow we have to do a bit of both.’ CCS Director Patrick Bond's reflection also bears repeating. A left stance can be mainstreamed, and sometimes the effect is eventually salutary. But eventually can take a long time:

The typical thing, if you mainstream a left position, is they ignore it. And the next thing is they ridicule it. And the next thing is they fight you and try and undermine you. And then next thing is you win. It's that old formula of Ghandi, here, right? But I think the place we've only gotten to is being ignored.

For RosaLux, which like CCS takes an anti-capitalist stance, the problem of marginalization goes beyond benign neglect. Steffen Kuehn told me that RosaLux (as well as Die Linke), with its partial lineage to former East-German communists, is not just an underdog, but is ‘dirty’ in the eyes of mainstream media and political elites. Even the Foundation's namesake, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's great democratic, martyred leaders, evokes among many the stereotype of Bolshevism and disorder, leading mainstream and many centre-left intellectuals to avoid any association with the Foundation, even as a place for convening discussions. On the other hand, as Steffen pointed out,

We don't want to be mainstream. We would like to influence the mainstream with what we do, and we know that this means to stay linked to certain actors and networks of people, but I

don't think that we try to be one of those accepted actors. I think just by our name and by our self-understanding and the things that we do, we are kind of out for this.

Fostering connections to the mainstream at one remove can be a strategy in itself.

RosaLux is an especially internationalized group, and in this sense an interesting site for reflecting on how the mainstreaming vs marginalization challenge appears quite differently in different locations within the world system. In parts of Latin America, where neoliberalism is no longer hegemonic, there is much less of a dilemma between the two. Radical ideas like *buen vivir* and the critique of extractivism are weapons in contesting the political-economic status quo, yet for Karin Gabbert at RosaLux's Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation the intercultural challenge is how 'to explain knowledges that come from different backgrounds of thinking, working, producing, living that have a background that is not the dominant Western, European background.' In Germany things are completely different: neoliberalism is still in command. According to Mario Candeias, there is a 'passive consensus', and the left is fragmented between the limited realization of interests through government policies and something more radical. IG Metall, the big industrial union that collaborates with RosaLux, also cooperates with the state to secure continuing high levels of industrial exports and thus jobs. This not only co-opts IG Metall into the state's project, but it creates sharp tensions with the ecological left. Of course, as Mario continued, it would be stupid for the union to reject the pragmatic measures that enable its members to be employed at decent wages. In the circumstances,

there are two different logics. They have to do it. We have to push them to the left, of course, and show how this kind of working with the government might be a short-term good thing for them, but long term it doesn't change things and their position gets weaker; because you can't continue this kind of exportism [which] is destroying Europe right now and getting into recession and destroying nature.... So you have to start *right now* with a transformative idea if you want to keep strong as a union. So that's where we're trying to hold things together, let's say, but the other side is much stronger and it's hard work.

Some participants who are more inclined toward critical liberalism pointed to the virtues of hewing to the mainstream. These apply most clearly in struggles for the social rights that have already been formally enshrined within UN, ILO and other Declarations – agreements that give impetus to a human rights framing of social justice. Roberto Bissio of ITeM/Social Watch asserted that reaching a wide audience is essential to creating actual change, and that such change should not be confined to short-term increments.

...if you cannot reach a wider audience, you're not challenging power in a sense. And our worry and concern and so on is always in terms of how do we push for changes, and changes that can actually happen. Which doesn't mean that everything should be short term.

PRIA is another group whose initiatives are often directed to the mainstream. As an 'intermediate group', consciously positioned between the Indian state and myriad communities, PRIA is constantly working at the grassroots – experimenting, building alternatives, 'questioning, critiquing and yet trying to insert some of that into the mainstream' (Rajesh Tandon). In the field of gender relations PRIA is a leading figure in fighting sexual harassment in the workplace and mainstreaming policies such as gender audits, so that they can be deployed widely in organizations and workplaces throughout Asia.

Dominique Guibert of CRID, and a longtime activist in the *Ligue des droits de l'Homme* (League of Human Rights), one of the oldest civil associations of France, presented the basic case for occupying a niche within the mainstream.

With us, there are people who are on a much more revolutionary line than others, so there are activists who are socialists, radicals, communists, there are lots of different things; and our goal is, our niche is, to approach issues through human rights. After that, people can pull out the theory they want from it. But this niche is very important to us, that is, if our taking an extremely radical position means that the League becomes just another far-left group, then it loses all its interest, it loses its specificity. So this is why we do not do this.

Particularly within CRID, whose members run the gamut from the radical left to the League's critical liberalism, it is important to occupy all these various niches, which together enable work both in the mainstream and on the margins of the mainstream (but in the heart of movement communities).

Other participants flagged the importance of resisting the allure of mainstreaming. Again, there is an issue-specificity to this position. To be sure, the challenge of climate change is not so easily 'mainstreamed' without becoming, under the rubric of 'ecological modernization', simply another accumulation strategy within capital's quest for endless growth. On this urgent issue, transnational alternative policy groups need to take up anti-systemic positions that are most certainly at odds with the 'mainstream', yet not necessarily so far removed from the developing sensibilities of many millions of people as to be beyond the horizon.

Pablo Solon put the matter clearly:

When it comes to climate, we say what we think. The majority – the mainstream – is not anti-systemic, but we are and we really believe that if we don't change the system ... we're not going to be able to solve the issues of climate. Now, is that a mainstream message? I think not at all. Mainstream doesn't even think of that. We're not going to change our position because of that. We are going to continue and we're going to work with the social movements around the world to have a common understanding that to speak about climate, you really are speaking about a systemic change.

At IFG, the emphasis on putting alternative knowledge into the service of movement-building has meant consigning mainstreaming to the margins as a strategy. Although some IFG teach-ins (notably the April 2000 event that coincided with a major World Bank meeting in Washington) have involved concurrent meetings between IFG constituent groups and state officials, the object has never been to gain access to the political or media mainstream. Rather, as Jerry Mander stated,

We start by trying to influence from the inside out. In other words, we try to create understanding and knowledge and awareness and create plans for movement building, for strategizing, for advancing and broadening the base for activism that will eventually lead to change.

Still other participants dealt with the mainstream/marginalization contrast as a *creative tension*. Yiping Cai and her sisters at DAWN engage with the mainstream (in particular, IGOs) while challenging it.

I think we're working with the mainstream and at the same time we're challenging it. I think it is the dual strategy, or the two-pronged strategy, and for one that we need to reach as broad an audience as possible so that you will have the greatest impact, because you don't want to just produce something that is for your own and for a small community, so you want to try to influence. That's why you need to work with the mainstream. On the other hand, we are challenging them, and in that way it makes us look like we are quite small in number and quite marginalized.

Nicole Bidegain, also of DAWN, framed this approach as a tactical innovation: 'what we try to do is to interrupt the mainstream places [in ways] that change the terms of the debates.'

Patrick Bond suggested that the mainstream/marginalization distinction is not ‘such a fork in the road’, and that a TAPG must do both at once. ‘You try for a mainstream stance, where your arguments can be taken seriously. At the same time, you explore such exceptionally esoteric positions that might one day be incredibly important.’ For instance, for a long time, CCS, along with the Durban Group for Climate Justice, took a self-marginalizing stance on carbon markets, at odds with major ecological groups such as Friends of the Earth International, all of whom advocated such markets. ‘Don’t fix them, nix them; they can’t be fixed,’ was the CCS line, and although it may have appeared self-defeating several years ago, this position is now highly credible. On certain issues there can be not only ethical virtue but strategic *virtu* in holding fast to an initially marginal position.<sup>24</sup>

### *TNI as an exemplar*

TNI stands out as a transnational alternative policy group that has, through its combination of programs, figured out ways of dealing with the challenge of mainstreaming/marginalization. Executive Director Fiona Dove noted that work that is ‘deeply embedded in movements’ – e.g., within the TNI’s Economic Justice program – generates primarily ‘self-referential information’ which affirms TNI’s own ideological orientation and provides cognitive resources to movements, but has less immediate traction with the political mainstream. At the other end of the continuum is the Drugs and Democracy Programme, which follows a clear mainstreaming strategy, yet maintains an underlying radicalism that points toward a qualitatively different future for drugs policy. As Pien Metaal stated,

Yeah, we are quite radical, I think, in our hearts we don’t believe in prohibitionism, but our discourse is grey – locking up the grey area so we can relate to much more people, because this issue has been polarizing the world to such an extent, that the only way, if you want to change things... we’ve been accused of being ‘wolves in sheep’s clothing’ by UN people in high posts – we’ve often been called that way, because they say these are just simple legalizers – which is a compliment, of course. We are able to convincingly wear the clothes of sheep.

Programme Director Martin Jelsma described Drugs and Democracy as having found a ‘good balance’ between the ideal policy framework/longer term strategy and what is achievable now. He frames the latter as ‘the more pragmatic principle’ which guides ‘every step that can be taken along the way, [and measures it] in terms of improvement of the conditions of the lives of the people who are the worst off at the moment.’

TNI’s Water Justice project, mentioned earlier, similarly integrates both the mainstream and the margins, but in different ways. The project has had success, through TNI-sponsored coalition work, in building a grassroots network counting 221 members in 71 countries, it and engages both at the UN level and at local levels, using technical language where appropriate but also promoting a model of public-public partnership

---

<sup>24</sup> This point was driven home by TNI’s Nick Buxton, who reminded me of the remarkably prescient book, *Privatizing Nature: Political Struggles for the Global Commons*, published by TNI and Pluto Press of London in 1998, and edited by Michael Goldman. At a time when ‘the idea of putting a price on carbon was put on the table and received enormous favour,’ TNI went completely against the grain. Not only did it publish the controversial book; it set up Carbon Watch, which initially ‘was seen as “far out” and radical and a bit off the wall. ... And now..., carbon prices are at an all-time low, every mainstream magazine from the *Economist* to *Foreign Policy* is saying basically that carbon trading has failed. So something that was seen as a bit far out there at one point became mainstream thinking.’

and ‘re-municipalization’ as a concrete alternative to neoliberal privatization.<sup>25</sup> Satoko Kishimoto’s colleague, TNI Fellow Daniel Chavez, also focuses his cognitive praxis on democratizing public services. He has found that working with progressive governments in Latin America can yield impressive results that move towards radical change, and that contribute to a stronger influence for TNI.

I deal a lot with governments, so I’m very much interested in mainstreaming the kind of ideas that we propose. So for instance, now we are organizing by the end of October [2012] a big conference on public enterprises. We are organizing it with the government of Uruguay, with the participation of other governments from the Latin American region.<sup>26</sup>

In this creative response to the mainstreaming/marginalization challenge, the point is to reject the left’s image of being professional complainers – ‘those people in the left who just criticize everything’ – while developing some practical alternatives. ‘So it’s still defending the utopia, still promoting the utopia, but at the same time trying to make some steps towards the realization of the utopia in the near future, as much as possible.’

In yet another context, Brid Brennan, coordinator of TNI’s Alternative Regionalisms program and active in its Corporate Power project, made a comment that is exactly complementary to Dominique Guibert’s observations (above) on how mainstreamed human-rights advocacy occupies a niche that also opens space for more radical initiatives. Brid told me that on certain issues such as corporate impunity (the object of a TNI co-sponsored campaign launched at Rio+20), putting a coherent, radical proposal forward can make space for others to move things forward.

When it comes to corporate power, accountability of TNC’s – we feel we have to put out a very radical position, because there are so many other positions already out there which haven’t been very successful. Even though this might be a far too radical position, it is able to make space for others to then come in and move the debate a bit.

Finally, two TNI activist-scholars rejected the mainstreaming/marginalization contrast as an unhelpful dualism. For Board Chair Susan George, intellectually responsible work should avoid seeing itself within this false dichotomy:

I wouldn’t put it in those terms at all. I think you just do your work as truthfully as you can, and you say things as forthrightly as you can, and I would say that is what everybody here does. You take a position in favour of the disadvantaged, the underdogs, and then you go with it. But you cannot measure: ‘I’m challenging power’. I mean, I think that would be the most presumptuous thing you could say as a researcher, and as a writer: ‘I’m challenging power,’ if by that you mean ‘causing the powerful to change their views and their policies.’ And how would you possibly know that? I don’t put things in that framework at all.

As Hilary Wainwright views things, the issue is not one of *tension* between two approaches, but of a *challenge* for radicals to reach popular forces, and to sharpen radical analysis through engagement with arguments of the mainstream.

---

<sup>25</sup> See details at <http://www.tni.org/page/about-water-justice-project-0>, retrieved 9 August 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel Chavez’s Synthesis Report on the conference is available at <http://www.tni.org/briefing/future-public-enterprises-latin-america-and-world>, accessed 9 August 2013.



I just say the challenge is, how do you maintain a radical critique and develop it in a way that reaches the kinds of popular forces through which it can have an impact? A radical critique that doesn't reach the people, who can actually realize its goals, is fairly useless. So I think it's not so much a tension; it's a challenge. How do you maintain the radicalism of your critique and build the popular part to give it impact? There is at least a perceived tension – that if you reach out you're going to water your project down and, in the end, it will be so tepid it will have lost all kind of critical edge. But I think that's not the only way to reach out. I think you can reach out in a way that is maintaining and developing your radical critique, and by reaching out, actually strengthening it because you're able to draw on wider constituencies; your radicalism is challenged and sharpened by how it deals with the forces and arguments of the mainstream. There's a lot of the left, you could say, that is weaker because it doesn't engage in the mainstream, so it's not having to sharpen its argument. So I wouldn't call it a tension. I'd say just simply, that's the challenge: to maintain your radicalism and reach out and be popular.

This discussion conveys the range of positions and strategies evoked by my question on mainstreaming and marginalization. One further insight, of great importance in my view, was offered by participants at RosaLux, where the concept and practice of 'entry projects' has been developed. Like Susan George and Hilary Wainwright, the strategy of entry projects, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, rejects the dualism. It does so by pressing for initiatives that are mildly transformative but may in practice create expanding constituencies sympathetic to radical change.

#### Getting ink and soundbites: a note on TAPGs and mainstream media

Part of mainstreaming is getting covered in mainstream, mostly corporate, media.

Not only are mainstream media often unsympathetic to transformative socio-political change (and, as Nicole Bidegain noted, global media, controlled in the North, provide sketchy, biased coverage of the Majority world). Media corporations themselves operate within the constraints of a capitalist political economy, within which the routines of journalistic practice play out. To cut costs, mainstream media turn to sources they trust, and to copy they can rather immediately convert into 'news'. The media mainstream desires clear messages, clear stories, typically in the 'who what when where' genre of beat journalism. Ideological baggage, as in social critique, is a non-starter, and complex, comprehensive analyses of the sort TAPGs produce find little space. For conventional media, the most 'trustworthy' sources are state agencies, not grassroots activists. Thus the challenge, noted by Roberto Bissio (himself a journalist by training):

how do we bring those voices, how do we bring those views in a way that the media trust and publish it and gain respect? It's quite a challenge, but there are things that can be done. And a lot of our training and capacity building with groups on the ground is about how to do that, is around how to work with data, how to work with numbers, how to produce evidence in a way that the media will understand 'oh, there is a story here'

Timing is also a major factor in getting mainstream media coverage: the news is constructed around vivid episodes and controversies, not ongoing realities which are simply taken for granted. How to hook an unsexy social-ecological analysis of water issues onto a news narrative that might fit the mainstream's info-tainment template? Often this requires deft timing, so that the critical analysis is recognized as relevant to an immediate news story, as Satoko Kishimoto explained.

Most transnational alternative policy groups do not have resources for a media strategy or a media person.<sup>27</sup> They lack capacity for sustained and strategic engagement with mainstream media. The situation is exacerbated by the international scope and huge number of issues under analysis. Nick Buxton compared the TNI's media challenges to the more straightforward situation he faced working within one country on the Jubilee 2000 campaign in the 1990s:

Of course there were lots of different dimensions – international debt and structural adjustment and so on, but we were working in one country, we could just target our national media. We got to know every journalist who was likely to cover it. Once we got them on board and did various things, then we were looking to how we could make it more popular and get MTV to support us and so on. We always had one focus, and one market to work with. TNI doesn't have that and so it's very challenging.

Academic allies may produce in-depth studies that have value in their own right; but they do not know 'how to make that attractive to the media and to transform a two-hundred page study into a sound bite of ten seconds, which is what CNN will give you if you're lucky' (Roberto Bissio – this *Report* being a case in point!).

The value of a designated communications officer was experienced directly by Focus, during the 2007 WTO meeting in Hong Kong, at which the group was able to retain a media specialist for the entire two weeks of negotiations. As Dorothy Guerrero recalled,

True enough, we got five citations in newspapers every day. And not just Walden [Bello], but all of us because [the media specialist] made a list of what the topics are, and that if you have this topic, you can ask this person, and telephone numbers. So you have one person who is responsible just to feed the media who can say this or who should be chased for this. At the moment we don't have that and we're all busy doing our research and training and workshops and responding to the requests to talk in conferences, so we don't have a dedicated staff whose priority is how to land in the articles – how to be quoted by journalists. So the most we do is to organize press conferences.

Similarly, until recent budget cuts, PRIA was able to use a system of 'media retainers' to attract media experts on a part-time basis to work on specific projects, helping staff to understand concepts and story angles, to write in a media-friendly style, etc. Embedding media people within specific divisions or projects can be effective, but can also pose problems of overall coordination in knowledge mobilization. As Pietje Vervest recounted,

We don't have one media person. We have found that it didn't really work for TNI. We are sort of for the intellectual analysis, which is very hard for a media person to translate to the media, because it's often very specific. So what we do now, we are building media and communication people in the teams, so we are moving the expertise more into the teams. So there's also less competition among the teams for the energy and time of the media person. But we do find a gap now that we don't have this central person in the office who is able to receive all the media requests, which is problematic....

---

<sup>27</sup> Some TAPGs, particularly those built in part around high-profile activist-intellectuals, assign a major piece of the mainstream communications function to one or more of their stars, who are able to 'break through' into mainstream coverage by trading on their reputations and charisma, using the trope of celebrity culture to advantage.

There is also the question of how transnational alternative policy groups can foster solidarities among allies, all of whom strive for some share of the media spotlight. Yiping Cai of DAWN had the responsibility at RIO+20 of interfacing with mainstream media, and she implemented a solidaristic strategy that coordinated the messaging among aligned groups, to feed the press conference organizers speakers and topics.

Each day I had to identify from the major women's groups and from the DAWN team who would be the best on this issue, because we have the group that has a very diverse access, expertise and knowledge and experience and also from different regions. So each day I feed them this information and provide the names.... 'If you need someone to speak' – I played the card of 'you need the women's voice, we need the Southern voice' – trying to claim the space with this mainstream media to have the voice across the South.

CRID, which exists as the hub of a network of 53 autonomous associations, has a dispersed structure that makes a virtue of necessity. Gus Massiah, a founder and leading activist-intellectual in CRID (and in France) reflected on the importance of solidaristic media relations in CRID's work as a coordinator, facilitator and animator. 'Each of our members has needs to develop its own image. So the first is to not develop too much the image of CRID. Not to be in competition with our members. That's why we ... are very careful. So [we] intervene in the media when our members agree that it is one of the campaigns of the CRID.'

A reasonable strategy for getting mainstream coverage is to take advantage of the liberal norm, among many though by no means all corporate media, to frame the news in terms of contending perspectives, and thus to seek a modicum of 'balance' by presenting 'both sides'. As Focus's Joseph Purugganan put it,

how the media work is they usually pick on the contending pose of a particular issue. The government view is presented, and then what is the contending view? So in that attempt to sort of balance the information, the media look for a credible contending view. The challenge is to develop yourself as that and present yourself to the media as that credible contending view.

At the same time, transnational alternative policy groups have to take care to avoid being labeled 'radical', 'militant', 'a destruction in the everyday harmony of society' (Mary Ann Manahan), and so on. The threat of marginalization in the media returns us to the larger challenge of how groups address the dilemma of mainstreaming and marginalization.

Particularly since the global financial crisis of 2008, which exposed the irrationalities and contradictions of transnational neoliberalism in an unprecedented way, the 'mainstreaming vs marginalization' challenge has become more complicated. As Gus Massiah propounded,

...in fact, after 2008, many ideas that we had before that were marginalized are now banalized, are accepted. But ... they don't lead to political actions. For example, everyone knows that inequality is not acceptable. Ten years ago, it was not exactly the same..., but it does not give new policies of what a civil [society] should be.

Similarly, Patrick Bond noted that in the wake of the obscene and almost universally condemned bank bailouts of 2009

you might actually win a struggle for hearts and minds, and say 'well, look – 2008, bankers are wrecking our society, worldwide and locally', and you might get the finance minister agreeing.... So we kind of think, well that's the rhetoric you can expect, but that is typically followed by further deregulatory move and it's just persistent and unstoppable – this creeping neoliberalization of finance.

The difficulty lies not only in making radical ideas on inequality common political currency at the level of rhetoric (that process is helped along by the contradictions that sharpen in a crisis), but to foster the social forces that can give such ideas practical traction.

### *The Post-2008 Conjunction*

The challenges facing transnational alternative policy groups and the creative responses they have mustered need to be viewed not only in the long-term, structural context of dominant institutions – state, media, corporate capitalism etc. – but with an appreciation of the specific timeframe of the ‘current conjunction’. That conjunction arises from momentous events and struggles of recent years.

We live in a post-9/11 world. The imperialist response of the US state to the events of September 11, 2001 – both the increased repression/surveillance domestically under cover of ‘Homeland Security’ and especially the ‘war on terror’ military adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq, chilled what had by the late 1990s become a burgeoning alter-globalization movement. The movement morphed initially into an anti-war movement that crested on February 15, 2003, with the largest demonstration in history, a globally coordinated effort to prevent the US-led invasion of Iraq. As Tony Clarke, an IFG board member and Executive Director of the Polaris Institute, reflected, ‘what happened with 9/11 just ripped the bottom out from under’ all the alter-globalization movement politics that had been gaining momentum since the mid-1990s. ‘All sorts of things, from the criminalization of dissent to the politics of fear’ led to a falling back, from which the convergence of movements has yet to recover. In Tony’s view, even the climate issue, despite the significant, 2010 meeting at Cochabamba, has so far failed to galvanize a global convergence.

In my conversations with project participants, I chose to focus on the contemporary crisis – commonly seen as announcing itself most dramatically with the financial meltdown of 2008 – and its political, economic, ecological and cultural entailments. Arguably, this crisis marks some sort of turning point in global history. But which sort? Five years on, capitalism seems to be in the deepest and most sustained global slump since the 1930s (McNally 2001), and although the crisis has been extremely uneven in its geographical spread and reach, it is most certainly systemic, a result almost guaranteed by capitalism’s highly globalized contemporary structures. This crisis, moreover, is much more than a slowdown/contraction in the rate of capital accumulation; it is profoundly ecological, most urgently on the issue of climate change but also with regard to declining biodiversity due to species extinction, rising food insecurity, resource depletion and extractivism, etc.

The crisis, in its economic, ecological, political and cultural expression, is ‘organic’; it matches Antonio Gramsci’s famous characterization: ‘the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear’ (1971: 276). The crisis is more than a ‘conjunctural disequilibrium’, but poses a persistent set of intractable problems; it is ‘a crisis of the entire social formation, both its economic “content” and its political “form”’ (Thomas 2009: 145). Organic crisis not only problematizes ruling-class visions and strategies while deepening the sense of despair. As old ways become unviable and as conditions of life deteriorate, popular discontent fuels outbreaks of protest which, however, stall for lack of organizational infrastructure and radical vision. Neoliberalism, as David McNally (2011: 189) holds, may well be incapable of summoning up a compelling vision of the future, but much the same can be said of the Left, at least in its ‘Third Way’, neoliberalized guise. According to Stephen Gill, the contemporary global organic crisis presents ‘a historical situation in which much of the “old” order seems to have largely exhausted its potentials and in which “new” forces are

still struggling to emerge in a politically coherent manner' (2012b: 234).<sup>28</sup> In an era when space opens for a radical imaginary that might posit a clear alternative to neoliberal globalization, can transnational alternative policy groups and similar initiatives serve as sites for such collective imagining? Most immediately for our purposes in this chapter, how do TAPG protagonists view the organic crisis in terms of the threats and opportunities it throws up for cognitive praxis and transformative politics?

To probe these issues, I posed this question:

Some analysts hold that global capitalism has entered an *organic crisis* in which 'the old is dying and the new cannot be born', and that this crisis has economic, political, cultural, and ecological dimensions. What are your thoughts on the contemporary crisis: *how deep and organic is it? What do you see as the key opportunities and threats posed by the crisis* for the alter-globalization movement or global left?

Samir Amin, Founder and Director of the Third World Forum, whose latest book is titled *Autumn of Capitalism – People's Spring?*, responded to my query by describing the current era as one of civilizational crisis, an implosion of a world capitalism moving into greater chaos, and yet so far inspiring 'just the beginning of an awareness of what is needed' as an alternative way of life, and how to bring that about:

If we should have a system based on social justice, okay, but what do you mean – and how? We should have a system respecting human rights, okay, but what are human rights? And how? Etc., etc. This is the tragedy of our time. ... It is the autumn of capitalism but there is not yet a coincidence between this autumn and the spring. We are in that very dangerous transition – time lag – between the system which is dying and the system which is not yet born – the alternative one.

Samir Amin's perspective forms part of an intellectual project that goes back to his doctoral dissertation, published in English in the early 1970s as *Accumulation on a World Scale*. Activist scholars like Amin have long sought to understand capitalism's crises and to strategize alternatives, and the more political-economy oriented TAPGs like TNI, RosaLux and DAWN have developed some keen insights, both analytical and strategic. IFG made an important contribution in this regard, through its 2007 teach-in, at which a framing of the 'triple crisis' was introduced. In this account, catastrophic climate chaos, the end of cheap energy ('peak oil'), and global resource depletion/wildlife extinction interact and amplify each other's impact. The resolution of the crisis requires system change, since all components must be addressed.<sup>29</sup>

Quite a number of participants offered similar views to Samir's, and some of them ventured into the pressing yet difficult question of how transnational alternative policy groups might find opportunities in the crisis to help hasten a 'people's spring'. Below, I canvass some of these perspectives.

---

<sup>28</sup> Gill (2012a: 26) also observes that organic crisis does not necessarily imply a complete breakdown of political legitimacy. 'The problem of political legitimacy for disciplinary neoliberalism has been met by strategies of depoliticization.....: as yet we have not seen any of the regimes governing North American or European polities being toppled.' Nevertheless, he continues, 'many problems once associated with the Global South seem now to be migrating to the capitalist core of the world order' – a development that forms an important element in the global organic crisis.

<sup>29</sup> See <http://www.ifg.org/programs/Energy/TripleCrisis/index.htm>, especially the *Manifesto on Global Economic Transitions* (September 2007) <http://www.ifg.org/pdf/manifesto.pdf>, accessed August 6, 2013.

## Prognoses and Challenges

Like all crises, the current one has had a spatial dimension, but in contrast to the 1997 'Asian financial crisis', which ramified from east Asia to Russia and Argentina in 1998, the 2008ff crisis, though already longer than other post-1930s downturns, seemed in its initial impact to be centred upon the Global North. Even now, with the crisis in its sixth year, severe austerity programs, the stock-in-trade of neoliberal rule in the Global South during the 1980s and 1990s, are being applied in Greece and Spain, not (yet) Brazil or India. As PRIA's Sumona Dasgupta observed, 'This is a bit like what the IMF was doing to a lot of us: unless you do structural adjustments, we won't give you money.' Yet the continuing relative prosperity of the BRICS has not been shared by other places on capitalism's periphery (e.g., much of Africa); moreover, recent trends in the BRICS themselves are downward. Meanwhile, as Claire Slatter commented, the crisis coincides with 'another round of imperialist pillage and plunder', a 'last grab' by the powerful for whatever resources can be appropriated. DAWN's crisis analysis describes a 'fierce new world' in which past gains become insecure and new challenges arise. Nicole Bidegain identified climate change as a core element of the crisis, stemming from an unsustainable production/consumption model based not only on the financialization of the economy but the financialization of nature. An important task is to oppose the calls for a 'green economy' that will intensify the commodification of nature as a new investment field, and to advocate a re-regulation of capital at the global level. In the South, there is the additional challenge thrown up by governments who say 'It is our time to pollute.'

Michel Lambert of Alternatives sees an 'extremely deep' crisis 'of imagination', as policy ideas are retreaded from 'the good old days' to maintain the current system. Roberto Bissio of ITeM/Social Watch pointed to a major reason for the crisis of imagination. In neoliberalism's triumph (including the neoliberalization of social democracy in Tony Blair's New Labour and similar developments) 'alternative thinking was destroyed.' This has placed policy makers and state managers in 'a very paradoxical situation, where they know it doesn't work, but they keep applying the same thing because it's the only thing they know how to do.' TAPGs face the challenge of creating alternative thinking that refuses the simple fix of restoring 'economic growth', a formula that might create jobs and win elections but will exacerbate the ecological crisis. The crisis of imagination is certainly a challenge for those interested in counter-hegemonic alternatives. As Patrick Bond suggested,

...maybe most tragically, we on the left can't envisage – can't even imagine – how we're going to take advantage of this crisis. We did so badly with the last one – so badly that the ideology behind it – neoliberalism – still is dominant.

Participants also noted social psychological aspects of the crisis of imagination that have permeated into everyday life, presenting new challenges. At Focus's Bangkok office, Jacques Chai Chomtongdi's ruminations began with Europe but extended to the 'global middle class':

You see how Europeans are moving. They are not moving to a kind of alternative, even though they go deeper and deeper into the crisis. ... When I was a student, we were saying the poorer you are, the more conservative you are, because you don't want to lose whatever you have left. So maybe the world is acting on that – the global middle class is acting in that way in which it even may be narrowing the space of alternatives.

Rajesh Tandon offered a parallel insight from contemporary India, focused less on the conservatizing impact of fear and more on the growth of a neoliberal form of individualism, goaded on by media, marketing and government policies.

We are not giving space to the reflection that people need to make about where we are heading in society and the bulk of it is only individualistic reflection. Am I making roads ahead for myself or not? Imagine if 1.2 billion are making roads ahead for themselves, individually; some of us will fall in the ditch because there ain't enough space to make roads for yourself.

How, Rajesh asked, in the frenetic pace of urbanization and hyper-consumption, juxtaposed in India to a continuing majority of rural subalterns, to create 'a reflective enabling of people's experience' that recovers the collectivist values and sustainable practices of a spiritual lifestyle in the Indian tradition?

Other participants described a crisis of democracy. Nathalie Pere-Marzano and CRID see 'a systemic crisis' extending well beyond 'the economy' to food, energy, and other and social ecological issues, a crisis whose urgency may exacerbate the retreat of democracy in contemporary capitalism.

Even in countries like France, I mean really it is not so clear how democracy works.... We say 'no' to something and it's still being put in place by our governments. So what does this mean? Greek people say 'no' to the policies their government is implementing, but their government still implements those drastic austerity measures. So what is democracy when you don't listen to your people?

At PRIA, Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay framed the crisis as one of global governance precipitated by rigid adherence to a paradigm that works for a few and that accepts a permanent division between rich and poor. 'This paradigm needs to change, and all these decisions [which] resulted in the food crisis or the environmental crisis or economic crisis combined is a governance crisis; it's a global governance crisis.' A challenge for transnational alternative policy groups and allies in global civil society is to devise ways of addressing the 'elite capture' of global governance institutions and their undemocratic functioning, which underlie the global governance crisis. Nick Buxton of TNI pointed out that the neoliberal paradigm, now applied to bankrupt countries like Greece, amplifies immiseration of the population and intensifies anger. Some of that anger can be productively channeled into radically democratic politics, and in Greece today Syriza represents that option. Yet nearly as popular is the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn. Indeed, within capitalism, fascism can become the dominant response to deep and prolonged crisis, as the scope for liberal-democratic compromise narrows. The challenge for Syriza and for allies that include TNI, is to find practical solutions not only at the policy level but in the everyday realm, where Golden Dawn is aggressively organizing communities. As Nick observed, 'we're going to need to respond to it practically and with alternatives, and provide progressive responses, because otherwise any vacuum will be filled by a reactionary one.' Perhaps the most pessimistic prognosis on the crisis of democracy I heard was TNI Board Chair Susan George's. Consistent with TNI's published perspective, she sees a convergence of interlinked crises, with the ecological aspect most urgent and with the ongoing financial crisis keeping us 'still on the edge'. In all this, Susan sees 'a huge crisis of democracy'. Democracy has become 'too expensive for capitalism.' Capitalists and their allies claim they

can't afford it. Capital has enriched itself enormously over the past thirty years but they are not satisfied. They have to bring down wages, they have to get rid of the advantages that working people have. ... there's a huge offensive against the welfare state. The vast inequalities have also brought about this total disregard for human suffering and human life, and there's going to ..., I think there will eventually be huge militarization of it. There's also a food crisis and bad hunger coming...Frontiers and fortress states, things like that. I believe people will try to resist but literally, if people try to riot, governments and police now have the technology they call 'non-lethal weapons' and they will not be allowed to continue. It's going to be bad. I don't see a happy end to all of this and that's why we have to keep working, just in case we can change something.

Susan George's unflinching projection underlines the stakes for transnational alternative policy groups as protagonists for global justice and counter-hegemonic thinking and action.

Others at TNI offered complementary perspectives to Nick's and Susan's. Daniel Chavez told me that TNI has a view of the crisis as different from any other previous crisis – likely to eventuate in a radically altered world, but not necessarily 'a progressive kind of alternative.' Brid Brennan described a 'full-blown crisis of the capitalist system' involving deindustrialization in places like Europe and North America and 'the intensification of the re-division of labour at the global level' as capital increasingly needs 'cheap labour without rights', often in the form of migrants. Yet the system 'has a lot of recuperative resources, especially the ideological ones.' Jun Borrás also emphasized capitalism's creative capacities to reinvent itself, which have been typically underestimated by the left. In view of this, the global justice movement needs to eschew complacency, to build and continuously invent its own forces of struggle. Hilary Wainwright noted further neoliberalism's effective appropriation of some of the rhetoric of the left, an example of capitalism's recuperative resources. In responding to the social disintegration that Thatcherism produced,

neoliberalism has appropriated a lot of our rhetoric around co-ops and big society, searching for social cohesion. So all these terrains which involve us trying to develop new kinds of collectivity – like participatory democracy in and against the state, forms of economic collaboration that both revive the cooperative movement and renew – potentially change – the trade union movement: these are also areas where neoliberalism is also pushing in its own way forms of social organization that will ameliorate the market.

As political and economic elites learn how to manage the crisis and how to reshape neoliberalism in ways that perhaps soften its barbaric tendencies, they create space not only for renewed popular consent but for renewed accumulation. Moreover, Focus's Pablo Solon emphasized that although the crisis may well be chronic, with no end in sight, still within it many capitalists can make big profits in the sectors that are expanding, and may prefer a continuing crisis to a resolution that weakens their position. For Pablo, the crisis is a systemic, structural one, with two new elements: 1/ we have reached the limits of planet Earth; 2/ due to financialization the paper economy has overtaken the productive economy by an order of magnitude. The worrisome implication of these new elements, operating alongside continued inaction on climate, is a pitching of the world toward overrunning a key tipping point.

Participants from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, whose Institute of Critical Social Analysis (*IfG*)<sup>30</sup> has focused extensively on the crisis, provided some further insights that merit consideration. In Institute Deputy Director Mario Candeias's view, the crisis has been deepening for two decades, with each recovery weaker than the one before. In 2007-2008 it reached the critical point and became organic, as other crisis tendencies condensed with the immediately economic crisis, including the ecological crisis and the reproductive crisis. Within advanced capitalism, the production of a healthy workforce, of the social infrastructures people need and of physical infrastructures capital needs has been running down, and with that, productivity as well as social legitimation – hence the reproductive crisis. The elements cohere in an organic crisis as the different relations of society no longer fit together.

Then a small problem can become a big problem when the whole dynamic of crisis develops in that way. Movements start to develop on a different level than before – coming together, not fragmented any more.

---

<sup>30</sup> A note on disambiguation: *IfG* is the German abbreviation for the Institute for Critical Social Analysis, which is distinct, of course, from IFG, the abbreviation for the International Forum on Globalization.



Mario believes this process to be just beginning, and again, applicable both to the left and the right, as the example of Greece clearly shows.

Steffen Kuehn at RosaLux made the useful distinction, developed in Michael Lebowitz's work,<sup>31</sup> between 'of' and 'in':

I think it's a very deep crisis, but I think it's a crisis within capitalism. It's not a crisis *of* capitalism. Because crises that happen from time to time, they're not really attacking capitalism itself. I think capitalism would be in crisis if people in the huge majority lose the illusion that this system could work out for them, or could work out for all of us. This has not happened yet. Many people have doubts, many people have criticized, but there is not a movement, there is not an idea of something that is really endangering capitalism itself so far, I would say.

In Steffen's view it is wrong to view the ecological crisis as providing impetus for a move beyond capitalism. The creativity of the system can produce 'ways to limit the access to natural resources for those who can't pay.' Within capitalism, the crisis will be resolved on the backs of subalterns. The implication is clear: 'a transformation of the political left is necessary for anything that transforms capitalism to something nicer or better.' Inasmuch as transnational alternative policy groups provide practical and theoretical resources for a global left, the question is how they might help foster such a transformation.

Other participants from RosaLux also emphasized the great challenges posed by the crisis. Lutz Brangsch views neoliberalism as having produced its own base, and as now developing on that base. The social base has been transformed – the working class reshaped into a precariat; capital transformed through the financialization of society, which in turn has changed the immediate interests of working people, for instance through privatization of their pensions. All this has 'stabilized the new phase in the development of capitalism.' Alex Demirovic suggested similarly that the crisis may mark a 'breakthrough' for neoliberalism, solidifying its dominance in core capitalist states. In contrast to a scenario of political crisis,

...all the crisis management strategies are neoliberal. There is no demoralized ruling class – not in the US, not in Germany, not in Europe. So you know they feel very strong. They learn how to make use of all the crisis management tools they developed even in the thirties. They know exactly how to avoid a deepening of the crisis such as war, protectionism, and so there is a very clear idea to avoid protectionism, how to avoid inflation, a devaluation of the currency. So I think, in my eyes – I think the problem is ... maybe the bourgeoisie – the bourgeois class – can handle it.

Alex went on to consider a second scenario, that of over-accumulation. Given the massive disjuncture, already noted by Pablo Solon, between productive capital and speculative financial instruments, the bourgeoisie may succeed in managing the crisis 'for now', but fail to solve the problem of over-accumulation. In a nutshell, the problem is that derivatives and the like are real property titles – claims on future labour value – and ultimately the ballooning volume of such fictitious capital depresses profit rates and necessitates a massive devalorization of assets. In this perspective the crash of 2008 becomes a dress rehearsal for something much more dramatic. As Patrick Bond put it, with reference to the endgame of the

---

<sup>31</sup> Lebowitz (2013: 346) writes, '...there is a big difference between a crisis *in* capitalism and a crisis *of* capitalism. The latter requires conscious actors prepared to put an end to capitalism, prepared to challenge and defeat the logic of capital. But this requires a vision which can appear to workers as an alternative common sense, as *their* common sense.'

1940s, the 'real resolution' of the crisis

occurs when a great deal of that over-accumulated capital – the deadwood – is burned and brushed aside or dispensed with. Inflation can do that to money; mass unemployment can do that to excess labour power; the industrialization and idle capacity of the machinery can do that to productive enterprises. So can bombs – the scale of Germany and Japan's suffering in the '40s and hence, Germany and Japan come back very, very strong once they've had a lot destroyed; they can rebuild from scratch. I think it's that valorization and then devalorization that a genuine crisis would accomplish so that it can have another round after it recovers.

Returning to the contemporary scene, for Alex Demirovic

...the problem is how the destruction of capital is organized – by inflation or by war? Now what is going on since two years, is capital is destroyed in Europe – Greece, Spain and so on. What Europe is doing [is] to solve the problem in Europe for the Euro and what they try is to turn the destruction of capital towards other regions. And this is a serious problem, because for those regions concerned – maybe China, maybe Japan, maybe Latin America – that means a new period of impoverishment, a new period of destruction....

In short, the crisis has truly arrived. It is persistent and organic, and it poses great challenges not only for elite management but for alternative policy and global justice. It is a crisis of political imagination; it is a crisis of democracy and representation, sharpened by the neoliberal capture of states and intergovernmental organizations and by the process of hollowing out the capacity of states to intervene on the side of subalterns. At the same time, the incorporation of certain elements of the libertarian left into a softer neoliberalism poses new challenges, as does the fact that, having produced its own base in the precariat and privatized pensions, neoliberalism appears to some as inviolate. Yet the situation is inherently unstable, as financialization, deindustrialization of older heartlands and ecological overshoot portend more serious problems for global capitalism, and for humanity, up ahead.

### Opportunities, openings

Crisis is a time of intense contingency, of both danger and opportunity (O'Connor 1987). Here is how Alex Demirovic put it:

The methodological issue is that in a crisis, you can never know what the outcome of the crisis will be, because everything depends on what people do during the crisis. So, very much of this depends on what we do. I mean, the crisis is not something outside, an objective thing happening like god or the creation of the world. ... Normally, the left is rather weak, but sometimes things are contingent. Nobody knows what the further process will lead to and then yes, maybe suddenly, with some uncontrolled contingency, there will be the emergence of new and surprising things and I think everybody will be prepared. The ruling people are still preparing themselves for this and I think the left has to be prepared and be more conscious and aware of this process.

Transnational alternative policy groups and allies on the global left need to be prepared and alert to the developing situation. More concretely, Pablo Solon offered a prognosis that the beginnings of catastrophic climate change will be felt in the current decade:

This decade, we're going to see severe impacts from the climate crisis in relation to food, to drought, to floods, to water and also in relation to health. So there is in this decade, a moment where globally, people are going to be dramatically affected. Now are we going to be able to

develop strong social movements that in different parts of the world are able to build power and take the power that is in the hands of the transnational corporations, or are we going to be defeated in this attempt? The story is open, but we have to really fight for that.

Indeed, crisis *is* a time of radical contingency. By implication, given crisis's dialectical character – the conjunction of heightened danger and opportunity – some of the challenges noted above may also present openings. Michel Lambert of Alternatives International, who earlier evoked a 'crisis of imagination' detects in the same situation 'a lot of opportunities', precisely because the world's problems have become obvious as the crisis deepens. In Quebec, a hotbed of mass politics in the 'Maple Spring' of 2012,

here we see a lot of people who want to be fed with new ideas. They want to engage on new things because they don't see in the political parties or they don't see in the government – they don't see in the newspaper anything that responds to their idea of the world they want to build, and it's particularly the case for young people – they want to do something. So that is in itself is a huge opportunity and of course, the news is giving us many new opportunities every day. The news is so terrible.

Bad news, in this sense, can be good news if it jolts (or even nudges) people into a political awakening. At TNI, Satoko Kishimoto sees the situation in similar terms. 'Undemocracy' has become so blatant, so visible, that its practices (some of which are neatly summarized in the term 'banksterism' employed by Patrick Bond) are now in question. Although the global justice movement wasted a year and a half with a disorganized, tepid response to the sharp crisis of 2008, more recently there have been growing numbers of people receptive to reasoned critiques of creeping authoritarianism. Ichiyo Muto, founder of PPSG, put the issue in another way. In Asia, people were prepared to fight in the 1980s and 1990s for democracy, and dictators like Marcos and Suharto have long departed. Yet the democracy that was won through struggle and sacrifice was basically liberal democracy taken from the American model.

And where it is established, people find there is no solution for the basic social, economic, and ecological issues essential to their life. Beyond that type of democratization, I am afraid that people in the world have not discovered appropriate forms of democratic self-governance meeting their real needs. So that is where intellectual efforts, practical efforts, should be focused.

One instance of using 'bad news' to raise consciousness is IFG's Plutonomy program, (<http://kochcash.org/>) which in showing the actual connections between far-right plutocrats such as the Koch brothers and ecologically horrendous accumulation projects such as Keystone XL pipeline shines a light on the 'privatization of politics' and the crisis of democracy. The need for such critical research is obvious, and growing, and TAPGs are crucial sites for producing and mobilizing such knowledge. 'People are starting to understand things,' asserts Nathalie Pere-Marzano, and they are more informed than we think, about tax havens, the ultra-rich, unemployment issues, etc. This creates an opportunity for groups like CRID, which dialogue extensively with movements, to help people become protagonists for change. Paraphrasing WSF intellectual Chico Whitaker, Nathalie submitted that if the Occupy Movement put the 99% against the 1%, the social forces active in and around the WSF make up only 1% of the 99%. 'What do we do to take the 98% with us?' This is the strategic challenge. Within it, the prospects are not bad, according to RosaLux's Rainer Rilling. Crises very often bring defeat for the left, as we know from the crushing defeats in Germany in 1919 and the 1930s, which in both cases had tragic, world-historical significance. But in the current crisis the left in Germany has not been defeated (though neither has it been reinvigorated in Rainer's estimation). Elsewhere, e.g., in Latin America, even India, the left has clearly strengthened.

In the circumstances, transnational alternative policy groups can be places for dialogue among social agents, consciousness-raising, and building solidarities. As PRIA's Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay told me, crisis resolution

has to come from multiple actors. So it's kind of acknowledging that, but then creating mechanisms where these multiple actors can come together, and acknowledging the fact that many times there will be confrontation when these actors would come together, but still there will be dialogue. There will be exchange, and better understanding, and that's the way forward. I think PRIA-like organizations have the capacity to stitch together the coalition of these actors and to bring them together and harness this energy in a sort of initiatives kind of processes.

Who sits at the table is obviously a big question. It would not be difficult to enumerate all manner of movements committed to social justice and ecological health, but some participants pointed explicitly to certain key constituencies as new social forces that need to be engaged. Just as neoliberal capitalism has 'created its own base', a major part of that base, the precariously employed (many of them highly qualified yet neither 'middle class' nor 'working class' in any traditional scheme of things) needs to be brought together (Lutz Brangsch). Relatedly, there is 'a whole new generation of young people', the children of neoliberal capitalism who have never known anything different. As Fiona Dove observed,

there's a tiny minority which has been politicized through the Occupy Movement, but the vast majority are just ordinary people who want to make money. But they want to be green, they want to be fair; so I think you're going to see a lot of these little businesses popping up. And what you see, you've got lots of experimentation with your local farmers and your little organic thing, and your handicrafts and whatever. I think you are going to see something more positive in the sense that people want to live sustainable lives, questioning the consumer model, being very concerned about the environment, and I think that will generalize beyond the North..., but I think there are different priorities for people in the South.

Such sensibilities and practices need to be consciously articulated with progressive politics; indeed, as Fiona went on to note, they can also be brought into the project of green capitalism. A softer, greener capitalism appeals to many of neoliberalism's children as the obvious way forward.

They don't understand why you can't get rich and carry on as usual and be consumers and so forth and save the planet. They don't get it. And we want them on our side, so I think...that's going to be a big challenge for us.

Part of the answer lies in what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006) calls the 'work of translation'. Here, Mary Ann Manahan's insights at Focus have purchase. She confessed that she has always been critical of 'the big isms' as vehicles for popular-democratic politics. For those who have not studied the left canon, terms like '21<sup>st</sup> century socialism' are simply big words.

We have to break down what is really alternative ideas for them, and I think that is really part of the challenge of Focus, while staying true to ourselves and our vision and principles of believing in those 'isms' but since we work with movements, movements want to work with something tangible and something that they would really understand and that is close to our hearts. That's what we try to do – try to bridge the gap – mind the gap [between] big ideas and people's ideas.

Some of the most profound people's ideas come from Indigenous communities, which provide a rich source of alternative wisdom, both practical and visionary that, as RosaLux's Katharina Puehl suggested, needs to be brought into the practice of counter-hegemony. By the same token, the crisis and the inadequacy (or

worse) of top-down responses open space for radical critique and analysis. Joseph Purugganan of Focus told me that in the responding creatively to the crisis

we have to address the forms by which capital must reconfigure. We have to address the false solutions as an intermediate step to unmasking the true nature of capitalism.... And this is a very big challenge for groups like Focus, because we operate at different levels and we engage in different platforms where we deal with different organizations. And many of the other groups, even within civil society ... lose sight of the fact that these reforms do not address the fundamental issues of the problems of capitalism. So you try to address the false solutions, but in a way you also – because a lot of groups congregate around these reforms already, that you also need to engage in a critical discourse even with groups within civil society as well. So it is for me a very big challenge of trying to go *beyond*. I think of the steps to reconfigure [capitalism] as hurdles to trying to address the more fundamental issues. So if we are aiming for system change, we have to first remove these obstacles created by capitalism as it reconfigures – false solutions to climate change, things like that.

False solutions such as carbon markets as an antidote to climate change do present obstacles to presenting a ‘definite alternative to capitalism’, which Gus Massiah of CRID favours as an answer to the crisis. Yet even as technocratic and market-based attempts to reconfigure the system cloud the issue, the crisis has brought us into what Brid Brennan called ‘an era of real paradigm change’, when the ruling paradigm is under question and recognized as failing for many millions of people. The increased room to maneuver is crucial for TAPGs. In Latin America, with US imperial power weakened, groups like DAWN (also TNI) are pushing hard for basic changes toward sustainable production, public management of the economy, regional integration and South-South cooperation. As Nicole Bidegain, summarized, ‘yes, the crisis is deep and the moment is now to act.’ In Germany, Mario Candeias recalled that

before the crisis it was not possible to talk about ‘green socialism’ or transformation or whatever. It was only possible to say there are so many injustices – we have to work on these and we don’t want the work-fare program – we want some other kind of organization of social security blah blah blah. .... But it was not possible to talk about further transformative perspectives. Now this has opened up.

Even mainstream media, particularly the most prominent right-wing newspaper in Germany, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, are sounding neoliberalism’s death-knell, as they tentatively advance such projects as ‘de-growth from the right’ as Mario put it, in which family is revalorized as the site of care and reproduction. Transnational alternative policy groups need to examine such proposals closely, in order to clarify their own positions. And ‘growth’ in the sense of private accumulation that degrades ecosystems, is one of the system values that must be challenged, in a way that promotes the alternative of growth in human capacities, in the richness of social relations, in social equity and in the vitality of ecosystems. As Jorg Schultz of the Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation at RosaLux commented,

You have to come out of the growth logic that we are facing and more and more and more toys for each and everybody and the production of things that nobody needs. That is something we have to overcome. But do not ask me ‘how’. That still remains to be seen. That’s why we are working. When we try to identify very small and basic elements of such an answer. That’s what we are trying to do with our international outlook.

The problem, Jerry Mander noted, is that ‘we see the alternative systems over there on the cliff ... but there is a river in between.’ How to get from here to there? For Jerry, it means dismantling the currently existing

power system, ‘de-fanging the system’ and ‘setting a process for moving toward alternative systems.’ It is an undertaking that can be summarized in a few words, yet it is ‘the hardest thing to do.’

### *Leaner Times: Funding Challenges*

In the best of times, from a funding perspective, alternative policy groups are challenged by the disjuncture between the counter-hegemonic aspects of their work and the predominant priorities of funding institutions. Most foundations and other potential sources of funds channel their resources to service-oriented NGOs and the like. Some groups – DAWN, CACIM and TWF are examples – have dealt with this challenge by remaining lean and light-footed. They have minimal administrative apparatuses and paid staff; however that does limit capacity. Alternatives responded to a catastrophic withdrawal of its funding from the Canadian state in 2009 by developing a base of several thousand dues-paying members, who insisted on thwarting the Government of Canada’s desire to make social justice oriented NGOs disappear. Even so, Alternatives, along with most of the groups participating in this project, has had to downsize its operations substantially in the past few years, and to turn to volunteer labour. A number of TAPGs receive considerable amounts from the well-known foundations that support a great range of NGOs – Ford, George Soros’s Open Society, OxfamNovib, 11.11.11, HIVOS, MacArthur, Mott, Atlantic Philanthropy, Global Fund for Women and so on. Government and intergovernmental ministries and programs, including those of the European Union and UN, are also an obvious source, as are church groups like Development and Peace. RosaLux is itself a foundation fully funded by the German state with a 2012 budget exceeding 42 million euros, and it has helped fund CCS (among many groups worldwide) on a project-by-project basis. Some groups, including TNI, IFG and PPSG, have benefited dramatically from donations by socially-conscious wealthy individuals.

The situation is variegated, but a few generalizations can be ventured. First, to protect intellectual autonomy it is advantageous, indeed often crucial, to maintain a mix of funders (PRIA has a policy of limiting funds from a single source to 25% of revenue) or, in the case of RosaLux, to have an arrangement with the funder that maintains a reasonably secure firewall around organizational priorities and practices. Second, with the exception of RosaLux, whose budget is so far fortuitously tied to the (precarious) electoral fortunes of Die Linke, the funding environment has clearly worsened, particularly since the financial crisis of 2008. This puts most TAPGs in the paradoxical situation of having to do more, given the challenges and opportunities just reviewed, with less. As IFG treasurer Bing Gong explained, ‘In 2008, all the foundations took a hit in their portfolios.’ What were in some cases deep pockets became shallow, as foundations were obliged to administer their own budget cuts, with cascading effects.

But the problem is not simply a diminution of available funds, nor is it a singular effect of shrunken foundation portfolios and increasing state deficits. Neoliberal governments in countries like the Netherlands and Canada have as a matter of policy defunded social-justice oriented NGOs. The (absurd) reclassification of India recently as ‘developed’ has meant that international funding has dried up, while widespread corruption at the subnational level further limits funding options for groups like PRIA. Alternative policy groups have always faced resource challenges, among them, the fickleness of funders. According to Jerry Mander ‘funders tend to put out the biggest fire, or they go for the brightest light or the new kind of ice cream. They tend to go where the “new idea” is.’ But the ‘new idea’ that motivates the biggest funders of NGOs today has no space for transformative knowledge and action. The flagship foundation for funding ‘global civil society’ – with an endowment of \$36.4 billion – is controlled by Bill and Melinda Gates, and operates within a pure liberal-charity, technocratic framework. In short, there has been a sea change in the funding picture. Gita Sen of DAWN reminisced about

the halcyon years of the ‘90s, when civil society really was civil society, which meant, you know, an important part of it was movements towards social justice. That has really changed.

The availability of funding for that kind of work has shrunk relative to the huge amount of money that is there for being involved in service provision of the traditional kinds.

In this, DAWN's leanness, its minimal funding need, is an advantage, providing some measure of financial stability. As Gita said, 'we can keep doing what we do; we aren't reaching a million funders who will then turn around and say "but how does this really help girls on the ground?"'

In the fierce new world of NGO funding, several challenges stem from or are entangled in the reduced quantities of funds for social justice oriented work. In combination, these seem to comprise a new disciplinary regime in which radical possibilities of cognitive praxis are marginalized.

- Most TAPGs have had to cut staff and reduce activity, sometimes drastically. Alternatives has dropped from roughly 40 staff in multiple offices to 14 (plus many volunteers, with a high rate of turnover). Focus's staff, at 15, is roughly half of what it was five years ago. ITeM and IFG have suffered even greater cuts, both in staff and office space. At CRID, which exists as a coordinating organization for a large coalition of groups, members have been hit so hard they are unable to contribute as in the past to CRID activities. At CCS, budget cuts plus the host university's growing insistence on more teaching from academic staff impose new limits on the Centre's capacity for action. The list goes on.
- The relationship between funder and TAPG has become more formalized, and the process of securing funds more competitive. As Daniel Zebaleta, business manager of ITeM told me, funders now issue open calls for pre-proposals around specific themes, after which a limited number of NGOs are invited to present full proposals. The process is more bureaucratic and demanding for relatively small organizations, not only at the early stage but throughout the approval and then the reporting process. Pietje Vervest, Programme Coordinator of TNI's Economic Justice, Corporate Power and Alternatives Programme, noted one of the effects of the new terms of engagement: 'I spend more than half of my time fundraising and reporting on it.'
- Funders increasingly target specific programs and insist upon measureable impact. Funding is narrowly dedicated and conditional upon deliverables, and practices of benchmarking assess whether the funded initiative has been effective – with subsequent funding contingent on a favourable result within a narrowly-specified timeframe. For PRIA, whose participatory methodology for knowledge production and governance thrives on open-ended dialogical processes, the new regime poses real challenges. Sumona Dasgupta told me that in earlier times, funding flexibility enabled PRIA to develop a large number of partnerships and to spearhead such campaigns as 'governance where people matter' In the new regime, funds are targeted at projects and funders want deliverables that do not include advocacy campaigns beyond service delivery. Sumona continued, 'this is the crisis of our times—that you do not have flexible funding anymore; everything is linked to a specific project, and a specific project is linked to five/six deliverables – specific deliverables.' Innovative cognitive praxis and movement-building can occur only once the deliverables have been delivered, on time. At Focus, Mary Ann Manahan agreed that 'with the crises, more and more funders are output or outcome oriented,' yet major policy gains take years of organizing and campaigning. 'Some battles, especially for agrarian reform, are hard won and it takes decades and decades,' a reality that does not fit within the technocratic purview of today's funding regime.
- The new regime tends to have a centripetal effect in weakening the internal coherence of TAPGs as counter-hegemonic initiatives. We see this in Sumona Dasgupta's reflections above. Andrew de Sousa at Focus observed that with the shift to program-targeted funding people end up raising their own funds for their own projects, creating 'mini-organizations within the organization: 'sometimes it is harder to feel that we're all coordinating together when people have these other things pulling them.' The danger in this, as PRIA's Nishu Kaul told me, is that the sense of common vision and

purpose, so important to counter-hegemony, begins to fade. Budget constraints, contributing to staff turnover, further weaken the collective project, as comparable jobs elsewhere offer three times the salaries of PRIA staff.

The new challenges have called for what Victor Menotti at IFG termed ‘resilience and innovation’. IFG came close to folding, and its board of global-justice luminaries, which used to convene for 2-3 day meetings that gave the organization vision and strategic direction, has not met in nearly two years for lack of funds. Still, by becoming smaller and turning to the labour of volunteer interns, IFG has been able to launch and maintain two programs which now form the core of its activities. As Jerry Mander surmised, ‘we’re coming out of [the funding crisis] now slowly, but we’re not frankly, anything like as effective as we were in the early years because we don’t have the staff or money to operate well enough.’ At Focus, and no doubt elsewhere, the new normal is a year-to-year operation, with no guarantees on what the future holds.

There are precious few bright spots in all this, but two activists at Focus offered reflections that merit serious consideration. Pablo Solon agreed with the rather grim scenario I have sketched above. There are, as he sees it, many funders who have moved in the predominant direction.

But there are also other funders who have moved in the other direction, that say ‘Hey, we have funded for the last decades with those benchmarks, and in reality things have not changed. So we have to have a more holistic approach.’ So you will see that also. Those will see Focus as an option, because we are not an organization that has benchmarks for each program and project. We have some indicators of how we are moving, but the way we work is not like an NGO that builds health centres.

In a similar spirit, Joseph Purugganan insisted that Focus’s radical political goals and vision need not be compromised in the current era. With reduced resources, and enlarged tasks, the key question is,

how do we tap into our allies, our bigger community, the bigger movement that we are part of so that together we advance some of these political goals? So that means that as far as strategies are concerned, we are trying to focus more on areas where we feel we are better able to contribute, in terms of knowledge production [and].... And then trying to move within platforms – regional and national platforms – so that meagre, small contributions can be expanded and we can leverage that and work together with others in pushing for political objectives.

Mutual aid, solidaristic practices and partnership are the order of the day.



### Chapter 3: Alternative projects and cognitive praxis

Any group that places the production and mobilization of alternative knowledge among its top priorities does so with specific ends, for specific constituencies and audiences, and through specific means. In short, each transnational alternative policy group has a *project*, and while TAPGs converge around a master frame for global justice and ecological well-being (as discussed in Chapter 1), they also pursue distinctive objectives. This chapter develops an analysis of alt knowledge projects that groups participating in this research have taken up, and the strategies and practices each project implies.

All transnational alternative policy groups are committed to producing knowledge that has an emancipatory thrust, and to mobilizing that knowledge so that it is taken up in practice. But how they do that – their strategies and practices – are shaped by the projects they have set themselves, which imply distinct constituencies, publics, understandings of justice and injustice, and social visions. For brevity's sake, I will focus these sketches on only some of these issues, and on the 10 TAPGs for which we have multiple interlocutors. Some of them (RosaLux, TNI and PRIA) are so large and multifaceted in their initiatives as to defy any simple categorization; all of them deal with the cross-pressures of serving multiple constituencies.

Moreover, as Hilary Wainwright insisted, there is an important distinction to be drawn between the constituency on behalf of whom, and with whom, one develops emancipatory knowledge and those to whom a communication (e.g. a policy paper) may be addressed. The former are often outsiders to institutional power; the latter may be strategically-positioned insiders, and many TAPGs direct their work, in different forms, to both. There is also the distinction, elided perhaps in conventional notions of constituency, between 'for' and 'with'. Hilary positions her own cognitive praxis *with* and *for* the subset of outsiders who have the potential to bring about transformation:

...the knowledge that I'm concerned to contribute to and develop is knowledge which strengthens the self-confidence and the perspectives and widens the horizons of people who are in some way subordinated by the existing order. So it can vary hugely between the context – whether it's workers, communities. I wouldn't say it's *for*, because it is *with* as well. It's not us producing *for* others. It's us producing *with* others and then helping to mobilize and spread it, which strengthens their capacities to bring about change, bring about transformation. It's *with* and *for* those who both have the power ultimately to bring about change and benefit from a more equal, democratic society.

Keeping this distinction between *with* and *for* in mind, below I present brief accounts of alt knowledge projects and the strategies and practices each project implies.

#### *ITeM/Social Watch*

At ITeM/Social Watch, two organizations that share the same secretariat space and coordinating personnel, the social vision that informs cognitive praxis includes four elements:

- i) the eradication of poverty and the causes of poverty,
- ii) an end to all forms of discrimination and racism,
- iii) an equitable distribution of wealth, and
- iv) the realization of human rights, emphasizing 'the right of all people not to be poor'.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.socialwatch.org/about>, accessed 27 August 2013.

ITeM/Social Watch maintains a dual, inside/outside orientation, on the one hand engaging in UN-sponsored and related intergovernmental initiatives that address global governance issues; on the other hand coordinating a vast network of activists, the so-called Watchers, who are engaged in their respective countries (numbering over 80) in monitoring compliance with international covenants. 'Watching' is a key practice of alt knowledge. The strategy for change it entails is one of documenting and reporting on events, or failures to act – a kind of alternative journalism – thereby raising consciousness and holding governments, and intergovernmental organizations to account: to honour commitments they have made. Watching involves 'a comprehensive strategy of advocacy, awareness-building, monitoring, organizational development and networking. Social Watch aims at strengthening the capacity of national coalitions to effectively monitor and influence policies with an impact over women, people living in poverty and other vulnerable groups.'<sup>33</sup> The Social Watch website is regularly updated, with news from Watchers in various countries, flagging noncompliance as well as small victories. Each year, reports from the Watchers are condensed and compiled into an overall Social Watch *Report*<sup>34</sup> which is widely distributed in IGO and NGO circles as well as back to the various grassroots communities of watchers. Ana Zeballos, who coordinates this process, described how it works:

The Watchers, of course, are part of the readers and they use the *Report* at the national level. One of our main focuses is the United Nations system. So we always present it in the UN arena meetings or conferences.... The last one was in Rio; the previous one – 2010 – it was presented in the MDG Summit in New York. So the 2009 [*Report*], which was mainly focused on the crisis, was presented in the Crisis Conference.... And of course, there are lots of places where we are present, like the World Social Forum, and the regional forums, the European one and so on. And several meetings that are important for us...the change...that can change from one year to another, the events and the subjects of each one of the Reports. Even when our focus is on development and poverty and gender, each of the Reports has its own subject and own theme, and it is decided by the network. So the focus can change from one year to the other.

The changing focus enables Social Watch to take up emergent issues that connect with yet go beyond its core, rights-based critique of economic and gender inequity. Its 2012 *Report*, for instance, was subtitled 'Sustainable Development: the right to a future' The continuing dialogue between local Social Watch groups and the secretariat, and among the groups themselves, mobilizes the local knowledge of many activist communities in developing detailed assessments of state compliance with social objectives on development, poverty and gender equity, upon which they have already agreed. The Social Watch website is an important resource in these communicative processes. Besides the annual *Reports* and related resources such as the annually updated Gender Equity Index,<sup>35</sup> the website provides news reports that are often based on material sent in from local groups. Marcelo Jelen, a journalist who writes the news stories, explained that the point of these stories is not a standard journalistic one, but to give momentum to the activists by enabling them to 'see themselves' in the webpage. For instance, one story recounted how a feminist group of Watchers in Honduras

---

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.socialwatch.org/annualReport>, accessed 27 August 2013.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/14365>, accessed 27 August 2013.

launched a very tiny group of studies in a very tiny village. It was not a very big story for the world, but it was for them, and at a certain point it was important for us because that's the way things are done in the grassroots movement.

Watchers exercise democratic control over knowledge production, an outcome guaranteed both by the dialogical process and by the organization's democratic structure,<sup>36</sup> while they also use the *Report* as a key resource in their struggles at the national level. In this way, ITeM/Social Watch pursues an interstitial, multi-level critical-liberal project, addressing intergovernmental organizations, national states, transnational and national publics and the more social-democratic currents within the global left.

#### *Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)*

DAWN, a transnational network whose core consists of a dozen or so Southern feminists, which has comradely relations with Social Watch, also addresses its work both to movement counterpublics and to institutionalized centres of power. DAWN has four main research themes, which are explained at its resource-rich website:

1. Political Economy of Globalization (PEG)
2. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)
3. Political Restructuring and Social Transformation (PRST)
4. Political Ecology and Sustainability (PEAS)<sup>37</sup>

These areas focus DAWN's core analyses and its global advocacy efforts. Strategically, DAWN strives to 'translate' feminist political-economic and political-ecological analysis into 'advocacy demands' and to help movements use those demands to push governments for change, as Nicole Bidegain stated, but it places equal or even greater emphasis upon bottom-up knowledge production. From the start, DAWN defined its core constituency as women of the Global South, yet it has always stood for the overcoming of all forms of oppression, and its interlinkage analysis emphasizes a holistic perspective on oppression and transformation.

Since its launch at the 1985 World Conference on Women at Nairobi, DAWN has engaged in advocacy within intergovernmental processes, including for instance Rio+20. But its project equally emphasizes 'networking' with movements and 'training' the next generation of Southern feminists. The goal in networking is twofold: 1/ to influence the women of feminist movements, bringing to them interlinkage analyses that are more structural and more critical, but also 2/ to 'work with other friends from the left or from the progressive social movements trying to bring the feminist perspective there' (Nicole Bidegain). Training, as Nicole continued, is a way to multiply the analysis and the knowledge so that new feminists can use it to transform their realities. As noted earlier in Table 3, an accomplishment of DAWN is the creation, within GEEJ (Gender, Economic and Ecological Justice) and other DAWN training institutes, of spaces for intensive participatory education in interlinkage analysis, a process that fosters transnational networks of alumni.

As Gita Sen told me, from its first book forward (Sen and Grown 1987),<sup>38</sup> DAWN's cognitive praxis has integrated theory and practice through extensive dialogue. 'We don't feel that we produce something, and

---

<sup>36</sup> Detailed at <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/63>, accessed 27 August 2013.

<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.dawnet.org/index.php>, accessed 9 August 2013.

then say, oh, now let's figure out what the activists think about it. It's theirs from the beginning.' Marina Durano, who has worked extensively on all three fronts of advocacy, networking and training (before recently accepting a full-time academic position at the National University of the Philippines), shared her account of how DAWN's dialogical approach uses interlinkage to contest neoliberal capitalism's dominant narrative:

The North/South distinction is there always. It can create tensions among civil society, but that's the story. Then within the South, then you look at the inequalities, exclusions, marginalizations. Some of them are identity-based exclusions. Some of them are purely economic exclusions or marginalizations or poverty. The different dimensions of poverty have to be brought forward, and of course gender-based discrimination is always prominent in that story, because you have additional layers of sources of exclusion or exploitation, depending on the relation you are trying to explain. So those stories have to be brought out from within the content. That's why seminars, workshops with allies are important -- that's how you draw out the stories. That's how you create the counter-story. We have to be actually talking to each other; otherwise we won't know our stories. And then drawing from that, [we co-create] the main messages as to the counterpoint to what is being sold as the truth.

Like ITeM/Social Watch, DAWN produces alternative knowledge both *for* intergovernmental (mainly UN) agencies and *with* grassroots activists. Its specific practices are distinctive however, as is its intense focus on women of the Global South, understood within a holistic, interlinkage perspective.

### *The Transnational Institute (TNI)*

As we have already seen in discussing the issue of mainstreaming/marginalization, the Transnational Institute's cognitive praxis is quite multifaceted. The group works with and for different constituencies, and addresses different sites of institutional power. In one sense, TNI resembles DAWN in its inclination toward producing alt knowledge that is strongly grounded in critical political economy and political ecology. It delivers macro analyses and critiques of the global regime, focused around two large programmes: Drugs and Democracy (with regionally focused projects) and Economic Justice (with projects on trade/investment, corporate power, agrarian justice and public services/water justice – each providing a window on the neoliberal global political economy and the search for alternatives). TNI's Burma Project is a stand-alone initiative, but draws on other TNI projects (drugs, agrarian justice, investment/trade) in working with ethnic minority groups seeking a voice in national policy making and engaging with international actors operating in their territories.. TNI brings to these programs and projects a social vision of a sustainable, just and democratic world. To these ends, it engages with activist communities worldwide, dialoguing with movements and with progressive governments, particularly now in Latin America. In its basic approach, TNI fits the motif of 'expose, oppose, propose':

- It carries out radical analysis on critical global issues such as corporate power, land-grabbing and water privatization;
- It builds alliances and capacity with social movements;
- It develops and disseminates, on its website and in publications, policy analyses and proposals for alternatives.

---

<sup>38</sup> Available at <http://www.dawnnet.org/resources-books.php?page=2>, accessed 27 August 2013.

With such a variegated set of programs and projects, addressing different publics, constituencies and audiences, TNI's knowledge-producing practices are diverse. As already mentioned, its basic strategies range from insider efforts (Drugs and Democracy; working to influence the European Commission on trade and investment policy; advise to progressive governments of the pink tide) to outsider initiatives (the campaign to Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity). As Pietje Vervest summarized,

I think we have different audiences. I think our key audience is social movements, but of course, policy makers and academe and media are also audiences we would like to influence. That's more 'influence' and the other is more 'working with'. So we are producing knowledge on different levels, suitable for the target groups for the audiences. What we do a lot for social movements is developing primers – easy readable analyses of land-grabbing, water-grabbing - - EU role in land-grabbing worldwide. ... For policy-makers, we choose policy briefings. And for the media, all kinds of stuff – short reports, press releases.

A good, rich account of how Drugs and Democracy pursues its primarily insider strategy was volunteered by Martin Jelsma, who contrasted the current, carefully targeted approach with earlier work that was too vague about its intended audience:

I would say now much more of our work tries to be more tailored to the policy audience, and that policy audience I guess including the informed actors moving within that, more broadly also including opinion-makers, key journalists, experts from civil society side – targeting more at that audience which is also the audience where we facilitate the informal dialogues. We bring those people together in this whole series of dialogues that we organize in Europe, Latin America and Southeast Asia. Besides those – the more tailored and recommendation-oriented information and products – we do have also the more time-consuming type basic research. We have two teams of local researchers at the moment, and one legal team in Latin America and a more mixed team with people looking at markets trends in the drug market in Southeast Asia. ... With those teams, we do also very original basic research in terms of data collection and lots of interviews and providing the evidence base and the analysis from which then we can produce the more focused policy recommendation type, shorter briefings that I do think are the materials that have the most impact.

The basic research is done in an unconventional manner, compared to academic work on drug policy issues. TNI actually interviews farmers, small traders and others – vulnerable groups typically ignored by the mainstream. The grounded knowledge it produces is now highly valued at the policy-making level in several contexts.

Similarly, though quite distinctly, in its Water Justice and Public Services and Democracy projects, TNI draws on and mobilizes experiential knowledge as a political resource for activists struggling to reclaim elements of the commons after privatization. Much of this cognitive praxis consists in finding and analyzing

working examples – [e.g.] of public water utilities that are doing impressive things. But learning from them as well – their mistakes, but part of their experience is actually showing that an alternative isn't just possible. It already exists, and the question is how to share this knowledge. And that's very empowering for groups that are kind of fighting processes that seem inexorable and they're just going to happen, to actually say 'no', people have managed to do this. Not only have they stopped privatization, they've reversed privatization and actually proved a public water utility, if it's set up right, can actually not only be socially and environmentally more accountable, but actually economically more efficient – so beat the neoliberals at their game as well.

TNI Communications Manager Nick Buxton continued,

Those kinds of sharing real experiences are really important, and one that I try to push more because ... we've got a convergence of systemic crises and we're really wanting to say not just how bad the situation is – people know it's bad – they want to know what we can do about it. So those kind of alternatives, those real life examples, ones that we can learn from and improve upon, are really important.

TNI is a policy group particularly rich in capacity (as distinct from balance-sheet assets) – including the capacity to practice alt KPM transnationally and across a range of issues. It complements a great deal of critical policy work, including original research, with ongoing dialogues and facilitations, associated with its various programs and projects, that provide cognitive resources to activist organizations and campaigns via conferences, workshops, seminars and in textual form. TNI's capacity to act within transnational fields has been greatly enhanced through its collaborative approach to alt KPM. Its list of collaborators indicates 82 partners, 14 of whom are extensive global civil-society networks such as the Hemispheric Alliance, Our World is Not for Sale, and the Seattle to Brussels Network.<sup>39</sup>

#### *Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RosaLux)*

The brain trust of Germany's democratic-socialist Left Party (*Die Linke*) has, of its nature, a particularly clear vision of where its counter-hegemonic cognitive praxis could lead. A large organization of approximately 150 staff, RosaLux consists of several divisions. My interviewing homed in on key activist-scholars at the Institute for Critical Social Analysis (*IfG*, established in 2008), plus participants from the Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation (the Foundation's international division) and the Academy of Political Education. Within the division of labour at the Foundation, the Institute is most engaged in knowledge production, including theoretical analysis and policy proposals. It does this in dialogue with the left intelligentsia and movement communities. The Academy and Center engage extensively in knowledge mobilization, which includes the funding of allies' cognitive praxis, often within partnerships.

RosaLux engages only minimally with governments and IGOs, the major exception occurring within Germany at state and municipal levels (such as Brandenburg) where *Die Linke* actually holds some measure of state power. In those cases, the Foundation, through the Institute especially, provides advice in dialogue with the government. There is also a good deal of building solidarity with allies through dialogue, especially at the Centre, for which this is a central part of the mandate. RosaLux's mission is to engage productively with what it sees as a 'mosaic left' – diverse, pluralistic, transnational – in ways that foster its becoming a transformative left. The mosaic left is fragmented, yet its fragments do add up to a picture – an alternative to neoliberal capitalism. RosaLux's dialogical approach strives 'to bring the different movements, the unions, the different parties together to formulate their interests, their visions, and practices [so] that they don't lose their specific identity,' but do converge into a counter-hegemonic bloc with transformative capacities. As Mario Candeias, Deputy Director of the Institute, continued to explain, 'We are all interested in transformative things. We're all into these ideas of "you have to build a mosaic", not *the* Party, *the* Union, *the* whatever. And we've very clear ...that expanding "the public" is one of the very important things.' The

---

<sup>39</sup> See <http://www.tni.org/partners>, accessed 19 August 2013.

point is not to replace the mosaic, but to assist in a process of self-clarification and development, which is also a process of revitalizing the democratic public sphere.

As a large, multidivisional international organization, RosaLux's alt knowledge practices are especially diverse and tailored to the various publics and movements with which it is in dialogue. However, as Rainer Rilling told me, the Foundation has two tracks of alt KPM: general political education and scientific work. As the main site for the latter, the Institute<sup>40</sup> publishes many analytical papers on strategy and policy for the left intelligentsia within and outside Die Linke. It also organizes conferences for broader publics that are followed up with synthesizing work. On the other hand, the Academy<sup>41</sup> offers participatory courses and workshops for youth, adult learners on such topics as economic literacy, gender inequalities, sustainable development and political communication. It engages with movements directly and through such media as its website, public events that may feature music and discussion, and hard copy pamphlets distributed at such events as Blockupy Frankfurt. Project coordinator Lutz Brangsch explained that the Academy's 'Let's Speak About Alternatives' initiative mobilized the knowledge of 'people in very concrete alternative projects at the grassroots level, like city gardening or like organizing solidarity alternative production, or bringing goods from the South to the North in a solidarity fair way and so on,' to discuss which forms are effective, why people engage in these projects, and how they can be generalized or scaled up. The resulting book, *The ABC of Alternatives* was widely distributed as a popular-education tool.

The Centre's<sup>42</sup> constituency is more popular than scientific, and especially diverse, given its presence in over 70 countries. Through its foreign offices, the Centre supports left organizations and currents in Latin America, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and, through its New York office, North America. Support takes the form of funding as well as seminars and conferences organized with partners that include universities and civil society organizations, radio stations and magazines, and in some cases, left governments. Karin Gabbert, Director of RosaLux's Latin American programs, described a RosaLux-supported study of Indigenous justice whose results were worked into a course that the government of Ecuador has been giving to all its judges. All of RosaLux's work in the South is done in partnership with movements and civil society organizations, but the objective is also to share critical knowledge between Global South and North, in bi-directional processes of intercultural translation.

RosaLux, in sum, produces and mobilizes alt knowledge for a constituency of the broad left, within Germany and in more than 70 other countries in Europe, North America and throughout the Global South. Its counter-hegemonic project is focused on working with the mosaic left to build a transformative left, a convergence of movements against capitalism and for green socialism, but it also addresses injustices that intersect with problems of capitalism, such as those pertaining to gender, sexuality, race and nation. It engages in extensive programs of political education, critical research and movement-building through dialogical engagements, with the first two centred in Germany and the third pursued both domestically and internationally.

---

<sup>40</sup> See <http://rosalux.de/english/foundation/research-projects.html>, accessed 10 August 2013.

<sup>41</sup> See <http://www.rosalux.de/english/foundation/political-education.html>, accessed 10 August 2013.

<sup>42</sup> See <http://rosalux.de/english/worldwide.html>, accessed 10 August 2013.

## *Centre de recherche et d'information pour le développement (CRID)*

In contrast to both TNI and RosaLux, the Centre de recherche et d'information pour le développement (CRID – Research and Information Centre for Development) is a group whose project involves very little original research. On the other hand, CRID produces enormous quantities of dialogical, collaborative knowledge and is a site of copious popular education and movement-building. The coordinating (but not controlling) hub of a vast network of politically progressive French NGOs, CRID has always been counter-hegemonic in its self-understanding. In the early years, when NGO conventions viewed development as a technical process of modernization, CRID went against the grain by conceptualizing development as human development, and by insisting on partnerships rather than embracing the standard charity model of North-South NGO relations. CRID's insistence on human development and partnership led it to adopt dialogical, network-oriented practices, to the point at which currently its self-conception is not that of an NGO but a nodal point, pulling together many movements, around a focal point of global justice and (more recently) ecological health.

This vision is captured also in the current CRID understanding of its project as one of cultivating 'transversal' solidarities – coalitions across different issue areas and identities. CRID now problematizes 'development' in another way, by pointing to how with globalization, the 'South' is now to be found in part within the 'North', and vice versa. Its current work includes important initiatives that struggle for justice for oppressed migrant and immigrant communities within France, issues not typically seen through a conventional 'development' lens, yet fundamental to a counter-hegemonic project of human development.

Out of the historical pathway I have just summarized also comes CRID's strong emphasis upon alt KPM as an empowering, democratizing process. CRID emphasizes dialogical approaches that synthesize knowledges from different activist experiences and standpoints. This is the reasoning behind the 40-odd 'platforms' CRID facilitates (particularly through the efforts of its Director, Nathalie Pere-Marzano), but does not control, which give it exceptional, two-way reach into the French movement left and on to francophone NGOs in global civil society. Each platform brings a set of NGOs and movement organizations together in common cause, on a particular theme or project. For instance, the platform Educasol (Development Education and International Solidarity), established in 2004, brings together 28 associations and networks to enhance the coordination, coherence and visibility of the development education sector and to pool knowledge in the areas of experiential exchange/knowledge integration, educational tools and methodological training. Some platforms produce collaboratively-authored papers; others are more action-oriented. The 'platform' approach is an interesting network-based method for alt KPM.

The actual practices that make CRID what it is are dispersed among its platforms, some of which are fairly core to the organization. The latter include the Week of International Solidarity and Summer University – major popular-education initiatives CRID coordinates, and *Altermondes*, a quarterly magazine on international solidarity, development and ecological sustainability. Since 2001, CRID's involvement in WSF (it is a founding member of the WSF International Committee) has significantly shaped CRID's identity. One can see the Forum visions of 'open space' as well as 'movement of movements' reflected in CRID's own work, including the idea of horizontal, network organization and the practices of dialogue and the cultivation of transversal solidarities. Among CRID principals there is unwavering support for the Forum, and appreciation of its successes. The sense is that the WSF is still relevant, and that reports of its demise tend to reflect disappointments based in unrealistic expectations of what such a Forum could accomplish, given the global left's primordial state.

Compared to ITeM/Social Watch, DAWN, TNI and RosaLux, CRID is a quite nationally-focused group, yet its multifarious social relations, through 53 member groups active in solidarity work around the world,



centre it within a project of alt knowledge that is also one of North-South movement-building and political-cultural mediation/translation. At the same time, CRID serves as a point of articulation between members who take a critical-liberal stance such as the *Ligue des droits de l'Homme* and more radical movement groups. With a small paid staff of dedicated activists, CRID's reach into domestic and global civil society is remarkable. Its member groups partner with 1500 groups in the South and in East Europe, and with approximately 7500 local groups in France, the latter representing approximately 180.000 volunteers.<sup>43</sup>

### *The Centre for Civil Society (CCS)*

Of all the groups participating in this project, the Centre for Civil Society is probably the most extensively and organically engaged with local politics. The Centre devotes great energy to its ongoing relationship with local movements and struggles, and provides intellectual leadership in setting these struggles within a broader political-economic and political-ecological context. Many of the books and other publications credited to CCS principals and associates (including the biweekly column in the *Mercury*, Durban's main English language paper) have a local thrust (e.g., *Undressing Durban*, to which Community Scholar Faith ka-Manzi contributed in a big way). This is impressive especially when we consider that the Centre has at the same time built a visible international profile, particularly through the efforts of its ubiquitous director Patrick Bond.

The alt KPM work of the Centre is done by three kinds of people – research staff (which numbered three at the time of my field work in January 2013), administrative/communications staff (numbering four, whose work goes beyond administration, to community development and social media initiatives) and Community Scholars (numbering approximately six). In addition, a steady stream of visitors from abroad, many of them academics, give public talks at CCS which are immediately posted to the website.

CCS's initiatives build linkages between activism and analysis, in both directions. The layout of its offices (occupying the top three floors of the tallest building on University of KwaZulu-Natal's Durban campus) is indicative. In addition to offices for academic and administrative staff, the space includes a multipurpose meeting room, which holds 40-50 people and gets a lot of use. Along its borders are several computer work stations. CCS offers this space to Community Scholars and visiting scholars, to facilitate political organizing as well as research. The 'Protest Observatory' that is prominently featured on the CCS website is another marker of intense activist engagement. Webmaster John Devenish scouts the internet each day for stories to post. The information-rich website contains many KPM resources for activists, including an online library of radical literature with more than 3000 documents.

CCS's close, dialogical relationship with the Durban activist community enables the Centre to learn from it and to provide intellectual and other cultural resources to it. As Patrick Bond told me,

here in Durban we probably are about the closest watchdogs of the left – from the left – that you'd find in the city, and we'll regularly put out mega-critiques and micro-critiques. So we've got to jump scale, do everything – we do political economy and political ecology with some of the best people in the world giving us assistance. We see them – the issues are rumbling up, and we study social movements, we think, with a degree of honesty that is needed and self-reflection and self-critique. Then we also study and promote culture. .... We have the videos and we have regular bands that do political music. The COP 17 – we had

---

<sup>43</sup> Figures are from <http://www.crid.asso.fr/spip.php?article13>, accessed 27 August 2013.

some amazing material that was generated for that, including obscure rap tunes about carbon trading – just superb. One of our Master’s students, Comrade Fatso, put that together. So we try to cover everything [laughter] and it’s a few of us who are doing this work, and Khadija [Sharife] is probably the most sophisticated, because she has real serious investigative journalistic sensibilities and will go deep into the issues with a great team of people around the continent especially, that she can commission.

One venue for Khadija’s investigative work, Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities and Trade (EJOLT) is an important initiative in socio-ecological justice, in which CCS has played a leading role – as shown in a December, 2012 critical policy analysis of the failure of the UN Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in Africa – which involved extensive collaborative, case-study research using political economic and political ecological lenses.<sup>44</sup> The report concludes, that across Africa, the CDM subsidizes dangerous for-profit activities such as coal-fired electrical generation and deforestation,

making them yet more advantageous to multinational corporations which are mostly based in Europe, the US or South Africa. In turn, these same corporations – and others just as ecologically irresponsible – can continue to pollute beyond the bounds set by politicians especially in Europe, because the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) forgives increasing pollution in the North if it is offset by dubious projects in the South. But because communities, workers and local environments have been harmed in the process, various kinds of social resistances have emerged, and in some cases met with repression or cooptation through ‘divide-and-rule’ strategies (Bond et al 2012: 1).

Patrick and Khadija’s critical policy work has also led them to an astute analysis of ecological debt reparations in Africa, which was recently published in an academic journal (Bond and Sharife 2013).

If CCS’s cognitive praxis includes local agit-prop (in various media) and critical policy analysis, it also extends to political community organizing and intercultural dialogue through the agency of CCS Community Scholars -- activists grounded in local, predominantly Black communities, who receive a stipend and have their own space at the Centre to pursue initiatives in cooperation with other Centre people. Community Scholars provide ‘reality tours’ of Durban, a form of experiential political education for Visitors; they are active in political struggles around issues of migration and xenophobia, access to water, toilets, and electricity, toilets, etc. China Ngubane, a political refugee from Zimbabwe and Community Scholar, who coordinates the program, has mastered a method of ‘protest mapping’ that aids in understanding the geography of protest in Umlazi, South Africa’s second biggest township (after Soweto).<sup>45</sup> These examples show how the program sustains an organic link between the Centre, which is embedded in a formerly Whites-only university campus, and the majority communities of greater Durban. As Community Scholar Thami Mbatha told me,

---

<sup>44</sup> See Bond, P., Sharife, K., Allen F., Amisi B., Brunner K, Castel-Branco, R., Dorsey D., Gambirazzio, G., Hathaway, T., Nel, A., Nham, W. 2012. ‘The CDM cannot deliver the money to Africa. Why the Clean Development Mechanism won’t save the planet from climate change, and how African civil society is resisting’, EJOLT Report No. 2. [http://www.ejolt.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/121221\\_EJOLT\\_2\\_Low.pdf](http://www.ejolt.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/121221_EJOLT_2_Low.pdf), accessed 11 August 2013.

<sup>45</sup> CCS also provides training for Community Scholars and other activists in videography, and has produced many activist videos, some of which are available on the website (<http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/default.asp?3,76>).

The main objective is to bridge the gap of understanding between academics and the ordinary people. By ordinary people, I mean the people who are not – some of them have never been to university and who still see university as really far away – something that you dream of as heaven on earth. So now the main objective is to narrow the gap that exists – to assist in communication between various sectors of our communities.

The focus of the Community Scholars program is local, but CCS also intervenes in extra-local cognitive praxis, including its ‘debaters’ listserv that pulls together a community of left intellectuals throughout southern Africa. When the opportunity arises, it organizes people’s conferences to coincide with major elite summits held in Durban. During my weeks at the Centre in January 2013, I attended two early planning meetings, convened by the CCS and featuring local activists and allied groups, for what became the ‘BRICS from Below’ civil society summit – ‘a call to re-build BRICS, bottom-up’, in March 2013.<sup>46</sup>

CCS’s various initiatives in alt KPM are informed by an epistemological commitment to view social conflict from the standpoint of the oppressed. As a CCS pamphlet prepared for the June 2013 Left Forum at Pace University explained, within this perspective

The most rigorous knowledge production about oppressive systems is generated when scholars understand first-hand, most often from activists, the sources and processes of conflict. It is only when a system of power is challenged by its critics – not just armchair academics – that we more fully understand that system’s logic: how it reacts and represses, co-opts or even concedes to opponents.

Situated in what the pamphlet describes as ‘the world’s most unequal and protest-rich major country’, the Centre for Civil Society pursues a project that is fully attuned to the need for knowledge, grounded in ‘the sources and processes of conflict’, produced with and for those who challenge oppressive systems.

### *Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)*

PRIA’s own roots lie in the 1970s movements for adult education, the pedagogy of the oppressed, and the development of participatory action research. These innovations in cognitive praxis were foundational to PRIA. From the start, PRIA has been about fostering dialogue among stakeholders, co-creating knowledge, and building capacity for self-governance at the grassroots. Its vision is of a deep, inclusive and participatory democracy, incorporating gender justice and balancing the social and the economic, individual autonomy and collective solidarity. With the slogan ‘Knowledge is Power’ at the centre of its project (and inscribed in its logo), PRIA emphasizes that for democracy to thrive, citizens need to know, and to participate in knowledge creation and self-governance.

Over the past three decades, PRIA has been a world leader in developing practices that incorporate a dialectic of knowledge production as a lever for empowerment and social change. From the core of participatory action research as a methodology of knowledge co-creation, PRIA has developed a rich repertoire of initiatives in participatory development, education, community-based research, gender empowerment and mainstreaming, organizational development, self-governance, inclusion, and strengthening civil society, which is now available to practitioners worldwide via the Practice in

---

<sup>46</sup> Details are at <http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/files/brics-from-below%20call%20version%2017%20March.pdf>, accessed 19 August 2013.

Participation portal.<sup>47</sup> Part of PRIA's project has been to systematize alt KPM through the invention and refinement of specific methods of knowledge co-creation, which open up processes of reflexive change, e.g., gender auditing, participatory planning, institutional analysis and citizen monitoring (the last refers to citizens monitoring state practices, not vice versa!). In step with the elaboration of these methods, PRIA has advanced a strategy for social change: mobilize at the grassroots, using participatory methods, but create intermediary, dialogical spaces that connect grassroots and civil society with institutional power – which can lead to program redesign, new initiatives, and increased accountability on the part of state and private sectors. In this sense, PRIA champions and convenes ongoing conversations in which communities are empowered and their voices heard by state authorities and the private sector.

PRIA's work focuses on four "thrust areas": (1) Violence against Women, (2) Urban Poverty and Governance, (3) Decentralized Governance, Planning and Delivery of basic services, and (4) Changing Roles, New Challenges and Capacities of Civil Society. These thrust areas all integrate a focus on projects of action research and democratizing local governance in India, training of practitioners in participatory research, planning, social audit, activity mapping and other skill sets, and transnational action-learning and capacity-building within civil society.

Like ITeM/Social Watch, PRIA represents the critical-liberal pole in alt KPM. It is pragmatically committed to realizing the potential of liberal-democratic politics while pressing beyond, with a commitment to 'deep democracy' and participation which cannot actually be squared with capitalism and class society. In this sense, PRIA could be said to instantiate an immanent critique of liberalism – to push liberal values beyond the ways they actually function in legitimating state and capitalist power. One can discern this in PRIA's two mottos: Knowledge is power and Making democracy work for all.<sup>48</sup>

There are good reasons why PRIA takes such a stance, with one foot firmly planted within conventional liberal-democratic politics and the other tentatively venturing beyond it, in the direction of radical democracy. Perhaps most salient is the condition of uneven and combined development that makes contemporary India such a contradictory place:

India lives in different centuries and everything that you say about India, the opposite would also be true. So you have the 21<sup>st</sup> century in India and the 17<sup>th</sup> century, probably on two sides of the same street. And there is no dialogue at all. So that is where the bridge needs to be built, because otherwise the potential for social violence is so great (Sumona Dasgupta).

Contributing to this potential is the legacy of statism, rooted in British colonialism but further ossified in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the drama of periodic elections, India's highly bureaucratic, rather corrupt state apparatus has been unresponsive to popular pressure from below. Elsewhere, neoliberalization has for the most part meant a hollowing out of social-democratic programs and entitlements, but in India liberalization has arguably opened space for 'civil society' to begin to breathe. Hence PRIA, unlike all other groups, is not strongly opposed to neoliberalism. Its own experience is strongly grounded in India, where the neoliberal model is not (yet) discredited; and although PRIA recognizes problems in privatization (decreasing scope for democratic accountability as services are outsourced to corporates), and in concentrated corporate power, PRIA also considers that markets can be preferable to corrupt, unaccountable state domination.

---

<sup>47</sup> The portal is located at <http://www.practiceinparticipation.org/>, accessed 19 August 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Both appear in the PRIA webpage masthead, at <http://www.pria.org/>, accessed 27 August 2013.

PRIA's pragmatism extends to a conceptualization of social problems as amenable to rational solutions that can be arrived at via dialogue – convening the stakeholders and facilitating their movement toward common ground. At the same time, PRIA's project has at its centre the goals of giving voice to the marginalized and creating the conditions for a deep participatory democracy. Two of PRIA's activist-intellectuals, Rajesh Tandon and Sumona DasGupta located PRIA's project within the question of the subaltern, thereby referring to a venerable tradition of critical Indian scholarship.<sup>49</sup>

### *Focus on the Global South (Focus)*

As its website declares, since its founding in 1995 Focus on the Global South's project has been 'to challenge neoliberalism, militarism and corporate-driven globalisation while strengthening just and equitable alternatives.' Focus works 'in solidarity with the Global South', and that solidarity extends to a range of knowledge-producing practices that 'bring together diverse actors' – from government through to social movements, from North and South -- to share and deepen analysis of emerging power patterns and new experiences of social transformation as the basis for broad collective mobilization for democratic change.' Like other groups, Focus deploys a wide range of approaches to KPM. These include research and analysis, conferences and seminars, 'education and study programs, network building, international solidarity and fact-finding missions, direct action and parliamentary testimonials, social forums, joint campaigns and media.'<sup>50</sup>

Although Focus produces alternative knowledge for a global public, its work is centred in South- and South-East Asia, where it has active programs in Thailand (through the Bangkok office, which is the headquarters), India (through the New Delhi office) and the Philippines (through the Manila office), which connect strongly with local movements and national political processes. Twice a year, the 15 Focus personnel convene for a staff meeting, at which progress is assessed and broad strategy is discussed. These discussions inform the plan for each national office, although regular cross-office contact is maintained through email and conference calls.

Thematically, Focus divides its labour among three overlapping areas: Trade and Investment (the original Focus concern), Climate/ Environmental Justice and Defending the Commons. The three are gathered under the umbrella of 'Whose New Asia?', a program framework that came out of the extensive discussions of 2011, in which Focus was restructured into its current form. As the 2012 annual report explains, Focus's 'work is now concentrated on promoting and strengthening alternatives to address how the so-called New Asia, with the emerging economies of China and India and ASEAN moving towards an economic community, is dealing with the global financial and environmental crises.'<sup>51</sup> To avoid siloing knowledge, each staff person belongs to two thematic teams, with Executive Director Pablo Solon and Operations Manager Andrew de Sousa belonging to all three.

---

<sup>49</sup> A bibliography of subaltern studies since 1982 is available at <https://dl-web.dropbox.com/spa/zohkohb0i282t94/Area%20Studies/public/subaltern/ssmap.htm>, accessed 27 August 2013.

<sup>50</sup> See <http://focusweb.org/content/who-we-are>, accessed 27 August 2013.

<sup>51</sup> The Annual Report is available at <http://focusweb.org/content/annual-report-2012>, accessed 27 August 2013.

Like other TAPGs, Focus is deeply engaged in collaborative work, in some case with kindred groups. As Shalmali Guttal, who leads Focus's Defending the Commons team, told me,

with TNI for example, we have a very, very close relationship, because they are our sibling organization in Europe and we're their sibling organization in Asia. So we're involved in a number of campaigns together. We're involved in anti-land grabbing campaigns and retaining public water, the Water Justice movement; the fight against TNCs on the issue of trade and investment. So we are in a lot of coalitions with them and others.... I think for us that's the only way we can work. We have to work together, and not carve up territory.

Focus's work has featured in-depth, critical policy analysis, for which the group is well known. But Focus staff are all activists, and there is a tight interweaving of knowledge production and mobilization of knowledge within movement networks. Jacques Chai Chomtongdi, based at Focus Bangkok but coordinates the Thai Climate Justice Network and is vice president of FTA Watch, exemplifying the fully embedded activist-researcher, as this extended quotation from our interview makes clear:

The key thing is that we try to make links between national and local movements with regional and international platforms. This is to inform the national and local movements with new information analysis – global debate and give them early warning of what would be the tendency coming to the region, coming to the countries and so on – what would be the impact and things like that. At the same time, we facilitate and animate networks and movements at the national level – selectively, not everything – and then feed the information upward. Like what is actually happening on the ground – what the implications of such policies are. And in these processes, of course we engage in specific campaigns that we collectively in the organization agreed, and then we also need to consult with our partners on what to do, so my area of focus will not be international, but focus on the national level. But of course, when you work in Focus, you need to be at multi-levels and you engage at the international level. Of course, in some years I pretty much focused my work at the international level, for example during 2004/2005/2006, I spent most of my time in Geneva working on the WTO.... at the moment, I am focusing on two issues: one is on free trade and trade and investment agreements. The other one is on climate justice. On climate justice, I am the coordinator of the Thai Climate Justice Network. This is the only network adopting a kind of justice concept and mobilizing on it. So we raise funds and we support the grassroots movements, work together, campaign on national policies, on international negotiations at some levels. This is my role and at the same time, I also work with and we help create these networks in Thailand. On the other hand, we also help set up a network on free trade which is called FTA Watch. ... I'm partly working with the network, because I coordinate the network, and partly being with Focus, but at the same time, the challenge is how to combine the two. For example, to decide to do something, I cannot discuss only with my colleagues in Focus and say to the network 'this is what is going to happen'. I need to consult with them and work with them, and they know better the national context than even other members of the Focus team. But Focus will know about the international implications and things like that, and they explain from all the countries so we pretty much inform the national network.

In Jacques-Chai's account of his work we find a compelling instance of cognitive praxis as an ongoing venture in transformative politics which is simultaneously a process of alternative knowledge production and mobilization. Indeed, Focus as a group is a good example of KPM as *praxis* – developing alternatives through activism. Virtually all of the ten interviews I conducted with Focus protagonists emphasized this. Focus takes seriously the need to be grounded in local politics, but connected to and active in global politics.

### *People's Plan Study Group (PPSG)*

Established in 1997 as a network of a few hundred intellectuals and social movement activists committed to reflexive investigation of alternatives, Tokyo-based People's Plan Study Group grew out of the PP21 initiative (People's Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century), which was also a predecessor to the World Social Forum. In our extended interview, co-founder Ichiyo Muto explained the complex lineage in detail. PP21 held its first international conference in 1989, at which the Minamata Declaration, calling for a transborder, participatory democracy, was adopted. A harbinger of the alter-globalization movement, the Declaration began with the words, 'The slogan at the beginning of the 20th century was progress. The cry at the end of the 20th century is survival. The call for the next century is hope.'<sup>52</sup> It perceived a 'new internationalism' arising in local, national and regional popular struggles 'confronting common enemies.' In the 1990s, PP21 convened in large assemblies throughout Asia (in 1992 in Tehran, in 1996 in Madras and so on), until its last assembly in Bangkok, 2002, at which time it dissolved itself, in recognition of the new role the WSF was taking up. Although there was no formal organizational connection between PP21 and PPSG, the latter, whose subtitle is 'Transborder Democracy, Dialogue, People's Alternative', developed out of the PP21 process, within the same network of Japanese activists.

Today's PPSG continues its commitment to transborder solidarity. As its English-language website states,

PPSG believes it is crucial to identify potentialities of the people to bring about changes. Learning from, and linking itself with, the praxis and thinking developed by like-minded people in parts of the world, particularly Asia, PPSG gropes for people's alternatives on the basis of critical evaluation of the past movements for social transformation, always asking ourselves who we are who do this.<sup>53</sup>

However, the group lacks the capacity and the international connections to act transnationally. Thus, the project, including the constituency, is for most part contained within Japan's national borders. As Hibiki Yamaguchi, who served as PPSG coordinator from 2008 to 2012, explained,

What we try to do is connect the state of Japanese society to the state of other parts of the world – how Japan is related to other parts of the world. Most of Japanese people don't try to think in that way. They are very, very inward-looking; they only think of the state of Japanese economy, Japanese society. They only think about their own life. So what we try to do is how your daily life is connected to the daily lives of other people in other parts of the world.

Besides insularity and language barriers, PPSG faces a massive 'generation gap' between an elderly cohort of 1960s-70s activists, who founded the group, and a new generation whose actions are more direct and whose communications are digital. In addition to these challenges, yet another cultural fissure weighs upon PPSG's cognitive praxis. Kaoru Aoyama, the first PPSG coordinator, told me that many Japanese activists are cynical about intellectuals, and uninterested in long, complicated analyses. As she put it, there is 'a big

---

<sup>52</sup> The Minamata Declaration can be read at [http://pp21.rederio.org/en/index.php/Minamata\\_Declaration](http://pp21.rederio.org/en/index.php/Minamata_Declaration), accessed 27 August 2013.

<sup>53</sup> See <http://www.jca.apc.org/ppsg/en/>, accessed 27 August 2013.

gap' between 'knowledge production and the actual acting people in activism;' and People's Plan 'has always been caught between the two, trying to be home for both.'

Still, the struggle continues. From its Tokyo offices, PPSG plays a convening role in bringing together activists from different movements for seminars, roundtables and strategic discussions, and serving as a 'networking institute' for activist communities, as steering committee member Yasukazu Amano stated (through interpretation). Since the earthquake/tsunami/nuclear meltdown at Fukushima (March 2011), the PPSG meeting room has become a key site for oppositional organizing that has ushered in a new generation of activists. Concomitantly, PPSG maintains an active listserv among its several hundred (typically older-generation) members, each of whom receives a hard-copy periodical that features thoughtful analysis and critique. And it has continued to produce knowledge on radical-democratic alternatives, most recently through an 18-month collaborative project that resulted in a book on Twelve Proposals for an alternative Japanese society.

The tenacity of the activist-intellectuals of People's Plan is impressive. Without the patient if frustrating work of keeping the networks, practices and infrastructures of alt knowledge alive during a period of political disorganization and quiescence on the Japanese left, the prospects for future counter-hegemonic initiatives would only worsen.

### *International Forum on Globalization*

The International Forum on Globalization first convened in January 1994, just as the North American Free Trade Agreement came into effect and in the wake of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which begat the World Trade Organization. On its website the IFG describes itself as 'a North-South research and educational institution composed of leading activists, economists, scholars, and researchers providing analysis and critiques on the cultural, social, political, and environmental impacts of economic globalization.'<sup>54</sup> From its inception, it has been a think tank of international left luminaries (who comprise its board of directors), with a two-fold goal:

- (1) Expose the multiple effects of economic globalization in order to stimulate debate, and (2) Seek to reverse the globalization process by encouraging ideas and activities which revitalize local economies and communities, and ensure long term ecological stability.<sup>55</sup>

But like TNI, IFG grew over time from what was arguably a top-heavy group of high-profile thinkers into a knowledge-producing organization with deeper roots in activist communities and dialogical relations with those communities. When I asked IFG Executive Director Victor Menotti (who was in the 1990s IFG's first paid employee) how the group produces alternative knowledge, he gave this response:

I think the main strategy is listening about what the needs are of groups on the ground, of frontline groups – victims of violence or whoever the impacted communities are and listening to what they need and really trying to gear what we know to support them. To strengthen them, to build power with other constituencies to speak truth to power, to find platforms to speak to power – to make informed appeals for change in a way.

This is a good operational definition of what IFG founder Jerry Mander (still active in the organization and

---

<sup>54</sup> See <http://www.ifg.org/about.htm>, accessed 27 August 2013.

<sup>55</sup> See 'History of the IFG', at <http://www.ifg.org/about/history.htm>, accessed 27 August 2013.



directing its Asia-Pacific Program) calls ‘movement building for change’.

The principal means by which the International Forum on Globalization has pursued this project have involved

- creating large, high-profile teach-ins on political issues of great moment and salience (most famously, the IFG teach-in that immediately preceded the 1999 Battle in Seattle),
- convening smaller, strategic seminars of movement leadership from a wide spectrum to discuss, and design political campaigns, and
- policy work that has been in equal measures critical of neoliberal hegemony and proactive in the articulation of alternatives.

Although as mentioned earlier the recent funding crisis has deprived the IFG of substantial resources, it remains active on two programmatic fronts: the Asian-Pacific Program (which discerns a ‘rising geopolitical battleground’ between the United States and China for resources, markets and political control within the world’s most populous region) and the Plutonomy Program (which investigates ‘the rise and empowerment of global plutonomy and the subjugation of democratic states’).<sup>56</sup> Locally, Executive Director Victor Menotti has built a good relationship with Occupy San Francisco, which has continued its own grassroots efforts despite the general demobilization of the Occupy movement. It is through such relations that IFG remains relevant within concrete social struggles, even as it continues to contribute critical policy analyses for a wide constituency centred in the United States.

---

<sup>56</sup> See <http://www.ifg.org/programs.htm>, accessed 27 August 2013.

## Chapter 4: The repertoire of alternative knowledge production and mobilization: modes of cognitive praxis

In the previous chapter I highlighted the *specificity* of each TAPG's project, and thus the distinctive contribution each group makes to alternative knowledge formation and transformative politics. The other side, analytically, is that of *commonality*. In the most general terms, all the groups participating in this project share a common objective – to produce and mobilize alternative knowledge in the service of expanding possibilities for human emancipation. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider the similarities across groups in their cognitive praxis – the approaches and strategies that they share as they grapple with the challenge of 'playing uphill' on a steeply sloped ideological field.

This chapter conceptualizes the repertoire of alt KPM in terms of eight modes of cognitive praxis. In the sociology of social movements, the concept of 'repertoire of collective action' has long been employed in historical and comparative analyses (Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1994, 2005). Each of the modes of collective action we now take for granted – strikes, demonstrations, occupations, boycotts, petition campaigns, wiki-leaking and so on – emerged in history as innovative forms of counter-power through which movements could respond effectively to dominant institutional forms of power. In the strategic interaction of movements and authorities, both sides select from the repertoires available to them in the circumstances, and sometimes create new forms appropriate to new circumstances. Part of the story of globalization from above has been new practices of 'fast', 'agile' capitalism, new technologies of repression and surveillance and new enclosures and dispossessions – which improve prospects for capital accumulation, either directly or by raising the cost of resistant collective action. From the 1 January 1994 Zapatista 'declaration of war' against NAFTA and neoliberalism through the November-December 1999 Battle in Seattle at the WTO Ministerial and the 15 February 2003 global protest against the planned invasion of Iraq, to more recent struggles such as the 2011 Arab Spring, Indignados in Spain and Occupy actions worldwide, and the ongoing campaigns against austerity in southern Europe, movements for global justice have deployed and developed their own collection-action repertoires.

As organic intellectuals to alterglobalization, transnational alternative policy groups have created, in tandem, a repertoire of alternative knowledge production and mobilization: ways of supplying intellectual fuel to global justice activism and oxygen to subaltern counterpublics. Some alt knowledge practices were well-established already in the nineteenth century – the public meeting, the pamphlet, the newspaper. In 1845 Frederick Engels published *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, based on extensive field research – an early example of critical policy research with a strong empirical base. Many other practices and approaches to producing and mobilizing alternative knowledge have emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> and now 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Participating groups in this project are, of course, crucial sites for these practices, and for the new forms of counter-power they underwrite. My interviews with 91 practitioners in 16 transnational alternative policy groups probed their strategies and practices. On the basis of what I learned, I endeavor here to summarize and analyze the overall repertoire of alt KPM that has developed.

What I want to do is to provide readers with a clear and reasonably comprehensive view of the family of practices, techniques and strategies that comprises a shared repertoire for the production and mobilization of alternative knowledge. Given the (frankly, overwhelming) richness of the interview data, I have divided the analysis into two chapters, for which the previous chapter has set the stage. In this one, I present eight *modes of cognitive praxis*, and discuss how they interlink in the work of alternative policy groups. I have abstracted these modes from the immediacies of concrete practices, which will be presented as a compendium, in Chapter 5. The eight modes provide some analytical form, borrowed from various literatures which I will not review at this point. The compendium of practices in Chapter 5 will detail the content of the repertoire,

and identify specific techniques with which alt knowledge producers might experiment, if they have not already done so.

The modes of cognitive praxis listed in Table 4 are posed at the level of strategy rather than tactics. In combination, they can be seen as promoting a dialectic of knowledge production and social transformation: striving to produce transformative knowledge concomitantly with knowledge-based transformation. These eight categories might be seen as constituting, in total, a typology; however, it is important to note at the outset that their borders are not sealed off from each other, but overlap and interpenetrate. Indeed, effective alt KPM typically means that a group combines various facets in a coherent initiative. I would go so far as to suggest that this schema could be useful in assessing ongoing projects in alt knowledge, and in designing new ones. In very practical terms, one could reflect on how a given initiative enacts or articulates with each of the eight facets, and whether it might be redesigned so that its full transformative potential can be realized.

Table 4. Modes of cognitive praxis

Name	Description
<i>Challenging</i> hegemonic knowledge	Contesting and disrupting the common sense of hegemony through critical research, scholarship and other means
Mobilizing alt knowledge through <i>engaging</i> with dominant institutions	Pursuing outsider strategies that engage the integral state strategically from an oppositional stance, and/or insider strategies of dialogue and negotiation with select elements of the state
<i>Empowering</i> the grassroots through participation and capacity-building	Helping to foster activist communities and capabilities, and within those communities, organic intellectuals who produce their own knowledge as a basis for transformative collective agency
Building <i>solidarities</i> through dialogical KPM	Through cross-sectoral, cross-cultural and other dialogues, bridging gaps, breaking silos, and undoing hierarchies that divide and limit effectivity of movements as forces for transformation
<i>Integrating</i> theory and practice	Dialectically unifying the practical, experiential knowledge of activists trying to change the world with theoretical knowledge on how that world is structured and how it might be transformed
Creating <i>spaces</i> for reflection and invention	Producing and sustaining physical, social and virtual spaces where new ideas can breathe and begin to live
<i>Systematizing</i> and disseminating alternative knowledge	Making alt knowledge robust, rich in comparative nuance, applicable across contexts, and thus useful in practice; disseminating the product to various publics and constituencies
<i>Refiguring</i> alternative futures from present practices	Identifying, real potentialities for living otherwise, analyzing how they can be strengthened, mobilizing knowledge of these openings within counterpublics and general publics

Importantly, there is no linear sequence implied by this listing, although the first item, challenging hegemonic knowledge, is an obvious starting point for the presentation. The remainder of this chapter puts flesh on this analytical skeleton by conveying insights and analyses from interviews with project participants, and by pointing out how the eight modes of cognitive praxis actually interlink in the work of transnational alternative policy groups.

## *Challenging hegemonic knowledge*

Hegemonic knowledge is sedimented in a whole array of institutions – the state, the corporate-capitalist economy, mainstream media just to mention the three most obvious ones. There is no one ‘dominant discourse’ that somehow keeps everyone in their places (Abercrombie et al 1990); rather, hegemonic knowledge comprises a family or ensemble of articulated discourses that are grounded in historical relations of power – colonialism and racism, class relations of capitalism as well as precapitalist survivals, patriarchy and heteronormativity, the instrumental rationalities that prioritize profit and efficiency while marginalizing concerns for ecological sustainability and the quality of life. Challenging and disrupting the common sense of hegemony – which is characteristically presented as ‘conventional wisdom’ – is perhaps the most obvious and well-worn (if not finely honed) element in the repertoire of alt KPM.

Often, this is accomplished through *research and analysis* that exposes the injustices or irrationalities of dominant practices. These efforts are addressed to three principal publics: the ‘general public’, ‘expert’ communities of practice that are typically located in and around state and inter-governmental policy networks, and the counterpublics that live within critical movement cultures. A number of groups – particularly TWN, TNI, RosaLux and PRIA – have extensive capacity to produce their own original research and analysis. Some groups, such as CRID, Alternatives, CACIM and PPSG do not engage regularly in their own original research, but instead do reflective work based in part on research findings produced elsewhere. All TAPGs are extensively involved in mobilizing knowledge produced elsewhere.

IFG is a group whose repertoire of KPM has included some important research and analysis, including a raft of books (co)authored or (co)edited by founder Jerry Mander (*The Case Against the Global Economy* (2001), *Alternatives to Economic Globalization* (2002), *Paradigm Wars* (2006), *Manifesto on Global Economic Transitions* (2007), *The Capitalism Papers* (2012)), as well as IFG reports that are posted on the website and distributed widely within activist networks. As Michael Pinesuhi, an intern and co-author of recent IFG exposés of the billionaire Koch brothers’ backing of the campaign for the Keystone pipeline (proposed to pump Alberta Tar Sands bitumen to Texas), told me, the bulk of the effort is ‘legwork from interns’, although administrator Anjulie Palta also does a lot of research and fact-checking, along with Executive Director Victor Menotti.

Maybe if we find something that is on one blog or in one newspaper in wherever, New York City, he [Victor] will do a lot of work trying to make sure that is true or contacting the people or will tell us to do it. So that’s just research – that’s all the quantitative and mostly qualitative research, trying to dig through stuff.

The IFG Plutonomy Project has used a network-analytical methodology to map out all the connections the Kochs have into Keystone, and how ‘they stand to benefit tremendously’ from the pipeline.<sup>57</sup> This genre of research resembles the critical investigative journalism that Khadija Sharife specializes in at CCS. In my interview with her she referred to a *triangle* of investigative reporting, activist campaigning and state-centred policy, which, when connected together, can effect real change. This points, of course, to the need to combine research with other modes of cognitive praxis – of which Victor Menotti is well aware. In IFG’s ‘outing the plutocracy’ work, it is crucial to mobilize the knowledge to interested publics who can give it political traction: ‘It’s getting out there and it’s reaching larger and larger audiences and maybe we can get some traction on them with some climate policy....’

---

<sup>57</sup> See <http://kochcash.org/the-kochtopus/>, accessed 20 August 2013.

At TNI, Pien Metaal made a similar observation on how critical researchers are positioned, dialogically, between grassroots counterpublics and sites of institutional power. For her, an implication is that one's writing strategies need to find 'a balance' between the popular and the technical. Challenging hegemonic knowledge means

writing articles that are accessible to people from different backgrounds – understandable language but not too scientific nor too simple. Looking for a balance, I think, both ways, because it's not just bringing the voice from the people to the abstract high level of the UN, but it's also bringing the dilemmas of policy-makers back to the movements, because they need to understand choices that have to be made by policy-makers are not that simple. And they need to have good arguments to use them in this decision-making process. So it's in fact, in both ways.

At TWN, whose staff consist primarily of multi-tasking researchers, a key target group is NGOs, whose own activist networks enable TWN policy analyses to carry to constituencies at the community level. Experience has taught TWN Director Yoke Ling Chee that effective challenges to dominant policy perspectives need to be rooted in detailed empirical analysis, so that readers can reach a deeper understanding of the issues. In TWN's extensive collaborations with grassroots coalitions like the Consumers' Association of Penang (which convened the 1984 conference at which TWN was formed), the emphasis is on

campaigns and actions very rooted in information and knowledge. For us, that is a really important part of it, which means detail, detail, detail. We want it for public messaging, you need to have some cause, or to present issues in a way that attracts people – you're going to take people at every level to a deeper understanding, and that means you have to provide a lot of information.

Detail is important since a good deal of counter-hegemonic policy research involves 'busting myths' whose veracity often appears self-evident, given the pervasiveness of neoliberalism's mantra of freedom=markets=efficiency=progress. As Dorothy Guerrero, activist-researcher at the Focus Bangkok office, told me,

What Focus is known for is busting myths. When investors say that a free trade agreement will generate employment and it will produce more jobs and development in some sleepy towns, we look at the statistics. Since all these free trade agreements happened and since countries got into free trade agreements, what is the inequality level? What is the Gini coefficient of that country? What is the poverty level? Is it increasing or not? What is unemployment level? Is it increasing or not? So one thing that we are quite known for is exposing myths and showing that what is actually happening vis-à-vis what is being packaged – the neoliberal contribution to development and growth. Many of us also did development studies, and the first thing we learned in development studies is not to trust the definition of 'development'. So when we look at development, we also argue that it's not just figures – so how do we look beyond figures? How do we look beyond the report – the national and inter-government reports and vis-à-vis redefining in terms of looking at how people lose their capacity to feed themselves, for example? How do communities lose their livelihood because they were relocated? And how do you put into the equation lost opportunities to these people when they were relocated? ... What is the cost when a dam is built in terms of the diversity of fishes or the presence of rocks that were removed because of the construction? How would you put value to the ecosystem? So these kind of questions we bring in a discussion, whether it's an international discussion with academics or policy-makers or other NGOs or other campaigners. ... I mentioned that one of the big works we do is exposing and busting the

myths. The biggest myth that neoliberalism peddles is that it is efficient at delivering growth, but then look at the economic crisis that we have now. Look at the suffering that is being experienced by people in Southern Europe and this is because of neoliberalism. So I think our big role is still presenting the other face of neoliberalism – the ugly face of neoliberalism: the face that shows people being squeezed out of society – people that are losing social welfare that they deserve, or the fact that rights and entitlements are eroding. In Asia, we're still fighting for most of those rights and benefits and entitlements that the Europeans have enjoyed so far. But with the austerity program that is happening, they are losing those, so that would also mean a global rollback in terms of understanding rights.

As Dorothy, suggests, part of the myth-busting involves setting neoliberal policy in a global context – connecting the dots to expose in this case a pattern of global immiseration. According to Karin Gabbert, RosaLux followed a similar approach with the 43-page brochure it developed for Rio+20 – an exposé of the 'green economy'. The initiative in this case came from movement activists. They asked the Foundation to provide them with intellectual ammunition, to clarify why one with a concern for social justice and ecological well-being should oppose the 'green economy'.<sup>58</sup>

Although challenging hegemonic knowledge often occurs through research and analysis, it can also take on a more performative shape, which can be particularly effective in connecting with popular publics. In these instances, TAPGs step out of the 'think tank' box altogether – their praxis blends into popular-education and dramaturgical forms of activism. Two examples are worth recalling.

CRID is the main organizer of the Week of International Solidarity, which mobilizes movements throughout France in a vast and diverse array of local, visible cultural and political events, to inform the general public about issues of global justice. As Bernard Salamand told us, 'It is quite effective, not making that the actors of the field speak in a single voice, but rather in supporting them so they can get access to opinion relays a little more easily than if they have to approach each on their own, on the occasion of this or that event.'

Brid Brennan recounted the campaign TNI led between 2005 and 2011 to have binding obligations placed upon TNCs regarding human rights and environmental justice. Part of the Alternative Regionalisms program, the Permanent People's Tribunal urged the UN Human Rights Council to reject the toothless recommendations of John Ruggie, whose 'guiding principles' had no more than voluntary status. As Brid recalled, to challenge hegemony in this case,

we did a series of tribunals. These were bi-regional tribunals [concerning] European transnationals in Latin America, but they entailed movements and networks from both regions working together to present cases. So we had very well documented cases – over 48 cases over six years, which at different stages produced knowledge really strongly challenging the conventional wisdom that transnationals are the answer to development, that transnationals bring you jobs, transnationals bring you wealth. And finally, in a way – that's also an interesting way to produce knowledge. Every two years, we had a major tribunal – one in Vienna, one in Lima, and one back in Madrid. That produced a very interesting judgment placing the whole questions of the operation of TNCs in the framework of crimes against humanity – economic crimes, ecological crimes and that's basically what we're working on

---

<sup>58</sup> See the brochure, *Beautiful Green World: On the Myths of a Green Economy*, by Ulrich Brand (June 2012) at [http://rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls\\_uploads/pdfs/Argumente/lux\\_argu\\_GreenEconomy\\_eng.pdf](http://rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/Argumente/lux_argu_GreenEconomy_eng.pdf), accessed 16 August 2013.

now. It's very disruptive wisdom [laughter]. ... but what's interesting about the Permanent People's Tribunal – it's a robust tribunal – like the bench of people would be really experts all in their own fields and in their own right.... In that whole experience, we also generated I think a quite important new analysis. The relation between free trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties and transnational corporations providing an architecture of impunity for their operations. So constitutions are changed, economic policy is changed, tax policy is changed – all the adjustment that has been made over the decades – all that is perfectly legitimized through these free trade agreements, through bilateral investment treaties. Nobody questions that isn't this all a bit crazy? It's a one way street. And there are no entities for governments to bring transnationals to heel. There are none. There are very long civil cases, maybe thirteen/fourteen years, whereas the other way around, transnationals can bring governments to ICSID and in a very short period hit them for several millions of dollars in fines and so on. I think that experience has provided some really good and new insights and revisited the whole question of the law of the markets – '*lex mercatoria*' which was a medieval way of dealing with business and trade and so on. Of course, that has all been really very much disrupted in the last twenty years to only serve one side of reality.

Challenging hegemonic knowledge, finally, carries another radical meaning, in that occasionally the hegemony that transnational alternative policy groups challenge is that which prevails within the global justice movement itself. To fulfill their promise in producing alternative knowledge for social change, TAPGs need to practice a 'critical engagement' that, as Jun Borrás offered, is critical in two senses. Not only is one critical of the mainstream prescriptions. Concomitantly, groups like TNI apply a critical lens to the popular alternatives that arise from the grassroots, which may fail to break decisively enough from those same prescriptions. 'So for example on land-grabbing, you have all these discourses by social movements, including La Via Campesina, that the problem is land-grabbing and the demand of social movements – the answer – should be land reform.' But land reform, on the model of the 1950s and 1960s, does not, in Jun's view, adequately encompass popular aspirations for economic democracy. At TNI, discussion among Fellows in 2012 led to a notion of 'land sovereignty' (inspired in part by La Via's 'food sovereignty') which provides a more coherent and effective alternative vision to land-grabbing. As Jun Borrás and Jennifer Franco put it,

Land sovereignty is the right of working peoples to have effective access to, use of, and control over land and the benefits of its use and occupation, where land is understood as resource, territory, and landscape.<sup>59</sup>

As this example shows, and as Mario Candeias of RosaLux suggested, 'it's not enough...to disrupt conventional knowledge, but then you have to bring up alternative knowledges. The first one is opening the space, and then you have to come up with the alternative debates.'

Sometimes pushing those alternatives means taking up a strong, controversial position, which moves the debate forward. When I was in Durban in January 2013, Patrick Bond was trying out political frames for the planned campaign that the Centre for Civil Society would lead in critiquing the March 2013 meeting of the BRICS, in Durban. As he explained,

How do we understand BRICS – we've probably made a mistake, and that's my mistake..., which is to call the BRICS 'sub-imperialist' too fast. But the point of doing that is to say 'we

---

<sup>59</sup> See a full discussion at <http://www.tni.org/paper/land-sovereignty-alternative>, accessed 16 August 2013.

need to debate.’ Is this group doing the system’s work, because if you don’t do that, you get the most banal sense that ‘oh, South Africa’s acceptance in the international community is now so great, that not only can we host a World Cup, we can join BRICS. With BRICS, we can make interventions in the Bretton Woods Institutions and etc. etc.’ So there’s no content. And if you say, well but this is deputy-sheriff duty, then you get a debate going. But that’s the sort of struggle we’re in. We’re always trying, without being vanguardist, [to] push the envelope of what’s acceptable.

All these examples push us on to a second mode of cognitive praxis, which (like all others) depends on ongoing challenges to hegemonic knowledge, but foregrounds a different arena of practice: states, intergovernmental bodies and other sites of institutionalized power.

### *Mobilizing alt knowledge through engaging with dominant institutions*

An influential current in alterglobalization politics has advocated ‘the evolutionary and “progressive emptying out of the power of capital and of the state”’ (*The Bullet* 19 Aug 2013; cf Holloway 2002; Day 2006). However, in an era of increasing state coercive force – whether through militarism, the criminalization of dissent or increased surveillance – this strategy has less and less purchase. For instance, John Milios and Haris Triandafilidou’s (2013) recent study of Greek politics concludes that in neoliberal Europe ‘it is not possible, to change the world without taking power in and beyond the state.’<sup>60</sup> In short, the state looms large, and movements for global justice ignore it at their peril. Retreating and opting out are really not viable options. As sites of cognitive praxis, many TAPGs mobilize alternative knowledge in ways and forms that engage with state power. Here, I take a broad view of the state, as an ensemble of public institutions that reproduce a way of life, through varying measures of coercive and consensual practices. These dominant institutions – governmental, military, educational, mass media – make up what Gramsci called the ‘integral state’. To be effective, counter-hegemonic cognitive praxis needs to engage with these institutions critically, and carefully.

In mobilizing alt knowledge to influence dominant institutions, we can, as before, distinguish insider and outsider strategies. The outsider engages strategically as an oppositional player; the insider favours dialogue and negotiation with select state-based individuals and organizations, even consultation and collaboration under certain conditions (some of which were made evident to me by project participants). Let us briefly consider each strategy.

---

<sup>60</sup> ‘Taking Power In and Beyond the State’, *The Bullet* 866 (19 August 2013), accessed at <http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/866.php>, 19 August 2013. See other articles from the RosaLux symposium on this topic, in related issues of *The Bullet*, in particular Mario Candeias’s ‘Creating a Situation that Does Not Yet Exist’ <http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/864.php>, and Jan Rehmann’s ‘Connective Party or Return to a “War of Maneuver”?’ <http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/865.php>.



## Outsider Strategies

Most outsider strategies do not address states directly, but orient themselves strategically to the problem of state (including inter-governmental) power. The example I gave above, of CCS's 'BRICS from Below' campaign, which included a number of actions and presentations in Durban, coincident with the March 2013 summit of five BRICS heads of state, illustrates the outsider approach. The point is not only to register protest but to present clear arguments against the hegemonic project, and, if feasible, to articulate an inspiring alternative (hence 'BRICS from Below'). Perhaps the most dramatic instances of outside engagement with states involve transnational alternative policy groups influencing policy by *subverting it or preventing certain moves from taking place*. This requires political mobilization; and for this reason 'outsider' engagements with states bleed into two other modes of cognitive praxis – empowering the grassroots and building solidarities dialogically.

Within the annals of alter-globalization, the outsider strategy pursued in the late 1990s by IFG, a self-declared 'movement-building' TAPG, is legendary. In 1997 it was able to obtain a highly confidential draft of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), which was being negotiated in secrecy in Paris by members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The MAI would be a new constitution for transnational neoliberalism, taking the project of the World Trade Organization (established in 1995) much further in securing the sovereignty of investor rights internationally. Through deft tactics, including a well-timed full-page ad in the *New York Times* which, as IFG's Victor Menotti put it, 'really set the OECD back on their heels,' the IFG, working in collaboration with the Polaris Institute along with other allies such as the Third World Network, Public Citizen and the Council of Canadians, managed to build international public outrage as well as dissensus within the ranks of the negotiators in Paris.<sup>61</sup> That dissensus was greatly amplified by the efforts of the *Observatoire de la Mondialisation*, of which Susan George was president. The *Observatoire* mobilized public opposition in France, which as it gained extensive media coverage pushed the Socialist government to set up a commission of inquiry. As Susan George recounted, at the inquiry, the testimony that the *Observatoire* gave (as it took up an insider strategy) shaped France's ultimate position on MAI. When the French government decided to bail from the deal in October 1998, the deal was dead in the water.

---

<sup>61</sup> As longstanding IFG board member Tony Clarke (who initially obtained the draft copy of the secretly negotiated MAI and made it public) told me, the strategy for defeating the treaty involved extensive international networking and public communication:

Before releasing it publicly, I was really very concerned about framing this text [written in legalese] in a way that would really capture people's attention and mobilize peoples' energies and resistance. So instead of calling it the Multilateral Agreement on Investment and here it is...we called it the "Corporate Rule Treaty" and did an analysis of the text in that framework before making it public. We made it public, first of all, through the *Globe and Mail* which we thought would get international attention and it did, and then through *Multinational Monitor* in the United States – Ralph Nader's organization – we got it circulated around to, well, everywhere – but more particularly to some of the key civil society organizations in OECD countries. After that, there was a question of ... how can we build an international campaign around this? We knew pretty well what we had to do in Canada and the Council of Canadians was largely responsible for that, but for the international work, we had to think through how to work at this. So the IFG was prepared to put some resources into one of the organizations to help move that internationally. And that's what happened with Polaris [Institute, which Tony directs], because we were frankly in a position to do this... i.e. I was relatively free at that time to travel to Europe and help organize an international campaign while Polaris itself had just been founded to address issues of corporate power and was then a fledgling independent non-profit organization without charitable tax status in either Canada or the US.

A year and a month later, negotiators were scheduled to convene in Seattle for a Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Again, IFG engaged strategically, as an outsider to the intergovernmental process. As Jerry Mander recalled,

we rented the Seattle symphony hall and filled that place up for three days, with 3000 seats ... and then we sent everybody out into the streets, and by then there was a lot of talk going on.... That led directly to some of those giant marches that happened.

The thousands of people who attended the teach-in also received ‘a very, very, very thorough’ report, ‘explaining what was wrong with globalization.’ Many of the tens of thousands of protestors who helped close down the WTO Ministerial had, shortly before its convening, attended the IFG teach-in. In these two telling examples, we can see the IFG pursuing an outsider approach to engagement with hegemonic institutions, and combining that with popular education at the grassroots, building solidarities dialogically, and challenging hegemonic knowledge. It is important to add that the derailments of the MAI and the WTO Ministerial were outcomes of complex processes, but it is equally important to recognize in these instances the role that transnational alternative policy groups can play, with allies, within those processes.

### Insider Strategies

Insider approaches are predicated on the insight that states, intergovernmental processes and other formally-organized institutions are not monolithic; they are made up of many sites and agents with varying degrees of openness to alternatives. Most of the groups participating in this project use insider approaches to some extent and in various ways, mindful of the dangers of cooptation that may appear along the way.

Such dangers can be subtle and incremental. NIGD’s Teivo Teivainen told a cautionary tale of how the Finnish Foreign Ministry’s support for an NIGD-initiated proactive campaign for international financial and other reforms to promote global democracy, with input coming from social movements, morphed into something else:

Those aims were soon watered down with sort of ‘let’s include all relevant stakeholders,’ in the approach to the process that the Finnish government took. ... If you want to include all possible stakeholders, such as the International Chamber of Commerce, then it means you are not going to be able to produce transformative proposals.

Better results have been obtained in insider engagements with governments of the pink tide, as already discussed. As Daniel Chavez commented, TNI’s recent efforts to ‘mainstream’ its policy work vis-à-vis governments, and in particular to convene in Latin America ‘some kind of open discussion, exchange of ideas among people doing research and people governing public enterprises’, have enabled TNI to put its alternative policy ideas on increasing participatory democracy into practice – a crucial innovation if Andean socialism is to avoid replicating statist hierarchical management as a form of political domination. RosaLux has also found itself in a position to provide help to progressive governments, through its Latin American office, and also within Germany, in provinces where the Left Party has held power, allowing some of the *IfG*’s innovative ideas on participatory budgeting to be tried out.

Clearly, insider approaches that work with politically progressive regimes are distinct in character from those that engage with liberal, including neoliberal, administrations and state managers. In either case, engagement’s impact can be magnified by building in practices that help empower the grassroots. Mindful

of the need to engage states in ways that help empower civil society, the TNI's informal policy dialogues, which rotate from country to country, try to bridge between government and local civil society. As Martin Jelsma noted, this approach

creates not only at the moment of the dialogue itself, a space for informal dialogue that did not exist before, but also afterwards in the sense that it establishes some relations of personal trust between the ones who attend, [who] afterwards can have much easier connection and access to government that they didn't have before. That was not so much an intended effect of the dialogues, but after, in terms of the feedback that we get from this whole process, that is one that comes up all the time. Local NGOs – often for them the biggest value was this bridge with the government that the dialogue framework provided.

In TNI's Drugs and Democracy program, deft strategic judgment in working with 'government officials who we think are open enough to think outside of the box' (Pien Metaal) has paid social dividends. Most recently, TNI played a major advisory role in the government of Uruguay's introduction of radical reforms that fully legalize cannabis for Uruguayan citizens. Pietje Vervest outlined some of the complexities and trade-offs in this highly insider approach:

One of the risks by moving into that level is that you lose touch with social movements, because it's time consuming, you end up working in the language that is completely different from the grassroots. So that has been one of the debates in the Drugs and Democracy Program. They started off as a basis of working with the opium farmers and the coca growers. From that work, they were asked to move over to the UN level and see if they could influence that process, but in doing that, you also have to develop yourself into a kind of expert on that level and in the diplomatic language, which is also taking a lot of your time and energy which means you can do less on the grassroots level and we have to make sure that the interlinkages remain, which is often a tension between that level and the level working with the social movements. I think what we've been trying to do on influencing the FAO process is to see whether we could bring people from the farmers' movements in the South into the lobby effort. And I think that has been quite successful.

Focus also includes a cautious insider approach in its repertoire of cognitive praxis. Administrator Andrew de Sousa explained how Focus always approaches state and intergovernmental bodies in solidarity with allies, as part of a coalition. 'We do have the inside connections, but it's done as part of the coalition. We are a member of the group; we do help influence it but we don't really do the policy work on our own.... So that is really through these coalitions, using the media, but also direct interventions with the governments.' Shalmali Guttal explained that in the three countries where Focus has offices, it has been involved not only with popular movements but with government – serving on commissions, addressing parliament, talking to parliamentarians, working with legislators. In India, for example, Focus works 'with legislators at the state level as well as the national level, because state legislators ... have a lot of power.' When I interviewed Afsar Jafri in New Delhi, he told me that, in concert with social-movement allies, Focus has met on several occasions in the last three years with state officials concerning the proposed EU-India FTA.

As part of the Forum Against FTA Network, we have managed to have success on FTA issues as well: now the government is not going to agree to the EU demand for the TRIPS-plus position on the health sector. The exclusivity on medicine is probably not there now. So it's a big success, not only for the movements in India, but for the movements of the world who are working on health issues, because India being the pharmacy for the world – we have a huge generic medicine sector, and if we give up on that exclusivity it means the whole generic

sector will be finished. So that was a success, because as per the news reports, India is not ready to provide that exclusivity on medicine to the EU.

Standing with allies is strategically crucial in such engagements, but equally important is the maintenance of a political *standpoint* distinct from that of the ‘ruling relations’ (Smith 2005). Focus’s insider strategy is based on the adoption of the standpoint or ‘purview’ of the underdog, which also means that issues are viewed from that critical perspective and the knowledge gained from engagement is shared broadly with the movement constituency. As Joseph Purugganan of Focus Philippines put it,

we felt that actually if you look at ‘free trade’, it operates on a win/lose formula. Some sectors will win; others will definitely lose and oftentimes it is the more marginalized. But the sectors who have already been marginalized by years of following the economic prescriptions of institutions like the World Bank and the IMF normally, or more often, become the victims of this kind of development, and it is usually the corporate sector who benefits. So coming from that perspective, we tried to look at policy documents; we looked at statements coming from officials; we engage in official spaces that are opened up by governments at the national level from that purview. ... So the analysis that would come out of that is critical of the kinds of policies that further marginalize, further impoverish, and further worsen the level of inequality, and critical of policies that... favour certain, mainly corporate interests. So that’s how we do it. We have that mindset; we analyze – of course, we also look at the official documents. We also try to monitor the negotiations, for example when it comes to trade. We engage. So ours is a critical, but engaged kind of a strategy, but with a clear level of understanding of how the power relations work, how the biases and ideological bias of government is for a neoliberal kind of economic policy. But as much as possible, if there are spaces that are being opened up, we engage so that we get the government view firsthand, and then try to analyze that view against our own experience, our own knowledge. Once we formulate our own analysis within Focus, then we share it and disseminate through to a larger constituency.

Sometimes, by following a carefully implemented insider strategy, activist-researchers can be effective in ways that outsiders cannot. TNI’s agrarian justice campaign works closely with La Via, yet TNI also sits at the table at the UN FAO’s Committee on Food Security. At FAO discussions, TNI’s strong credentials as a research-oriented organization, at one remove from grassroots activism, enable it to present a serious radical analysis without being dismissed out of hand.

In other contexts, engaging with other dominant institutions, groups like DAWN have devised informal approaches that strive to reform institutions and dominant practices by influencing key individuals. Economist Marina Durano employs such micro-strategies in trying to convey feminist insights to left-leaning male economists who have some direct influence in development policy circles:

I keep track of the debates in the mainstream – the economics literature more or less, what I can get my hands on. How do I do that? There are certain people I watch for and listen and see what they are saying. They are not going to be the gender specialists; these are not the feminist economists. I know who the feminist economists are and I read them, sure; I know them. But the men are important, because they are dominant in the conversation so ... I need to know what the ‘boys’ are interested in because for sure, they will miss out on what we are interested in. ... in my view, men – their networks are closer to the decision-makers, so they have – if you read them, you can sense what the decision-makers are considering – because they are providing advice to the decision-makers. Ah, okay, so they want to prioritize that; that’s where they are heading, so I, as DAWN, have to think ‘how do I redirect? How do I tell them that there are other important things, or if you use this framework, then your priority will change?’ Something like that – ...by trying to see what the men are thinking and then how do I get the men to think something else.

Yiping Cai, who worked with the feminist media group ISIS before joining DAWN, told me about activist research she has done in Beijing on gender stereotyping in the media, whose findings were then leveraged to influence the media organizations to change their attitudes and practices.

So for example we point out there were very few women who were portrayed in the news, so we provide these recommendations to the media – the newspapers – the head of the newspaper – the editor-in-chief and convince them, because they always think that they are doing a wonderful job until we show them no, no, no – there’s so much you need to improve. And also we use these research findings to deliver training for the journalists – how to improve their reporting. For example, we did research on how media portrayed the issues of domestic violence or gender-based violence. But the language we used was [taken] from their reports.

These kinds of informal initiatives, which function in cooperation with practitioners placed within dominant institutions to shift practices and consciousness within, bring us to the project participant whose engagement with state organizations has been most extensive, and often fruitful.

PRIA, as I have noted, focuses its cognitive praxis around dialogue and practical problem-solving to empower key marginalized groups – in particular Dalits, women, youth, and the urban poor, who are the most marginalized, disempowered members of a society caught between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. PRIA founder Rajesh Tandon offered this account of how the organization blends a strategy of empowering the grassroots with a continuing series of dialogical engagements with the state:

Well, what is distinctive about us is ... we do work at the base, we do horizontal learning; and we also use it to interface, convene, dialogue, with policy makers. We rarely only provide policy advice – very rarely, once in a while. That we provide by virtue of being in different committees of the government or this or that. But we don’t do commissioned research for policy-makers or even for the World Bank or any of that. We don’t do that. And the reason we don’t do that is that, because of our experience and perspective that change won’t happen by preparing a report.... We recently... prepared a road map for one provincial government on decentralization, but we changed the methodology and ... organized a number of interface dialogues, and ... we made sure that this remained in the media and public domain’s attention, because we can submit any document we like, but change will happen only when political pressure will be applied. And political pressure will only be applied if the public at large knows that the government is willing to commit to this, or that they have commissioned this.

Thus PRIA's engagement as an insider is strategically calculated to work in tandem with public awareness and pressure from below.

The key, for PRIA, is to empower through dialogue, even if the parties to the dialogue have differential power resources, in which case PRIA sides with the subaltern and attempts to right the balance. Namrata Jaitli, a member of the Executive Committee, told me that, in contrast to the Naxalites' taking up arms against the state, PRIA tries to promote dialogue while empowering subalterns (the latter to be discussed below):

...ours would be more in terms of ensuring dialogue, collaboration between unequal power – locations whether it is through class or caste. So actually that's the meaning – the dialogue would be more rather than to confront, than to raise arms against, because that's another approach which is useful to address inequality. And knowledge, you know; empowering the community with knowledge, with skills to be able to – and working with them to sensitize these groups. So we've kind of worked with both, so our strategy has been to work with let's say the 'downtrodden' as well as the powerful and try balancing that. In the governance framework, we say supply/demand; you strengthen the demand side [community voices], but also work with the supply side [social programs] so that they can come together. So I think that approach of men/women; strengthen them, sensitize them, get them together – and I think that has worked in many ways.

As an 'intermediary organization', between citizens and state, PRIA attempts to construct practical, democratic bridges; indeed, since the 1990s much of its work has been framed in terms of governance reform. Anshuman Karol sees great virtue in a dialogical engagement that is multi-stakeholder and oriented to creating change by bridging the abyss between citizens and state:

you can't make change happen unless you bridge those gaps, unless you work closely – this is also applicable to PRIA as an intermediary organization because we are working with the local governments.... We are working with the citizens. We are working with the people in local groups, CSO, civil society and all, but we are also working with the policy-makers. We are also working with the government. We are also working with the like-minded international organizations. So in a way, we are actually bridging those gaps and those gaps may be governance deficits, knowledge gaps, or whatever it is. This is PRIA's strength, I think. PRIA works like a bridge in actually dealing with those issues.

The bridge that PRIA co-constructs often takes shape through a process of 'convening' the stakeholders onto a common platform. As Namrata Jaitli explained,

A lot of our field level work has been this, when you are talking about policy influence, and they've actually got the government, the civil society organizations, elected representatives on a platform, whether it is at a district level or it is at the state level. ... We have offices in the state, work at the national – and we've got global partners and internationals -- that range is very rare for a civil society organization to operate on. So I think that convening role becomes a valuable addition. So if we are in Delhi and we want to hold a meeting, we are accessible to the government and the civil society – we have a standing with it. So it's not being co-opted – that kind of convening component, strategically used, can be important for alternative knowledge and getting alternative knowledge to engage with dominant policies.

PRIA's insider strategy shows how the combination of grassroots empowerment and engagement with governmental agencies can begin to reconstitute local states along participatory-democratic lines. The arc of PRIA's development traces out a successful strategy of alt KPM in the critical-liberal register: first

developing practices of empowering agents for self-governance in the 1980s, then strengthening institutions of civil society in the 1990s, and in recent years, creating, through state-civil society dialogue, the basis for 'governance from below', both within India and internationally.

A particularly impressive example of PRIA's mainstreaming approach to changing institutions from within is that of the gender audit. PRIA has since 1998 conducted training workshops on gender mainstreaming and prevention of sexual harassment with local governments (Panchayats) and more than 100 organizations throughout India.<sup>62</sup> The gender audit combines participatory research with gender-sensitivity training at all levels of the organization. Martha Farrell, who spearheaded these initiatives and directs PRIA's International Academy provided a rich narrative on how PRIA approaches gender-auditing as a dialogical process:

you're actually hearing from the people – from the staff – how they view their organization, what are the values, what are the principles, what are the things that people aspire towards? What's the culture? So when you have your formal policies and systems, and one of the informal culture – the kind of language you use in the organization, the kind of systems you have, what is given priority? In some organizations, issues like honesty are not really a priority. You can get by. So what does the organization really mean to people? You get that information. Then you get information on how do people view the workplace, from a gender perspective. And because you're looking at the women joining the workplace – which is a male-dominated space – what are all the challenges that women face but they don't really see as challenges until we speak to them about it, or they don't even see as issues of concern, because women never looked at it from the gender lens. So even as small an issue as having a separate toilet for women. Initially women don't even think it's an issue and they don't even think about it. Then they say, 'well, we thought that you have to put up with whatever is there. So if there's no toilet, well that's how it is supposed to be. And just because we are women in a workplace, we can't demand things. We didn't think it was something to demand.' And how the knowledge that is taken from them, put into the report, then triggers off women saying, 'well we want toilets now. Now we want separate toilets because we realize that is a right and we would like to have that.' So that knowledge has changed the culture of the organization.

As a second exhibit, consider Nandita Bhatt's account of a participatory gender audit PRIA had just completed at a large Indian institution when I interviewed her in February 2013.

We had these field-level trainings. We said we have to create – because gender is such a 'cherry on top' add-on component, or it's a completely ignored component or it is something to make your project look fancy to get donors. So, getting people to understand that you have to think about it from the beginning. But we said we have to create – because people have become so jaded, we have to create this hype – gender, gender – and people are talking 'it's important; it's that.' So what we did is we began the gender audit in the head office and we started the training in the field offices simultaneously, and then we did the audit also with the field office. People were involved, were talking about it already. So a lot of changes actually took place while we were doing the audit also, because when people started speaking out – they spoke to us in confidentiality, but then at lunch groups they were discussing it – then there was a shift in the leadership and when the new leader came in, we had a sharing – initial sharing – and he was like 'oh my god' so he started asking people on his own, started sending

---

<sup>62</sup> See the compendium of PRIA gender mainstreaming projects at <http://www.pria.org/projects/gender-projects>, accessed 20 August 2013.

out information, little surveys, like ‘what is this? what is this?’ So he said, ‘it’s true; what you’ve taken out in your audit is true.’ So we recommended that they have a committee to address sexual harassment in the workplace. They didn’t have one; they had no policy. So by the time we had finished the audit, they had instituted a policy. They formed a policy to have a committee and next month, I think, we will be going to train the committee.

In both instances, the process of doing the audit was already transformative to the social relations within the organization. PRIA’s approach to gender audits has been adopted in formal organizations across Asia. In one sense it illustrates how practitioners of alt KPM can engage with state and other institutions in ways that spur change from below, but it also exemplifies the participatory action research methodology for which PRIA is well known, which I discuss in more depth below.

### *Empowering the grassroots through participation and capacity-building*

We can distinguish a range of approaches that produce alt knowledge by empowering the grassroots: helping to foster activist communities and capabilities, and within those communities, organic intellectuals who produce their own knowledge, and whose collective agency can itself be a transformative force. It would be difficult to over-estimate the importance of this mode of cognitive praxis. The capacity to move collectively toward a shared goal is a prerequisite to any process of democratic transformation. Among the practitioners participating in this project, I have discerned three kinds of approaches within a program of grassroots empowerment: popular education, *participatory* KPM, and participatory *action* KPM.

### Popular Education

Most conventionally, transnational alternative policy groups engage in the venerable and indispensable practice of *popular education*: a crucial way of nurturing counterpublics and of influencing the general public. All TAPGs engage in popular education in one way or another. The Network Institute for Global Democratization, for instance, has organized sessions under the rubric (introduced by WSF intellectual Boaventura de Sousa Santos) of the Popular University of Social Movements (Santos 2006), with the idea of creating spaces for mutual learning between social movements. PRIA is very extensively engaged in education, especially through their International Academy and in partnership with a host of universities including the University of Sussex’s Institute for Development Studies. Since 2000, CRID has convened a biannual 3-4 day Summer University on International Solidarity, whose attendance level has risen from 200 to over 1000 activists. CRID proposes a thematic for each rendition of the University (in 2012 it was Citizens in Solidarity Reinventing the World), but the training sessions and workshops that constitute it are organized by the participating groups, which numbered approximately 130 in 2012. The University’s purpose is to train and educate activists from many localities in new developments and approaches, within ‘a very open space for everybody to bring many things to share,’ as CRID Director Nathalie Pere-Marzano told me. RosaLux’s Academy for Political Education offers political training courses as well as ‘conferences and workshops, weekend seminars and a variety of other events’ all with the goal of providing people with ‘the knowledge that can empower them and enable them to act.’<sup>63</sup> IFG teach-ins, mentioned earlier, have ranged across a wide array of topics, offering critical analysis to activists, so that they are in a better position to make strategic judgments, and also to spread the knowledge further in their communities. The most recent teach-in was held in San Francisco just a week before I interviewed Jerry Mander. He told me that

---

<sup>63</sup> See <http://rosalux.de/english/foundation/political-education.html>, accessed 20 August 2013.



The goal of that event was to get American activists and scholars and so on to pay some attention to the Pacific, because nobody has noticed. US policy has just basically switched from the Middle East and Europe to the Pacific. Sixty percent of the US military is in the Pacific; the US has 400 military bases in the Pacific. There are giant new trade agreements going on in the Pacific which are horrible. There's a whole gigantic emphasis on the Pacific now which US activism has not noticed. So our job has really been to bring in the Pacific peoples together with an audience of American scholars and activists to meet each other and to talk about things, in public and also privately for three days. And I definitely think we achieved that, and that's always step one. And then the idea is to try to take that someplace and do something more with it.

Again, the most memorable instance to date of connecting popular-education within a teach-in with collective action was at the battle in Seattle. IFG board member Tony Clarke reminisced: 'So we would have a teach-in and then the mobilization would take place in the streets, and the people who were prominent in the teach-ins would also be out there in the streets and be interacting. But when it was in the streets, it was the people's movements that were taking the ball and moving with it ... and, in effect, they were the ones doing the "teaching" by sharing their street knowledge' At a crucial moment, the teach-in enacted three of the modes of cognitive praxis I have discussed thus far. Challenging hegemonic knowledge, it engaged a key inter-governmental institution via an outsider strategy, even as it empowered the grassroots through conveyance of critical analysis.

### Participatory Approaches

Transnational alternative policy groups also help empower the grassroots through *participatory* approaches that consciously *build capacity*, within social relations, for the self-generation of alt knowledge within counterpublics and general publics. In part, this involves giving voice – enabling subalterns to speak, which requires a break from the monological paternalism inscribed in traditional pedagogies. An important instance of this can be found in Social Watch's methodology of watching, explained earlier. Through monitoring state compliance with social covenants and human rights, and through reporting and sharing information across the network of 80 participating national movement-groups, the grassroots activists who comprise Social Watch have their alt knowledge recognized, validated and voiced at intergovernmental forums other sites of institutional power. In the process, they also become more capacitated as social-justice protagonists. Sumona Dasgupta offered a telling example of how a participatory approach, as in PRIA's projects in rural India, can help subalterns find voice. At PRIA's Conflict Resolution project, Sumona asked a young participant,

'what is the value of education for you?' And this was the poorest of the poor, and also the so-called lowest caste in the village; and she said, 'to me education means the ability to wage conflict.' She said it in Hindi. And I was just stunned.... This was a new take on education. One would hear 'I want better jobs' or 'better conscientization' and all of that. But I wouldn't expect someone to say that 'for me, education means the ability to wage conflict non-violently.' So this is what I am talking about, in terms of an intuitive understanding of life that comes from struggle.

The Centre for Civil Society's Community Scholars program gives us another exemplar of the participatory approach to mobilizing knowledge and building capacity at the grassroots. As China Ngubane explained, a key element in community scholarship is

dissemination of information. Mostly, that is it. Because I think it is very important, too, in that sense because you see, without information, without the knowledge of what is happening in your own community, it is a danger on its own. It's just like you are driving in the dark; you don't have lights, and you don't know what to expect, either in the second minute or in the following week or month. Things like that. I think mainly CCS – that's its role. Secondly, by doing so, it brings people on its premises to actually meet and debate challenging issues. ... Through the CCS, it is my duty as a Community Scholar to report to the CCS, because as a society, we need to report and talk about that and challenge whatever we see that we can challenge. And that's the role of the CCS; it's very important.

We can see in this account that the Community Scholars program activates several of the modes of cognitive praxis I distinguished in Table 4. It creates channels for disseminating counter-hegemonic knowledge to subaltern communities; it opens a dialogue with those communities that builds solidarity; and, through the reporting practices of the Community Scholars, it enables the Centre to call attention to injustices and help mobilize effective political campaigns.

DAWN's extensive work in training and capacity-building, within its training institutes and its ongoing series of regional consultations and workshops on Gender, Economic and Ecological Justice GEEJ), mentioned above, provides one further exemplar. These efforts are strongly attuned to activists' needs to conduct their own research and critical analysis, to develop alternative knowledge and to learn how to deal effectively with media. The participatory approach is intended to develop capacities for democratic, feminist leadership, as Marina Durano emphasized:

The idea of leadership is really about not the top-down thing, but it's how we come together and become leaders in a different sort of way. Feminist leadership – what is that? We have to work that out because there's no one definition. So in this group, how do we exercise that? Each of you as feminist leaders, but also together as a network leader, shall we say.

Most recently, DAWN introduced an additional dimension of advocacy to its participatory approach. DAWN brought a team of over 20 activists to Rio+20 – members of DAWN plus GEEJ trainees – so that the latter could learn advocacy by doing it. As Nicole Bridegain explained, this is 'our new way of working... [a] participatory approach – not only sharing the knowledge in training but also in advocacy spheres.' This example moves us into the domain of participatory action research (PAR) and alternative knowledge production.

### Participatory Action Research (PAR)

A third genre of grassroots empowerment, PAR, combines knowledge production and participation with transformation. At its best, this approach realizes Marx's (1845) admonition in his Thesis 11: 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.' The promise of making the *transformation of reality* an integral part of the project of producing and mobilizing alternative knowledge makes PAR an especially important methodology of grassroots empowerment and capacity building, combining alt KPM with transformative praxis.

PRIA, an internationally recognized centre for PAR, has developed a remarkable array of methodologies, available through its website, publications etc. Space permits only a brief account of the approach, drawing mainly upon interviews with project participants. Standard accounts of PAR describe a process of knowledge co-creation in a dialogue between expert knowledge and local knowledge that is focused around a shared project of social change (e.g., Greenwood and Levin 2007). As in Marx's Thesis 11, the point is not only to arrive at an understanding, but to achieve that through a process that changes the situation or object

one is trying to understand by resolving a problem or contradiction. The gender audit, discussed earlier exemplifies the basic idea, and shows that the transformation is not only situational – objective – but subjective. In particular, subordinated groups can become empowered through their own participation in action-research.

The basic principles of PAR have been summarized by the participants of a PRIA-hosted workshop, that were published as *The Heart of Organisational Learning*:

1. Action research is about information and transformation. It is inherently about social change and empowerment.
2. Action research is a collaborative endeavour.
3. Action research requires a mind-set of shared curiosity and not individual certainty.
4. Surfacing, making sense of and valuing the ‘knowledge-of-the-doers’ is important.
5. Action research is systematic and rigorous: It is an intentional commitment to a planned process of inquiry, reflection, risk and change.
6. Action research is not static: there is room for questions and plans to change along the way.
7. All involved are both subjects and researchers. There is no distinction between those who act and those who research. For us, ‘all involved’ meant the donor, regional holders, the core (leadership) team, workshop facilitators, initiating organisations and those invited to take part.
8. There is an obligation to show how you arrive at your learning (findings), in other words, to produce evidence and to share your findings.
9. Action research is not a linear process, but follows an action learning cycle, with each action accompanied by observation, reflection, sense-making and planning (p. 4).<sup>64</sup>

PRIA has applied this approach in the context of local governance in India, where, as Deputy Director Namrata Jaitli told me, a key issue is

what are the planning processes vis-à-vis expert knowledge. So even in that training capacity building interventions, [we] look at participant’s knowledge vis-à-vis the expert trainer knowledge – so that the participatory research component is built into our approaches, so we are actually talking about citizens not only mobilizing knowledge to enhance their own lives, and looking at solutions related to their own lives, but also to hold the government accountable. So [there are] a lot of components about this last bit: empower the disadvantaged or oppressed as knowledge creators. That has been a lot of hard work with women, with local self-governance institutions, with the electorate....

Another aspect of PRIA’s grassroots empowerment work, illustrative of PAR, involves moral-intellectual reform at the local level, on issues such as patriarchy, whose tenacity within contemporary India is strong. Reform operates at the interpersonal and personal levels, to which PRIA activists are attuned, and in a non-didactic way that relies on strong, visible exemplars. For instance, in telling me about a PRIA campaign on female infanticide, Nishu Kaul observed that

social change ... is infectious also at times. If I see that a woman of the village was not empowered and she sees that a woman is engaging and she is engaging with men – she is

---

<sup>64</sup> The 2012 report is available at <http://www.barefootguide.org/index.php/resources-hidden/item/the-heart-of-organisational-learning-findings-of-the-bfg2-action-research>, accessed 23 August 2013.

engaging with women – and she has a good understanding, then there is a kind of response of ‘I want to be like that,’ which is a sort of example which we have been gathering. So that is one of the strategies that when we work, we always try to engage with women and we should *capacitate* these women so that they work on these issues at the local level, and they create examples for the local community. ... Like in Haryana, we were working on violence and the issue of sex selection – what we did was we understood the local context and based on that, we developed posters and various media which we kept in the training halls. There was this lady who has three parts [in her hair] – because a woman who is married, she has one part [symbolizing one husband]. So we put three. Then women would ask ‘why is there three? There is only one which is to be put, so why is there three?’ So we said if people do engage in sex selection and they kill girls, then obviously one woman has to marry three men. So yes, that creates a larger impact so you have to understand the field. When we work, we do try that we understand what are the things that are coming up from the field and try to bring them ... through various media, posters which you keep in the training hall, let’s say. And people obviously would ask and then that creates a sort of self- reflection. And rather than telling them this is wrong, this is wrong, you should not be engaging in this, you create a sort of dialogue around those issues and then they ask it, and then it would have a larger impact on addressing those issues.

One of the challenges for PAR is to avoid cooptation – the slippery slope on which participation slides into ‘consultation’, or worse.<sup>65</sup> Patrick Bond of CCS has, with that danger in mind, gravitated toward participatory *oppositional* research as a prophylactic against the cooptation that can attend participation when the terms of participation involve power inequities – when one is in ‘an oppositional situation’. As he explained,

‘participation’ can be such a sop.... You’re not open to any real consultation, and you’re just going through the motions.... I think our main challenge is if we’re in an oppositional situation, be scientific about it. Assess the balance of forces. Look at the framing strategy. Look at the narratives that are coming out on both sides. Look at who is allied with whom. Look at that full repertoire of strategies and tactics. And above all, if you’re doing good intellectual work, check your analysis all the time. It may need to change, even in radical ways.

On the other hand, PRIA's quite different project – PAR – emphasizes non-provocation and dialogue as a fundamental factor in knowledge co-creation; that is, it presumes the possibility of finding common ground. Although this places PRIA in a mediatory position, it does not necessarily prefigure an inexorable regression to cooptation. PRIA Director Manoj Rai gave this account of PRIA’s typical role, in situations of unequal power:

because of the fact the PRIA is apolitical, PRIA is able to speak languages of both sides, because if we talk to people in the government, we will be deliberately using the terms which they use, rather than using our own jargon. We will try to use their terms, so that it’s very obvious, but when we talk to community, we use their talk. ... So because of the fact that we have institutional capacity to reach to multiple sides, converse in their languages, help them feel comfortable in our company and being comfortable in their company – it helps us in facilitation. ... When I say that we speak to government in their language it does not mean that

---

<sup>65</sup> Sherry Arnstein’s (1969) analysis of the ‘ladder of citizen participation’ is the classic take on this.

they don't know: our position is very clear that we are pro-poor. Our position is very clear. We are pro-poor. Working with the community, and bringing them to a space where at least – I can't say that is a level playing field, but at least it is better. The community is informed. The community is capable of raising its voice, so we are very clear that this discussion is what you can say – dialoguing. So we are very clear about that: this meeting is to establish dialogue, but if the meeting is around, say, some service, then we prepare the community to present, but then PRIA sits with the community and then we tell the government that this is not a level playing field. These are the issues which have come from the community. ... Our first choice is, if the community is capable, it will present. If community is capable of engaging with the government directly, then let it. But if community thinks that no, it would be difficult for them, we cannot wait, because after all it is the question of their life. One way could be to work with community, build their capacities and then when they become capable, engage them. But in real life, it does not go that way. There are issues of urgency; there are questions on the survival of the community. There are questions of dignity, so you don't have time.

Similarly, Nishu Kaul, a Program Officer at ALIP, pointed out that PRIA does not address 'issues' but mediates between state and community in attempting to vivify local democratic governance:

we are working with Panchayats – these are local governments – and we are providing them capacity-building support. We are making them vibrant, so we are playing more of a facilitator's role. So we are not in any way engaging in issues.

PRIA's vision lacks substantive content, beyond the abstract notion of participatory democracy, yet arguably this enables it to play the role of honest broker. Indeed, the PRIA commitment to Making Democracy Work for All can be read as a radical challenge, a vision that must ultimately include workplace democracy, community economic democracy and participatory budgeting, etc. Ultimately, what makes PAR so promising as an approach to grassroots empowerment and capacity building is the power of participation to effect the double transformation that Marx wrote of in another of his Theses: 'the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*.'<sup>66</sup>

### *Building solidarities through dialogical KPM*

Another mode of cognitive praxis that all the groups participating in this project include in their repertoire is building solidarities through dialogue. What is crucial here is to bridge gaps that otherwise limit the effectivity of democratic movements as forces for transformation. The gaps may be cognitive, identitarian, or social-relational, but in each instance they reproduce divisions; they silo knowledge, identities and organization within narrow limits. The limits themselves may be defined by national borders, movement issues, social-identity markers or cultural discourses. Of course, the specific social-justice challenges facing a given group often necessitate an intense prioritization of goals and visions. But the need for convergence, for a differentiated understanding of cross-movement, cross-national solidarity, is also intense, and if anything, intensifying as the crisis of neoliberal globalization deepens. Without a convergence of strategies, organization and vision, counter-hegemonic knowledge will remain scattered, and opposition to domination

---

<sup>66</sup> 'Theses on Feuerbach' (original version), written in 1845, English translation first published in the second edition of *The German Ideology* (New York: Lawrence & Wishart, 1938), available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/original.htm>, accessed 21 August 2013.

will not reach beyond the episodic forms of resistance that manifest grievances without offering real alternatives.

Against that backdrop, groups participating in this project build dialogical solidarities in quite a variety of ways. At ITeM/Social Watch, this occurs within an extensive transnational network of social justice advocates, through internet and email as well as face-to-face assemblies. Social Watch's cognitive praxis not only helps give voice; it creates dialogical bridges across places, within a human rights framework. The annual *Report* is itself a bridging exercise, which many thousands of watchers help author, and then read – building cross-national consciousness and solidarity. Between the initial writing of national reports and the final publication, Social Watch staff like Ana Zeballos, who works on the *Report*, add value by integrating the knowledge thematically. As she observed,

the *Report* is not only the sum of the different national reports. We also try to create and generate thematic reports on different issues and also analysis of the different national realities. So, in a way, we are creating bridges every time, always, through our work.

ITeM/Social Watch leader Roberto Bissio likened the group's approach to what has been called 'crowdsourcing'. In the corporate world, this might mean solving problems online by appropriating unpaid labour, but for Social Watch it means mobilizing alt knowledge in a global network of grassroots activists who in learning from each other can deepen their solidarities.

### Convening

A particularly common method for building solidarities is that of *convening*. Given their embeddedness in transnational activist networks, TAPGs are optimally positioned to call people together for cross-sectoral discussion, strategizing, and, sometimes, the launching of initiatives. TNI, PPSG, CRID, Focus, PRIA and RosaLux are all conveners in this sense. As Hilary Wainwright of TNI noted, convening creates 'spaces of collaboration and actual forms of collaboration.' In her field – alternatives to privatization – the TNI has been a facilitator of collaboration 'between North and South, between researchers and activists, between users and trade unions, between practitioners and the wider media, recently in the process of participatory democracy.'

Strong examples of convening as an alt knowledge practice are not difficult to find. IFG, for instance has played a role in identifying emerging issues and convening coalitions to address those issues. The MAI campaign came out of an IFG strategy session. Our World is Not For Sale was initially a shadow group of IFG. IFG didn't want to become the WTO campaign organization, so a lot of those players set up OWINFS to be the WTO campaign and coordinate all the neoliberal trade agreement/investment agreement stuff (Victor Menotti).

IFG's many convenings have been hothouses for developing a common strategy.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, although Focus devotes much effort to popular education, publishing and outreach via the media, 'at the same time we always do meetings where we can strategize with people ... because we know at the end of the day when you are facing a policy engagement, sometimes agreements in a group where you have other networks – consensus is only on the common denominator' (Dorothy Guerrero). Convenings of this sort – strategy

---

<sup>67</sup> An IFG convening of 41 activist-intellectuals in October 2011 launched its current Plutonomy program. Participants are listed at the program's webpage: <http://ifg.org/programs/plutonomy.html>, accessed 23 August 2013.

sessions – build solidarities among activists, around a specific campaign or initiative. They put alternative knowledge to use in counter-hegemonic practice. The Third World Forum’s activities consist largely of convenings of activist-intellectuals, most recently in Ecuador, Egypt and China, which are strategically aimed at building solidarities to enable effective action. As TWF founder Samir Amin told me,

We facilitate the debates, but with a view to building ‘Convergence with Diversity’. But converging. We say the movements will not be able to achieve important advances without strategies with strategic targets, which are common targets. We started by looking at the struggles – there are struggles – but they remain disseminated, scattered and usually on the defensive. That is, defending whatever had been achieved in the past.... Now, how to move from defensive strategies to offensive strategies? You need to have targets – strategy targets.

As a ‘network institute’ PPSG links activists in Japan from different movements, and maintains very permeable boundaries, enabling it to convene horizontally and cross-sectorally in a way that facilitates, but does not control, a process of convergence, as Yasukazu Amano related.

At PRIA, and in contrast to these oppositional examples, convening plays a central role in the dialogue between the ‘base’ and the ‘top’:

we evolved a methodology of what we call ‘interfacing’ where we combine – we get those who have to listen and those who have to speak – we convene them around the same table somehow. So a large part of what PRIA has been doing is convening conversations, enabling conversations across world views and regimes and perspectives. But in order to convene, you have to create first a process of systematization at the base. What is it that the conversation is going to be about, so you produce some knowledge systematization. And you have to demonstrate to the top that this conversation might be of use to them, somehow. Either it reduces hassles or it may get them a reward or something – you know, why would they be interested? (Rajesh Tandon).

Focus also draws on the trust it has earned in activist communities when it convenes meetings:

It’s a big part of what we do. I’ve also been told ... that they [movements] trust Focus to bring people together, so that they feel we have the ability to bring people of different walks and tendencies together without people feeling they’re getting tricked into signing off on something. So they feel reasonably confident that they can come to a meeting organized by Focus, and not be coopted into a process that they didn’t agree to (Shalmali Guttal).

Convening is a practice that that builds solidarity and mutual understanding while enabling activists to sharpen their strategic analyses through mutual learning – a point underscored by Pien Metaal of TNI:

One of the techniques is to organize for our meetings and bring actors together so they can exchange lessons learned from one reality to another one. For example, the model of the Brazilian Rio de Janeiro *favelas* policing – community policing – might be an interesting experience for the violence in Central America. We come with all kind of ideas so people can exchange ideas.... We always make recommendations. The format that we use for our publications is always being ‘propositive’ and being focused on the development of alternatives. You can’t say ‘all this stinks, it doesn’t work;’ you need something else, so that’s one of the main tools that we use ... to be creative in finding out things or simply hearing about an experience in country A and then talking about it to policy officials from other countries, and saying ‘well, that’s what they did; maybe that’s something you could consider’ in bringing that way, transferring knowledge to other scenarios and other fora.

Brid Brennan elaborated further on how TNI convenes ‘strategy meetings’ to build the practical solidarities that enable an actual campaign, and pairs those efforts with ‘a public face’ which mobilizes knowledge more broadly:

what’s really important for the work we do in terms of strengthening or co-facilitating movement, is what we call ‘strategy meetings’ which would be discussion of strategy, both in terms of how you might consolidate, for example, multi-sectoral or cross-social movement involvement in a campaign. Or how you would – what your key messages to the media would be, what your key steps and nodal points in the whole campaign process would be. That, for us, is a very important source of alternative knowledge – not necessarily published, you know. We usually do combine those kinds of more internal sorts of meetings with a public face. We will have a forum.

### Beyond silos: transformative articulations

As a mode of cognitive praxis, building solidarities through dialogue enables global justice movements to break out of silos, a process that often involves combining discourses, or looking for their intersections. Reflecting on her first year at RosaLux’s Institute for Critical Social Analysis, Katharina Puehl told me that much of her work lies in attempting to

find intersections of different discourses, like what’s the special feminist analysis of the social-ecological crisis? How do we bring that together? There are archives of alternative knowledge from eco-feminism, certain strands of Anglo-American and other traditions of feminist thought. Things like that. You have to combine discussions, because they are sometimes separated from each other. That’s what we try to do, and we will do that in forms of workshops. We will do that in the form of large conferences and, if you want, traditional form which one knows from academia, but because of the people who are invited, we always try to bridge the discussions between more academic, working people, social movements, the Party of the Left, and people who don’t belong to ‘a’ party or whatever left identity in the more narrow sense.

As Katharina’s reflections suggest, the value added of cross-sectoral dialogue lies both in finding discursive intersections (sometimes termed ‘nodal points’) and in bridging discussions between people from different subcultures. The latter is a critical move in breaking down the status- and knowledge hierarchies that divide and disempower the constituencies for a global left. In many contexts, dismantling hierarchies is a prerequisite to the formation of innovative, alternative knowledge. Karin Gabbert explained that at RosaLux’s Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation

what we’re trying to do is find out where could be the part where we can create something new because there’s a lot of alternative knowledge everywhere. So what would be the ‘extra’? For example, one extra is that we try to bring together – to mix people – for example, academic people with politicians and activists; and we’re trying to really ‘oblige’ them to work together and trying to build a dialogue that breaks hierarchies, because normally if you have a very clever intellectual, then you can invite three women from the countryside and they won’t talk all day. So what we do is maybe we make as a condition to participate in a conference, is for everyone to go out and visit them there first and *then* go to the conference. Sometimes the people don’t like it, but we think that we need to really make people listen to each other– [to those] who have different kinds of knowledge.



Breaking down hierarchies ‘that exist within the left – or within the alternative’, as Karin put it, is central to the *Grupo Permanente de Alternativas al Desarrollo*, a broad-based working group coordinated by RosaLux’s Andean regional office, which is attempting ‘to practice an ecology of knowledge from the confluence of diverse experiences.’<sup>68</sup>

Building solidarities across differences can also mean confronting, through dialogue, divisions within the family of global justice movements. Again, TAPGs are well positioned to facilitate such engagements. NIGD’s Teivo Teivainen recalled a memorable initiative of this sort which he organized out of the group’s Lima office a few years ago:

I invited a Chilean writer/performance artist – very well established – who had been just one of the best-selling novelists in Chile, and who was a very well-known transvestite and gay activist, but also declared himself a communist and had been a member of the Communist Party. I didn’t know him personally; I invited him to Peru – he came to Peru and we organized some activities. My idea was that because I knew he was a person who speaks very harshly to the left – the traditional, communist left because of their homophobia and incapability to accept difference – sexual differences – but then he speaks very harshly to many branches of the gay movement, accusing them of bourgeois this and that, and not taking into account the material conditions and all that. So I found it a good idea to bring him and basically, to use his kind of language, to more or less say ‘fuck you bastards in the communist movement who don’t accept us gays’ and then to say ‘fuck you bourgeois gay activists who don’t understand class differences and the material basis.’ And by being harshly critical in the sort of entertaining and innovative ways of an artist to both of these groups, to help us understand possibilities to articulate between the more class-based traditional leftist forces and criticism of capitalism and the necessity to think about alternatives that go beyond capitalism and the importance of insights and frameworks that are derived or come from the Marxist tradition, and the positions based on criticizing patriarchy and hetero-normativity and the possibilities to bring about processes of liberation in terms of sexual and gender lines – to take that into account. So that was ... quite successful to tell the people in the more traditional Marxist-Leninist left, ‘look, if you really want to be as revolutionary as you are arguing, don’t really go and beat up gay activists,’ and to tell the others, ‘if you want to transform the world, then you may want to articulate the kinds of insights on the oppressive nature of capitalism that the more Marxist comrades will tell you [about].’

---

<sup>68</sup> See <http://www.rosalux.org.ec/es/ique-es-el-grupo-permanente-de-alternativas-al-desarrollo-128.html>. My slightly edited, mechanical translation from Spanish: ‘In order to discuss possible responses, the Permanent Working Group on Alternatives to Development was formed at the beginning of 2011 in the Andean region, coordinated by the regional office of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. The Working Group brings together women and men from eight countries in Latin America and Europe, but focuses its discussions on Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela. That is, in countries that, through their constituent assemblies, are seeking to re-establish themselves on new foundations, but that in the development and implementation of public policies have nevertheless fallen into the so-called “Latin American Paradox”: progressive governments in Latin America who cast themselves as revolutionary but support and promote extractivism to support their social policies, leading to negative social and environmental consequences.

‘This working group is an effort to practice an ecology of knowledge founded on the confluence of diverse experiences: militancy in various fields of civil society, work in inherited state institutions, experiences of indigenous peoples who have survived outside the capitalist system and those of intellectuals dedicated to critical thinking.’

Teivo has a name for this solidarity-building project: the construction of 'transformative articulations' between different social movements and social actors. Through dialogue, we can learn what kinds of articulation and collaboration between movements are possible and 'what the conditions for that kind of articulation are, in different places.'

Clearly, solidaristic dialogue is an important mode of cognitive praxis within and across the world's macro-regions. Within the Global South, DAWN's GEEJ initiative has connected across movement domains in places like China:

So the GEEJ was the idea to try to build this link across the different movements to ensure the women's movement was also bringing in the other – like economic or ecological perspective and also ensure the other movements will integrate the gender into their agenda so we can build a stronger movement.... GEEJ China is also applying this methodology to bring together the people from different movements to talk about how to link multiple struggles to our work. ... [At a recent GEEJ workshop] feedback from participants was very positive, like for the first time a health organization realized that there were environmental health problems that they should consider. And for the environmental organizations, they would realize there is a gender perspective; there are women's special needs that need to be addressed. And for the women's groups, apart from the legal and the rights of women, they also think about economic rights and about climate change and environmental degradation as a factor of the women's status in the family and society and their livelihood. So it is very encouraging to see this very productive dialogue happening in the room for the first time (Yiping Cai).

By the same token, the question of North-South solidarity is absolutely central within global justice politics, and dialogues that bridge South and North can move this process forward.

Indeed, in an era when capitalist globalization is in some ways bringing the North to the South and in other ways bringing the South to the North, it is crucial to promote North-South dialogue.

As Daniel Chavez of TNI put it,

Whenever we organize a seminar or workshop for a research project – for instance, when produce a collective book, we always invite people from the North and people from the South because we are aware that most of the issues that we are dealing with are no longer issues of the South. But many of the problems we are addressing are also very visible in the North, and also that many of the actors that we criticize or actors we try to influence, are a presence both in the North and in the South. For instance, in the case of the Municipal Service Project, this network that both Hilary [Wainwright] and I are part of representing TNI, deals with alternatives to commercialization of public services in the water, electricity and health areas. We see the same kind of discussion, the same kind of problems, in countries of the South and countries of the North – issues such as corporatization, issues such as public/private partnerships appear in the discourse and the policy implementation in both regions – North and South. So we don't really see the need to limit our relationship with the South because we feel the need to engage with both progressive forces and negative forces in terms of engagement in the North.

TNI's Drugs and Democracy program provides a concrete instance of the cumulative impact of a strategically astute North-South articulation of solidarity. Drugs and Democracy has, from its inception, tied the politics of consumption in the Global North to the politics of production in the South, thereby constructing a bridge

between the ones working on the consumption side and problems related to that, with the ones working on more development side, farmer's side, security issues in the South, criminal justice issues. Those used to be quite separated worlds and now there are much more bridges, so that's also where things stem from that now harm reduction for the production side, something like that can come up as a discourse because it's a framework that comes very much from the consumption side (Martin Jelsma).

Complementing such sustained programs, which construct real relations of solidarity as they formulate alternative knowledge, are continuing efforts to address through North-South dialogue the biggest political-ecological challenges facing humanity. For instance, in July 2012, RosaLux's international conference on the concept of a 'good life' and extractivism in Latin America took up

such questions as how to overcome the policy of extractivism, using natural resources to solve social problems but destroying the environment. That's of course very complicated questions we must discuss, because sometimes people say, 'oh you must change your pattern of life there in the North,' and think that has no consequences for the South. Of course, in the world now it is only possible, from my point of view, to change together (Lutz Brangsch).

Building solidarity through dialogue is obviously counter-hegemonic in that it helps integrate the varied movements for global justice into a coherent whole, capable of moving together. But it also goes against the hegemonic grain as a form of production that refuses enclosure, that instantiates a global knowledge commons. The point in dialogue is to share, to enrich each other, and hopefully to reach a convergence that enables collaborative action. TNI has, since Rio+20 been coordinating the international campaign against corporate impunity. At Rio in 2012, TNI took advantage of the occasion not only to do the public launching, but to convene a strategy session with sixty or so key movement leaders from many countries. The session produced ideas that are now shaping the work of the campaign. According to campaign coordinator Brid Brennan, the strategy session enabled 'what people had been inputting into the process of preparation' to come to fruition. 'So in a way, I think we put a lot of emphasis a type of knowledge that has collective ownership: alternative knowledge that has collective ownership – I think that's one of our key points.'

At Focus, Shalmali Guttal explained how collective ownership of alternative knowledge works in the context of agro-ecological politics:

I always tend to give credit to where those ideas are coming from. So for example, we're big supporters of agro-ecology, but we didn't invent agro-ecology. Farmers did; many farmers all over did. So what we do now on the issue of agro-ecology, is we support La Via Campesina and its work on agro-ecology. We write about it. We help to host meetings about them. We help farmers to meet other farmers to learn about agro-ecology. And what we learn from them, we write about it giving full credit to the farmers who are doing it. That then also helps us to challenge the corporate seeds regime and say, 'why is this a problem? Why is the concentration of the seed market in the hands of six corporations a big problem? And what is the alternative to that? What is really happening?' On the ground, you have these farmers who are doing this, this and this; and then we know, because we've been with the farmers, that when there was a drought in this part of the country, this is how the farmers survive. They use seeds they saved from such and such a time. So, that reality exists and we're just helping to amplify it. But also using it to bolster our argument, and then we're also using our argument to bolster in international spaces to challenge governments and say, 'no, don't support Monsanto. Support the farmers of Karnataka.'

CRID is an especially apt example of creating knowledge collectively and dialogically, through solidaristic communication among allies. Structurally, the group is a dispersed and widely ramifying network of 'platforms' that include member groups as well as on-members. CRID Director Nathalie Pere-Marzano gave the following job description:

...my work is mainly to put people together and try to see what subject they would like to be working on, and to participate on this elaboration of this knowledge they have. Starting from where they are, and trying to bring them to have a more transversal approach of what they are working on. So this is mainly my work – creating meetings, so that the people working together, because we haven't found any better way to do that than putting people around the same table and talking together. So that's how we shape our knowledge. It's really like from one meeting to another. We think together, we exchange and then something starts coming out and then people say, okay, I can start writing on that. And the other says, okay, I can help you work on that. And then at the next meeting we work on this first paper that some organization has started working on. It takes time, but it is really collective and it's really integrating what they are working on within their own organization, but then gets enriched by what they hear from the other organizations. It really is how we work. ... : so that is when we are trying to write something together and having a position paper, and then it's the same way of working when we try to organize a campaign. So the position papers are often within CRID. The campaigning is really larger than the CRID, and it's how we spread our knowledge with these campaigning activities, because we are always opening our spaces. You don't have to be a member of the CRID to participate in a campaign that we propose to launch. But we never decide alone to launch a campaign. We propose a meeting to many actors, saying that okay, there is this opportunity. Maybe we could do something and it would be a good time to talk about this or this subject. So that is how it also takes shape.

Part of CRID's dialogical approach to solidaristic knowledge co-creation is to facilitate and build platforms as autonomous sites where jointly authored position papers take shape and political campaigns are planned. Gus Massiah, a CRID founder and former president, explained the function and form of CRID platforms at some length:

We create what we call 'platforms'. For example, we have a platform on debt. ... We have a platform on fiscal havens. We have forty platforms. What is a platform? A platform is members of CRID who want to make a campaign and work together and together they form a platform. And these platforms are not restricted to members of CRID. They are open to others, for example we have many platforms with unions, peasants, with other movements of French society. These platforms define their action. That could be spectacular action; it could be just a media plan. It could be ...each platform also defines what kind of alternative they will help with a partner of the platform – with the partner of the members. And also, what international campaigns we will choose. So, most of the action comes from platforms. For example, [in] the platform on water we have something like ten associations of CRID, in fact, four or five which are really working on this completely, and then something like ten members who are not from CRID -- unions etc. ... we had last year a World Forum on Water in Marseille and we organized a counter-forum on water with many proposals and many manifestations and initiatives. And we have a common position on water. This common position was written by the platform, and discussed by CRID and accepted by CRID. CRID could also not accept the platform position if some of the members of CRID [object]. On migrants, for example, we have a platform. The name of the platform is 'Bridges, not War'. And there is something like 30 or 40 associations – 15 of CRID and others not CRID with many migrant associations, so this is the way. And from time to time, our members ask us to be the animator or coordinator

of a platform.... One of these platforms is the Week of International Solidarity, which is a big campaign in France in November. This year we have several thousand initiatives in France, so we are the coordinator of this.... We have *Altermondes*; we have the organization of the French delegation to the World Social Forum.

Reflecting on the cumulative impact of one of CRID's platforms, Nathalie shed further light on the dialogical mode of CRID's solidarity work. 'This Week of International Solidarity in fifteen years, has created many networks in different parts of France and brought many organizations to work together because we believe in the necessity of having a lot of diversity of actors in international solidarity, ... working together. So we have many local coalitions that have been created, so people get to know each other, and we're doing real pedagogical work with them.'

In a similar spirit, Brid Brennan told me how at TNI the process of knowledge mobilization involves 'consolidating knowledge and insights from practice, and at the same time, building broader consensus around it.' Alternative knowledge and solidarity need to be rooted in a 'broad mobilizing consensus', and TNI plays a facilitating role in that – so that as it contributes to building solidarity dialogically it also helps mobilize and build capacity at the grassroots. As a collective organic intellectual for global justice, TNI plays a role of moral and political leadership:

Maybe one of the things we try to do, is *agenda setting* – so we say, we are in a completely different era of corporate power right now. The big question is 'what can we do about it?' and 'what can we do together about it'. And in order to do that, then, you need to develop broad mobilizing consensus on that. So therefore, of course, you draw in also a variety of analysts, a variety also of leaders, and we like that mix that you can get expert knowledge which is really needed, as well as the experience and perspective of movements who are committed to transformative change and politics. In the final analysis, we have an international call, for example – it was eight months work, [but] we developed an international call for the global [Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity] campaign.<sup>69</sup> In a pretty short period, in about a month pre-Rio, we got more than a hundred networks and all the major social movements signing on to it. So in a way... it's like being able to articulate a strong consensus with a lot of participation and support and commitment... (Brid Brennan).

I began this section by suggesting that without a convergence of strategies, organization and vision, counter-hegemonic knowledge will remain scattered, and opposition to domination will not reach beyond the episodic forms of resistance that manifest grievances without offering real alternatives. I then reviewed the extensive and varied efforts of groups participating in this project to build dialogical solidarities across movements, sectors, identity-groups, national borders, regions and North and South, effecting 'transformative articulations' that open space for more concerted politics. Through crowdsourcing, platforms, convening and other approaches, transnational alternative policy groups create convergences within diversity and enable the broad, mobilizing consensus that makes for strong campaigns. In these ways and others, efforts by TAPGs to build solidarities dialogically are integral to cognitive praxis: they weaken the hold of single-issue, single-identity, siloed politics; they put alt knowledge to work in finding common ground for global justice struggles.

---

<sup>69</sup> See the initial call-out at <http://www.tni.org/article/dismantle-corporate-power>, accessed 21 August 2013.

## *Integrating theory and practice*

At one point in our five-hour interview, Patrick Bond, summarizing an insight from the participatory and dialogical modes of cognitive praxis I have already discussed, and paraphrasing one of Marx's Theses on Feuerbach, reminded me that 'the teachers need to be taught.'<sup>70</sup> This means that those involved in producing and mobilizing alternative knowledge need to be sensitive to the relations of knowledge production and mobilization. In particular, as Marx commented, they need to avoid the traditional and self-contradictory division of society 'into two parts, one of which is superior to society.' For alternative knowledge to be effective in the world, for it to inform practices that truly contest injustice and inequity, the traditional division between the teachers and the taught needs to be eroded and ultimately replaced by what Paulo Freire advocated – relations of co-learning. For TAPGs, all this has important implications. In a dialectic of theory and practice, the practical, experiential knowledge of activists trying to change the world must be unified with theoretical knowledge that comprehends how that world is structured and how it might be transformed. Theoretical comprehension of alternatives, and the theorists who produce it, must be rooted in, organically linked to the school of practice, just as the practices of activism and advocacy will be most effective if they proceed from a veridical comprehension of 'the nature of the beast'. To bring Marx back into the conversation, 'All social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.'<sup>71</sup>

Given the importance of integrating theory and practice, it is not surprising that several participants offered helpful perspectives and accounts of how transnational alternative policy groups have actualized this mode of cognitive praxis. Let me review a few of them.

Although initially comprised of academics committed to progressive social change, from the start, the Third World Forum has rejected the goal of being 'a think tank of theoreticians'. It purposefully created the internal conditions for a theory/practice dialectic by encouraging the cohabitation, in local chapters of leading activists and left intellectuals. This has opened the possibility of generating analyses that synthesize knowledge from activist struggles with theoretical formulations and that point toward feasible political strategies. As Samir Amin explained, it is this dynamic that energizes the continuing series of regional convenings of the TWF.

Yoke Ling Chee, Director of the Third World Network, offered an excellent example from her recent experience in mobilizing knowledge around agro-ecology in Indonesia, which combines the integrating theory and practice with extensive dialogical engagement across constituencies:

We are constantly – when we have workshops, and most workshops are now organized by NGOs – trying to bring the different constituencies together. ... for example a few weeks ago we organized and co-organized with the Indonesian peasants – Small Farmers Alliance of Indonesia. We have one staff member based in Jakarta; she is an advisor through her national work. She is an advisor to the Alliance of Small Farmers. So we put together a joint training

---

<sup>70</sup> Thesis 3 states, 'The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.' Available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/original.htm>, accessed 22 August 2013.

<sup>71</sup> The quote is Thesis 8, available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/original.htm>, accessed 22 August 2013.

program for farmers, especially from Indonesia but we thought that since we're bringing two or three excellent resource people, we will bring some people from other parts of Southeast Asia as well. And we had a five or six day thing. Amazing. So our staff went; it was hands-on and so we worked. The workshop was about agro-ecology, so many of them are already practicing it, but then you have a couple of scientists who have been working with farmers in Central America especially, and they have been working around the issues of principles of agro-ecology. So it's actually – what I was saying – marrying the knowledge systems and experience together. So we all learned from each other. It was a very exciting program.

At DAWN, activist-scholars have always worked within a political-strategic, interlinkage approach to advocacy and analysis. As Gita Sen told me,

we have from the beginning, adopted an approach that really integrates the two [theory and practice] from the beginning. Not that we are producing analysis and then try to get it to the activists after that. We are activists ourselves, but whenever we plan to work on something, we always start by bringing people together and saying alright, what are the issues here and how should we think about that and so on. So it's always a process like that. ... So we take that and break those silos right from the beginning, and we've always done that. Even the first book was done like that, by bringing people together, by interaction with lots and lots of groups and people and ideas flowing back and forth. Ultimately ... [some] among us will then pull it together.... That for us is of course very satisfying. But also, we can be pretty certain that it's well-grounded in reality. We don't feel that we produce something, and then say, oh, now let's figure out what the activists think about it. It's theirs from the beginning, and ... for me that's the most interesting; why I have stuck with DAWN for such a long time. The amount of learning that happens through that is huge. The possibility of really being grounded and really feeling that what one is analyzing or reflecting on is solidly based in people's lives. And there's a huge amount of learning of things that one really doesn't know and one learns only in that way. So I think that for us is the core in terms of how we really work.

At TNI, Hilary Wainwright offered a similar reflection, emphasizing how a strong, ongoing communicative bond between activists and researchers ensures that the usefulness of alternative knowledge is 'inbuilt'.

For me, the alternative knowledge is coming from the activists partly. So the process of production and the processes of dissemination are difficult to distinguish, really. I suppose I wouldn't even be engaged in it if it wasn't useful already. The stuff on participatory democracy – that was being produced in practice and we were helping to spread it in a way the production of knowledge would often be linked to checking back on its usefulness. When I'm drafting things, I always try and check it back with the people that I'm working with, so I know in the process whether it's going to be useful. In a way, it's not like we've got a product – how do we make it useful? It's like what product is going to be useful? How do we develop it in a way which makes its usefulness inbuilt?

Hilary's colleague, Jun Borrás, emphasized that TNI constantly strives to fuse two kinds of radicalism – those of radical academics and grassroots movements – 'to create additional knowledge' of value to both:

TNI is a firm believer that there is a plurality of knowledge being produced. Grassroots movements are producing distinct knowledge that is useful for them and their purposes. Academics – engaged academics – are producing knowledge in distinct ways, but autonomously from grassroots movements. So the point is that radical forces, whether you are in the grassroots social movements sphere or in academia, produce knowledge in distinct ways

for their distinct purposes. Both are very important sets of knowledge. Again, the tradition of TNI is basically ‘how do we bring together – what you need is actually a real force combining these two extremes of radical forces. How do we bring it together?’ That’s where we come into this scholar-activist/activist-scholar fusion. There we help a lot in trying to maintain the autonomic spaces of grassroots social movements to produce their own knowledge, and radical academics to produce their own knowledge – autonomous spaces. Then we try creating circles in which we interact to create additional knowledge that will even be more mutually reinforcing for each other’s work. So it’s more like that. It’s not a one way thing that academics produce knowledge and it should be used by grassroots, etc. We also don’t romanticize that the only way to generating knowledge is grassroots social movements and that academics should just learn from them. So it’s more of an interactive, nuanced politics.

At RosaLux’s Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation, the theory/practice dialectic also places considerable emphasis on grounding analysis in practice. Jorg Schultz described one of the ‘main starting points’ as

the ‘participatory approach’. Again, we do not come anywhere to teach anybody. We do not know the answers, but sometimes we do not even know the questions. So our main concern, our main interest is to get involved with local organizations, with local people. In many cases, we work through them. What we want to do is to identify those which are close to us, whom we can exchange with – who have the intellectual and influential capacities to – I don’t like the words ‘change agents’, but who can bring about change in their country, and we try to support them in disseminating their message, their ideas. That’s what we do. Of course, then we also discuss our ideas with them. Neither theirs nor ours are better, but we could still discuss about ways into socialism, for example. To improve the situation in a country; that’s what we do a lot.

Karin Gabbert corroborated this account and noted a challenge in bringing theory into practice:

I think in our international work, we work the other way around. We take the knowledge from the practice. Actually what our partners and we miss a little is trying to make theoretical knowledge – to bring it back to the activists on the political level, to really make it fruitful. So more that way around.

This reflection points to the ongoing challenge of translating theoretical ideas into effective practice, something Karin’s colleague Katharina Puehl, who had joined the Institute for Critical Social Analysis from a previous academic position not long before I interviewed her, described as her current challenge. ‘How can I now transfer/translate what we do in more academic contexts to everyday life questions?’ Katharina sees herself as ‘still in the state of learning how to translate’; and told me that the process is, again, dialogical:

we produce expertise in different ways and [with] different publics – expert publics, social movement publics, but also in the everyday what we do and have to do, is people come to us ... [and] want to know about certain topics – capitalism, gender, whatever. I just had a discussion with such a group of women, around 50, coming from south of Germany and I was kind of excited to see that they are really already critical. They really want to have things changed. You wouldn’t expect them – they don’t come from a social movement, but they are a critical mass of counterpublic, and people who really are engaged in questions of transformation and the needs of transformation. So we have really to deal with very different people....



As a final reflection from RosaLux on integrating theory and practice, it is well to recall that its Institute was established explicitly *not* as an academic entity; that it understands itself as ‘scientifically oriented’ and ‘theoretically based’, yet practically engaged. As Deputy Director Mario Candeias explained,

all the work we do is connected to the real political actors. We are part of it, ... as individuals we are part of the unions, the movements, the Party. So everything we do has to really orient on the real, existing actors. That’s the starting point from the real problems, the real interest, the real practices and then to develop on that with them, together. And that’s also the thing that you want – not to sit around the table. This is also a problem – and I don’t want to dismiss it: with the theory thing comes a good idea, and then go back to the movement, No we don’t do that. We want those people who do that, of course – good academic theorists like, Bob Jessop is a fellow of ours here, ... but it’s not the way we work.

Jai Sen of CACIM, a group that describes itself as ‘an initiative towards cultivating and nurturing a culture of critical reflexivity and action in individual and public work,’<sup>72</sup> offered a similar insight:

alternative knowledges need to encapsulate this picturization of the global.... So how do you build theory out of local experience? How do you build – are there theories which can exist and inform work for people in struggle at more recognizable horizons? How does the task carry that forward to building more universal theory? Then the problem comes of the universalization of theory and the attempt to create universal categories which cover such plural realities. How do you develop language which is sufficiently elastic and open – that is capable of reflecting? So far, I don’t think there’s been – I think we have a long way to go.

### *Creating spaces for reflection and invention*

These ruminations bring us to a sixth mode of cognitive praxis, linked internally to others, and particularly to what has just been discussed. To produce knowledge that actually poses alternatives, in theory and practice, it is necessary to produce *spaces* where new ideas can breathe and begin to live. Creation of critical spaces, whether physical or virtual, is integral to vivifying the theory/practice dialectic. Such spaces, as they enable self-development and reflection, are crucial not only for activist-researchers producing alt knowledge in TAPGs and other contexts, but for empowering subalterns, and thus for building grassroots capacity. Although this mode overlaps with the convenings I discussed earlier under the rubric of ‘building solidarities through dialogical KPM’, its thrust is more prefigurative. Spaces for reflection and invention are a step removed from the cut-and-thrust of forming strategy groups and launching campaigns. Their value lies in ‘taking the lid off the box’ (to borrow a metaphor invoked by Social Watch’s Marcelo Jelen) – the box that *contains* us, and that makes the present seem so fixed and obdurate.

Among the groups participating in this project, CACIM’s cognitive praxis is most directly centred on this mode. Its website advances, as a primary focus, ‘the exploration of open space as a political-cultural concept, and the exploration of cyberspace as open space.’ Of course, the World Social Forum has provided a transnational context for CACIM’s work, and indeed, much of the group’s intellectual output consists of books, (co)edited by CACIM’s Jai Sen, that analyze and reflect on the WSF.<sup>73</sup> CACIM has struggled not

---

<sup>72</sup> See [www.CACIM.net](http://www.CACIM.net), accessed 22 August 2013.

<sup>73</sup> See <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications>, accessed 22 August 2013.

only to reflect on current practice but to invent new ways of doing things. As Jai told me, CACIM's goal is 'building a culture of critical reflection and action – or critical reflection, thought and action.' Such prefiguration – creating the new out of what exists now – requires opening spaces rather than running in the well-worn tracks of past practice. In Jai's estimation, CACIM's special contribution has been 'trying to reach the critical within situations of creating spaces – interactive spaces within, to help people achieve a higher power, rather than simply go through the roads of where do people stay, where do they eat. Trying to produce or create spaces where theory can be produced – from action.' Jai Sen offered the following account of how CACIM, through its many gatherings, has tried to open such spaces for critical reflection:

We've tried to invite people coming from different persuasions, different positionalities and locations to share space and to try and work together to produce knowledge – or 'knowledges' in the sense that to refresh their own, as well as to produce common knowledge. ... The second [aspect] is, I think, strongly participatory and experiential. We have attempted to – there are always substantial encounters, never like agenda-based cranking of thinking out some thoughts. There have been three day, five day encounters where we go through – and it's living together very much which is a part of that process and also in a few cases, not in all, we manage to include within it practices of coming to encounter each other as individuals in terms of our dreams, in terms of our meta-existence, including bringing in shamans who could help us through this process. This has been, I think, one – not that we make a big thing about this – but an extremely important part of work we do, and I think for many of the people who participate it's been a turning point in their knowledge trajectory.... I suppose a third is that we've also tried to make it, as far as possible, 'hands off'. Every one of us is a free agent. We're free to critique each other. We're free. In other words, there isn't a 'whole'. We don't belong to CACIM. If anything, it belongs to you. You do with it what you want, as much as you want, as little as you want. I don't think it's therefore made it into a robust institution that has this presence.... It's a network of resonance and affinity and as a result [has] brought a different level of respect and affection and affect which I think institutionalization doesn't, to my limited knowledge and experience of such places.

Other TAPGs also try to open spaces for critical reflection and personal/political growth. On the day I interviewed Clarissa Militante, Focus Philippines was hosting a 'deepening workshop' that would bring Focus staff into dialogue with close activist partners in campaigns on mining:

we call it a deepening workshop because the members only will attend, because people want to know what are the needs around mining, and when you say 'women against mining' what do we mean? Why are women against mining? So those things – you really get to enrich the visions, not only among ourselves.

DAWN's training institutes are more institutionalized than CACIM's wide-open spaces of encounter, but they serve a crucial function in nurturing the next generation of Southern feminists, using radical pedagogical methodologies that open doors to critical reflection and invention.

Among the alt knowledge practices I have already reviewed, CRID's methodology of creating 'platforms' resonates with CACIM's noninstitutional approach. Platforms are open spaces; they determine their own agendas, and there is plenty of breathing room for critical reflection. At the same time, as we have seen, platforms can be launching pads for campaigns: they connect their participants' collective analyses to actual political initiatives. They amplify alternative knowledge across many allied communities, and put it into practice. Another critical space which has been a significant source of new thinking is the annual fellows meetings at TNI, a permanent part of the Institute which initially was its centre of gravity and still serves an

important function. Pietje Vervest explained that as the fellowship comes together from the corners of the world,

we choose a topic of which we think this is a hot issue at the moment and then we look at it from all the different perspectives – regional perspectives. You know, most of us work very closely with social movements, so we know what those movements are struggling with. To give you an example, a few of our fellows have been developing the concept of land sovereignty lately, because they felt in working with farmers and peasants movements – other social movements in the rural areas, that land reform was not sufficient any more to fight against land-grabbing. So in that encounter with those movements, they felt that there was a need for a new framework. They started to work on the land sovereignty framework, and they are now testing it with the movements. Is this a helpful concept or not? So they are sharpening it, and they will also sharpen it by engaging on the issue with critical people in academe. So to have the academic support for working on new concepts with social movements – this is one example. I think we also like to challenge movements to invent themselves again, or to look at new frameworks and not get stuck in old frameworks like land reform, which maybe it is a key issue in Latin America but it is not anymore for the Asian farmers. This is one example.

‘Land sovereignty’ combines La Via’s visionary/strategic concept of ‘food sovereignty’ with the critique of ‘land-grabbing’ that has become common currency on the global left. It was presented to one of the key meetings of La Via Campesina, who indicated an interest in working with it. La Via’s June 2013 conference, marking its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, was held under the theme ‘for land and people’s sovereignty, in solidarity and struggle.’ It adopted a new action plan which, according to Nury Martinez is not just about food sovereignty, ‘but about the sovereignty of peoples.’<sup>74</sup>

At RosaLux’s Institute for Critical Social Analysis, the most theoretical of the participating groups in this project, there is an appreciation of the need for spaces of self-reflection, not only among intellectuals but indeed throughout society. Lutz Brangsch opined,

I think that the biggest problem is that the people don’t know what they know. That means that, from my point of view, the most important is to create spaces where they can reflect what they know – what they can do, what are the bases they can use to act. So the things we do here, even as an institution which is orientated on scientific knowledge, we must every time take into account this process of self-reflection and we must formulate the results of our work in a way that is accessible for people who are in such situations that they are confronted with problems that they are searching for solutions and that they can use the results of our work, and then to prove these results – look how it is in accordance to the reality or not – and to produce in this way a new form of knowledge we then have to understand and to concentrate

---

<sup>74</sup> TNI’s key document is *A Land Sovereignty Alternative: Toward a People’s Counter-Enclosure*, by Jennifer Franco and Jun Borrás (30 September 2012, available at <http://www.tni.org/briefing/land-sovereignty-alternative?context=69566>, accessed 22 August 2013). On La Via’s conference see ‘La Vía Campesina Internacional’s new action plan reclaims food sovereignty and agro-ecological production’ (19 August 2013, available at <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/food-sovereignty-and-trade-mainmenu-38/1475-la-via-campesina-internacional-s-new-action-plan-reclaims-food-sovereignty-and-agro-ecological-production>, accessed 22 August 2013).

scientifically, theoretically. That, I think, is the way we have to go when we want to make our knowledge – the scientific, the theoretical knowledge – fruitful for society.

Clearly creation of critical spaces is integral to vivifying the theory/practice dialectic, as Lutz points out. As an indispensable aspect of that, creating spaces for self-development and reflection is equally crucial in empowering subalterns. Not surprisingly, PRIA's participatory-action initiatives in women's empowerment rely exactly on the creation of such spaces, to open possibilities for women and other subordinated people in Indian society. Nandita Bhatt explained to me the importance of creating an 'enabling environment' for women to reflect, communicate, and begin to thrive collectively. As part of a PAR project in rural India,

when we did daily routine analysis with the women, we realized they just have two hours – three hours tops that is their time in the whole day. So that is that time when they can choose to be with you and learn something new – choose to be with the network, do something different – or watch television. Whatever, it's their time. After that or before that, it's not their time at all. So we try to capitalize on that; that's how we began. We just used that little window.

[BC: How do you actually use that window to begin to develop the enabling environment?]

It's just – for women sometimes; it's just being with other women. Not being judged. Not being labeled as a sister and a wife and not feeling responsible – women are burdened with responsibilities, so just being yourself, learning something different, talking about something different. Bring them together to watch a movie, discuss the movie – that's different for them. So we also have these village information centres – resource centres. We have built these little resource centres where we open it twice a week and where women can come and they have a lot of reading material. We have a facilitator who comes and talks to them about different issues, but we have also seen that it is a safe space for women. They just want to get away and be by themselves in a safe space. So they just come and sit. So we tell our facilitators 'let them be; don't ask them questions; don't load them with information. Just let them be comfortable in the space.' So that is some of things we do – some enabling environment, so creating that and getting the understanding of that – it's what we try to do.

### *Systematizing and disseminating alternative knowledge*

This mode of cognitive praxis connects most directly with the first moment of the theory/practice dialectic, discussed earlier. To systematize alt knowledge is to make it robust, rich in comparative nuance, applicable across contexts, and thus useful in practice. As knowledge producers and mobilizers, transnational alternative policy groups all engage in such practices, and they disseminate the results of knowledge systematization to various publics and constituencies. In view of the ever-increasing importance of alternative and social media in knowledge mobilization, I will devote part of the chapter following this one to an overview of the outreach practices through which project participants work with alt media, and function as sites of alt media. Here, I restrict the presentation to a few observations on knowledge systemization and dissemination as a mode of cognitive praxis.

A classic venue for knowledge systematization is the book. Book-length treatments can provide in-depth analysis, and can systematize an alternative, exploring in detail how, for instance, local water can be delivered in ways that do not hand over power and resources to capital, but rather, create participatory-democratic alternatives. *Reclaiming Public Water*, published by TNI in 2005 as a key work in its ongoing Water Justice project, and subsequently translated into 13 languages, is a splendid example. The book,

available for free online, became an important cognitive resource in local campaigns around the world.<sup>75</sup> As project coordinator Satoko Kishimoto recounted,

we have criteria for what kind of practice we are looking for, such as participatory management, or democracy and democratic control and sustainable water management. That is the criteria we have set. Then we started to search for such kind of work on the ground. Then successfully we managed to compile twenty-two cases all over the world, particularly in Latin America and Asia. ... So that book became kind of the milestone of how we can keep searching for practices; and also the book became a space to learn from each other. At that time, I was not truly aware of what kind of methodology we are taking, but that process had become the process of networking and that process had become that kind of creation of space to learn. So then later on we called it 'collective learning'. Then the TNI – this product, in a way, facilitates the space, and the space can be online space but also face-to-face space such as meetings and conferences. But anyhow, we started with this way of learning the different experiences of people for them to connect the dots. Authors – contributors – became the initial founders of the network. Afterwards, we are calling this network 'Reclaiming Public Water Network'. So that's the people who, after publishing the book, we had a first meeting with all contributors to get together. So then we decided to make it as a network – decided to try to expand – keep searching for more people with us, under the name of 'Reclaiming Public Water'. So that's how we started the network process – it's still going on, by having the different methods of collective learning.

We can see in Satoko's account how knowledge systematization in this case involved a sequence of several modes of cognitive praxis: some initial theoretical work (identifying criteria) that informed extensive research in the world of practice, leading to a participatory process of 'collective learning' that produced not only the book but also a solidaristic network of transnational grassroots activism.<sup>76</sup>

There have been many TAPG-produced books that, broadly speaking, follow this sequence. DAWN's *Development, Crises and Alternatives Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives* (Sen and Grown 1987) is a classic in a series that includes *About Women's Powers and Wisdom* (2000) and *Latin America, a Pending Debate: Contributions in Economics and Politics from a Gender Perspective* (2007).<sup>77</sup> The series of edited books on the WSF process, published by CACIM and featuring reflective analyses by leading activist-intellectuals worldwide, are required reading for anyone interested in one of the most important contemporary initiatives on the global left. Transnational alternative policy groups like RosaLux, Focus, TWN, PRIA and TNI have not only produced many books and other major syntheses; they maintain very information-rich websites (to be discussed in the chapter that follows) on which alternative knowledge is continually being both synthesized and disseminated.

---

<sup>75</sup> The book can be found at <http://www.tni.org/tnibook/reclaiming-public-water-book>, accessed 23 August 2013.

<sup>76</sup> The Reclaiming Public Water Network, of which TNI is a founding member, 'is an open space to connect people from around the world dedicated to effective, democratic and equitable water solutions, including community activists, NGO campaigners, academic researchers, trade unionists and water utility managers.' See <http://www.waterjustice.org/?mi=3>, accessed 23 August 2013.

<sup>77</sup> Many DAWN books are available *gratis* at <http://www.dawnnet.org/resources-books.php>, accessed 23 August 2013.

Earlier, I explained CRID's innovative use of platforms as autonomous sites where jointly authored position papers take shape dialogically. On the many platforms it coordinates, CRID attempts to systematize knowledge by facilitating what Nathalie Pere-Marzano calls a 'transversal capitalization' in which lessons learned in practice are integrated into a framework for moving forward. After its 2012 Summer University 2012, CRID engaged in such a process, at a day-long workshop that CRID executive committee members facilitated. As Jacqueline Hocquet told me,

We also asked people to collect all the interesting information. We call this capitalization. They did very interesting work too, so our work as the [CRID] executive committee is to collect that to make sure that we use this information – that's it's not lost; and we want to collect and use this information to plan the next few years.

The CRID report on the transversal capitalization is an in-depth, theoretically sophisticated analysis. One of the interesting graphical aids to conceptualization, a 'Conceptual map of proposals, change levers and actors,' is reproduced below, as Figure 2.<sup>78</sup>

Such reflective knowledge systematization can be of great value to activists and practitioners. At PRIA, which has used the terminology 'knowledge systematization' for some time, a key constituency is practitioners of participatory action research and related approaches to knowledge democratization. For instance, PRIA has served as a 'knowledge broker' among practitioners across Asia. For a decade, its Learning Initiative on Citizen Participation and Local Governance has developed 'a global network of practitioners from civil society organizations, research institutions and governments created to stimulate and support civil society organizations and networks' promoting participatory democracy at the local level. The program works 'to systematize, analyze, debate and diffuse the knowledge arising from field-based innovations and expressions of democracy in local governance.'<sup>79</sup> As PRIA Director Kaustuv Bandyopadhyay explained,

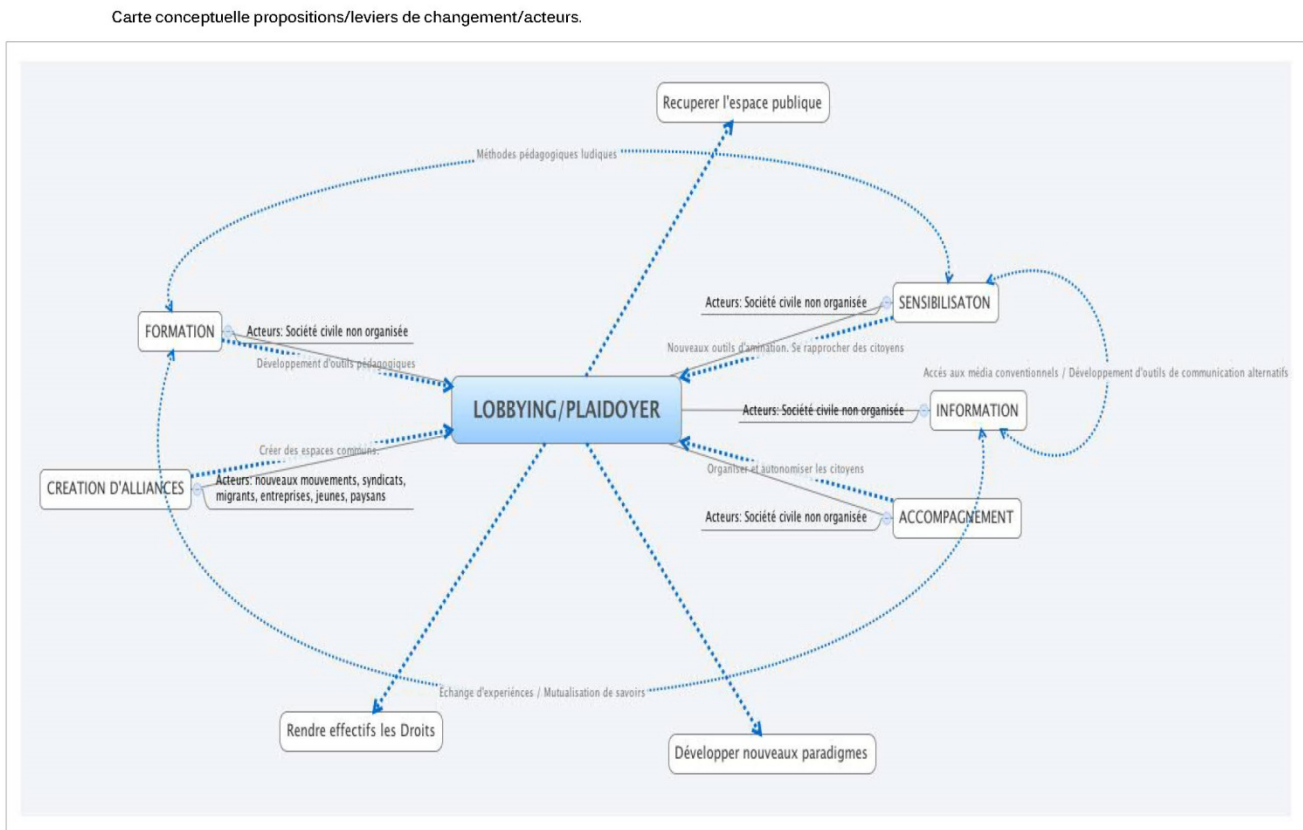
we tried to first of all catalyze a network of practitioners, both from civil society organizations, academia, media and government around issues of democratic governance and civil society and citizen participation. So wherever there is knowledge available – practical knowledge available on these issues, we tried to harvest them. Our role was a kind of knowledge broker, in a sense harvesting good knowledge and then disseminating it to the practitioners, because many times it is not possible for a grassroots practitioner based in a district or sub-district or sub-national level – they may not have access to those knowledges. But using our existing network of practitioners, but also sort of expanding that network ... we had a combination of face-to-face coming together of practitioners through organizing conferences, seminars and things but also using the information technology. So if you look at some of our publications, they are in a way comparative analysis, comparative knowledge -- synthesized and then submitted to the practitioners.

---

<sup>78</sup> The report is titled *Analyse transversale du processus de Systématisation de l'Université d'été de la Solidarité Internationale 2012*. The graphic is from page 31.

<sup>79</sup> Quotes from <http://www.pria.org/about-pria/our-divisions/pgp/pgp-projects/2464>, accessed 23 August 2013.

Figure 2. Conceptual map from CRID transversal capitalization, 2012



A related PRIA initiative has been the creation of Practice in Participation (PIP), a knowledge portal that enables transnational ‘communities of practice’ around themes such as Communication and Social Change, Local Self-Governance and Community-Based Research.<sup>80</sup> PIP ‘aims at global south-to-south collaboration for preserving, maintaining and collaborating on issues and practices of social justice. It is *an invited space for practitioners to share their local knowledge and learn from others’ practical experiences, and participate in generation, production and dissemination of knowledge based on experiences from the field.*<sup>81</sup> The PIP portal combines several modes of cognitive praxis. An open space in which its members can critically reflect, it helps deepen transnational solidarities while giving voice to marginalized practitioners, building capacity for advocacy and contributing to knowledge systemization:

the mandate for this portal was primarily that we wanted to have a portal where Southern voices, on their practices in participation, interface with the Global North – because our concern was that mainly what happens [is that] Southern voices [come] from smaller civil

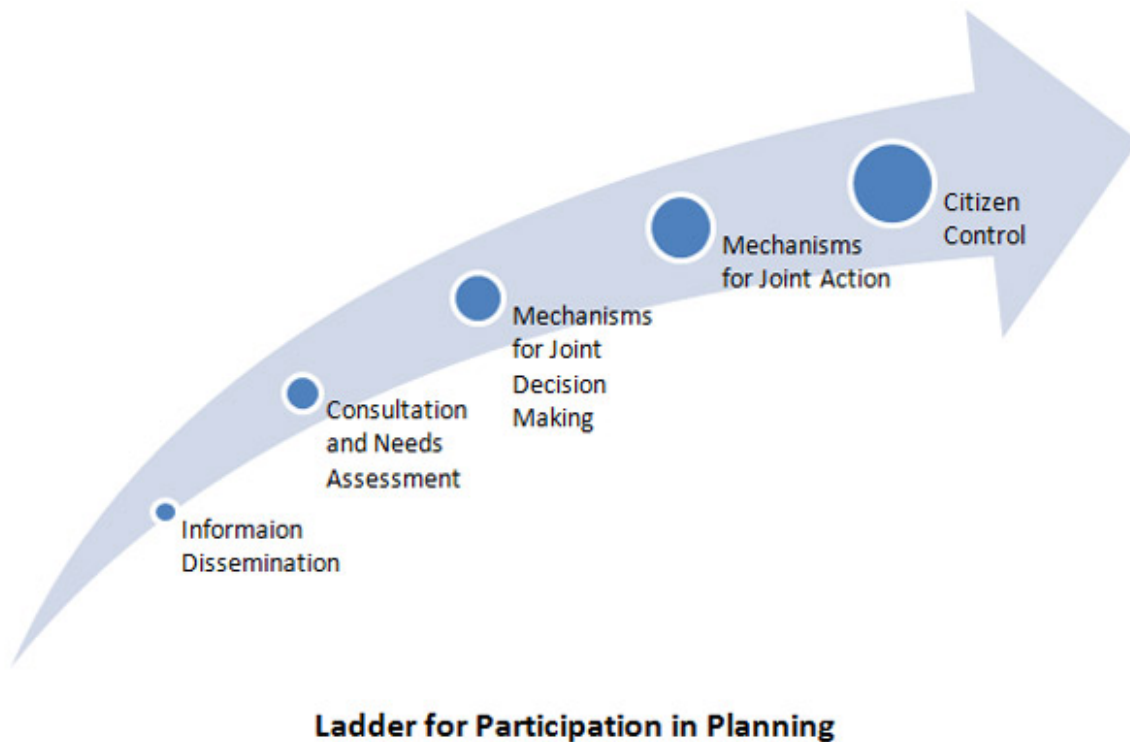
<sup>80</sup> See <http://www.practiceinparticipation.org/index.php/groups>, accessed 23 August 2013.

<sup>81</sup> See <http://www.practiceinparticipation.org/index.php/pages/about-us>, accessed 27 August 2013.

society organizations, who normally would be practicing but not normally writing in mainstream publications or journals or online. So our concern was that we wanted to facilitate primarily a platform where some of these voices, which are normally unheard, and which maybe get restricted only to a micro location – how to get that through an idea platform (Namrata Jaitli).

An example of knowledge systematization and dissemination through PIP is the analysis on the portal’s Planning and Budgeting page of a ‘ladder for participation in planning’ – a ‘bottom-up’ approach that ‘creates avenues for participation of citizen groups’ in planning and promotes a shift in power towards ‘under-represented groups like women, youth, backward castes and tribal or indigenous population’ (see Figure 3).<sup>82</sup> Graphical visualizations such as this one, in tandem with concise explications, can be effective tools in translating alternative knowledge into practice.

Figure 3. A graphic from PRIA’s Practice in Participation portal



Knowledge systematization is important not only for practitioners, activists and counterpublics, but for other audiences and publics. Thus, at ITeM/Social Watch, although a great deal of effort goes into systematizing the knowledge that comprises the Social Watch annual report, the group has, as part of its strategy of holding states to account, developed two global indexes of social justice: the Gender Equity Index (GEI) and the Basic Capability Index, which it releases annually, with the objective of getting play in the media mainstream. In 2012, the GEI received extensive coverage worldwide and was even published in Arabic, as

<sup>82</sup> Quotation and graphic can be found at <http://www.practiceinparticipation.org/index.php/pages/planning-and-budgeting>, accessed 23 August 2013. The ladder is based on Arnstein’s (1969) earlier visualization.



Ana Zeballos told me. Its ‘tape measure’ format provides a highly illuminating infographic that compares national and regional levels of gender inequity and explains the concept of equity.<sup>83</sup> Each Social Watch country report also contains a visual representation of the GEI, decomposed into its three empirical components – education, economic participation and political empowerment. Accessible visualizations like the GEI graphics systematize knowledge by creating popular-education resources. The same can be said for the infographics that TNI has come to feature on its website. Its strategy is to pair a working paper on policy with an infographic that conveys the main message of the paper. For instance, in March 2013, TNI published an important briefing paper, ‘Privatising Europe: Using the Crisis to Entrench Neoliberalism’ by Joseph Zacune. The infographic, which ‘advertised’ a great ‘fire sale’ of public services and national assets that are being sold to transnational corporations, created a figural complement to the textual discourse of the paper (see Figure 4).<sup>84</sup>

The IFG’s current program on Plutonomy gives us one last example of how transnational alternative policy groups use a combination of graphical and textual forms in systematizing knowledge to render it both accessible and psychologically powerful. Its December 2011 ‘Outing the Oligarchy’ report, authored by a number of IFG activist-scholars, ‘call[ed] public attention to the ultra-rich individuals who benefit most from—and are most responsible for—the deepening climate crisis that is destabilizing global ecosystems and devastating the lives of the planet’s most vulnerable peoples’ (Menotti 2011: 1). The report contained an interesting visual ‘Kochtopus’ on p. 58, mapping the influence network of the billionaire Koch brothers (ardent supporters of the Keystone Pipeline), which has been further developed and is featured, using the interactive software Prezi, on the IFG website (see Figure 5).<sup>85</sup> Again, the information-rich combination of strong image and detailed textual analysis yields an effective, accessible summarization and systemization of alt knowledge, in this case about elite relations that underwrite capitalist political and cultural influence.

These are of course only a few examples of the many ways in which transnational alternative policy groups systematize alt knowledge and mobilize it among movements and publics. In doing so, they often use alternative and social media; indeed, they function as sites of such media. In view of the importance of alt and social media in the work of transnational alternative policy groups, I will devote part of Chapter 5 to this issue.

---

<sup>83</sup> See <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/14365>, accessed 23 August 2013.

<sup>84</sup> See <http://www.tni.org/briefing/privatising-europe>, accessed 23 August 2013. Another instance of this textual/figural pairing is the May 2013 TNI paper/infographic on military spending and the EU crisis, available at <http://www.tni.org/article/military-spending-and-eu-crisis-infographic-0>, accessed 23 August 2013.

<sup>85</sup> The *Outing the Oligarchy* report is available at [http://www.ifg.org/pdf/IFG\\_OTO\\_report.pdf](http://www.ifg.org/pdf/IFG_OTO_report.pdf). To view the Kochtopus in Prezi, go to [http://prezi.com/0\\_wyaom0http/ifgs-kochtopus-mapping-the-influence-of-koch-cash/](http://prezi.com/0_wyaom0http/ifgs-kochtopus-mapping-the-influence-of-koch-cash/), accessed 23 August 2013.

Figure 4. TNI's 'The Great European Fire Sale' Infographic, March 2013

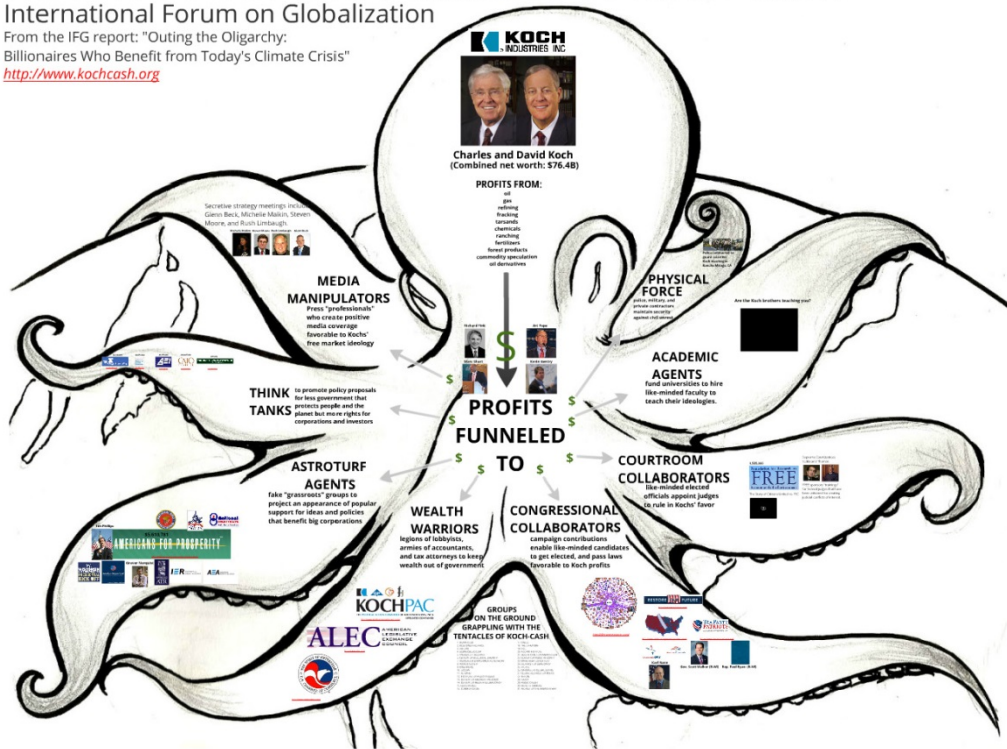


Figure 5. IFG's 'Kochtopus', May 2013

# KOCHTOPUS: The Influence of Koch-Cash

International Forum on Globalization

From the IFG report: "Outing the Oligarchy:  
Billionaires Who Benefit from Today's Climate Crisis"  
<http://www.kochcash.org>



## Prefiguring alternative futures from present practices

I have taken the liberty at several junctures to link this chapter's analysis of modes of cognitive praxis back to one of the seminal modern texts on praxis – the Theses on Feuerbach. In the second Thesis, Marx wrote,

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question.<sup>86</sup>

This last mode of cognitive praxis centres upon the alternative knowledge that prefigures a transformed future by attending to its potentialities *as evident in current practices*. That practice itself is the source of knowledge is a basic insight we already encountered in discussing the theory/practice dialectic. Here, the knowledge in question is not simply 'what exists', but *what might be feasibly brought into existence* through interventions in the here-and-now. I want to highlight the role transnational alternative policy groups have played and can play in creating what I have elsewhere called 'the new' out of extant actualities.

<sup>86</sup> Again I quote from the 'original' [translated] version of this text, at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/original.htm>, accessed 23 August 2013.

...it is from existing practices and relations that the new is fabricated, which is to say that the future is already contained as potential within the present. 'Fermenting in the process of the real itself' is what Ernst Bloch called 'the concrete forward dream: anticipating elements are a component of reality itself' (1986:197). Counter-hegemony, as distinct from defensive forms of subaltern resistance, strives to shape those 'anticipating elements', so that they may become lasting features of social life (Carroll 2010a: 169).

As Mario Candeias (2013) has recently written, the challenge in this instance is one of 'creating a situation that does not yet exist.' To produce alternative knowledge, it is not enough to critique existing policies and practices – as important as such work is. We need to identify, within existing realities, the real potentialities for living otherwise, to comprehend how such potentialities can be strengthened, and to mobilize knowledge of these openings within counterpublics and general publics. This mode of cognitive praxis is the most prefigurative of the eight aspects highlighted in this chapter. It points directly, if ever so tentatively, to a transformed future.

Focus is a group that has been quite active on this front. As Clarissa Militante, Director of Focus Philippines told me, Focus protagonists are continually learning from alternative practices that are already in play, 'harnessing' that knowledge and disseminating it to promote replication and amplification:

But in terms of having wide coverage for these alternatives to take root, I think that's where the challenge is right now. ... it's what we started in our discussion in January: what do we mean when we say 'concrete alternatives'? ... is the task now to just really go down and harness all these alternative practices and make them known – disseminate them so that they will be replicated? Which ones should be replicated? I think that's where we are at now....

Clarissa points us, once again, to the need for a theory/practice dialectic in sorting out possible routes to a better future. Good judgments about which alternative practices should be promoted require a paradigm shift, taking us outside the reified frameworks that shore up the existing order. In this sense, transnational alternative policy groups, along with other alter-globalization forces, become what Jerry Mander called 'paradigm warriors'.

Focus leaders have promoted two visionary alternative paradigms that aid in making these judgments. Walden Bello (2003), founder and Executive Director until his election to the Philippines House of Representatives in 2007, presented a 'deglobalization' paradigm over a decade ago, which he summarized in eleven practical principles in 2009. Deglobalization is a project to re-embed economy in society. It holds that 'shared principles of alternative economics do exist, and they have already substantially emerged in the struggle against and critical reflection over the failure of centralized socialism and capitalism.'<sup>87</sup> Among the principles Bello outlined in 2009 is that of 'subsidiarity' – bringing decision-making, where feasible, to the level of communities rather than centralizing power in distant extra-local sites such as TNCs and IFIs. In economic life, subsidiarity encourages 'production of goods at the level of the community and at the national level if this can be done at reasonable cost in order to preserve community' (Bello 2009). Principles of this sort can be helpful guides in appraising the prefigurative potential of alternative practices.

More recently, Focus's Pablo Solon, Executive Director since 2012, has brought the *buen vivir* paradigm from his native Bolivia, where it lives in the practices of Indigenous communities and functions as a keystone of Andean socialism. By virtue of its transnational reach in the Global South, Focus has been

---

<sup>87</sup> Walden Bello, 2009, 'The virtues of deglobalization.' Available at <http://focusweb.org/node/1523>, accessed 24 August 2013.

testing the relevance of *buen vivir* in Philippines communities through dialogical engagement, to see whether a paradigm based in the grassroots practices of one place resonates elsewhere.<sup>88</sup> Mary Ann Manahan explained that

the whole idea of *buen vivir* originally comes from Latin America but interestingly, we conducted a roundtable discussion with Indigenous peoples in various sectors in the Philippines. It's interesting that there are a lot of similarities in the whole concept of *buen vivir* from Latin America with the sectors here in the Philippines, and that has a lot of resonance.

Pablo Solon agreed that *buen vivir*'s rootedness in Indigenous experiences helps it to resonate at the grassroots as a counter-hegemonic project, particularly in comparison with statist policies that transform from above. He suggested that the paradigm is rich in possibilities and challenges for the global left:

If we're going to build a new society, alternative to the capitalist system, it can't be a society only of humans. It has to be a society of humans *and* nature. It has to be a bio-society. And I think that, for example, almost everywhere there is this common understanding that we are discussing about bio-society, and not only a human society. That is a step forward. Now, of course, that is not enough. What is the role of the individual? What is the role of the community? That's another level of discussion. How do you deal with issues of growth and so on? What is the perspective of that kind of society? And then the more concrete things: what do you do with the financial system in a new society? What's going to be the role of money? How are you going to solve the issue of money? And there are some issues, [for which] there is not yet a clear response. I think we are all thinking – like the issue of capital – how do you really overcome capital?

The vision of living well, not having more, is grounded in existing, local practice, yet it opens onto future possibilities of global scope, for which alternative policy groups can be self-critical protagonists and conveners.

Other examples of alternative knowledge that prefigures a transformed future abound in the work of groups such as PRIA, TNI and IFG. Although PRIA's critical-liberal worldview does not overtly stray from a paradigm of state, capital and civil society, its many projects and methodologies for empowerment, participation and building capacity at the grassroots and among subalterns put into play practices that prefigure a democratic way of life that is not easily reconciled with neoliberal globalization, but fits within and enriches the deglobalization paradigm. TNI's programs and projects in remunicipalization, public services and democracy, and alternative regionalisms offer parallel cognitive resources for transformative practice, grounded in well-established approaches.<sup>89</sup> Not long after the first World Social Forum, *Alternatives to Economic Globalization* (Cavanagh and Mander 2002), drafted by the Alternatives Task Force of the IFG, laid out both a critical analysis of capitalist globalization and a 10-point vision that was meant to inspire activists to recognize the real possibilities for building a better world. That was followed up

---

<sup>88</sup> See the Focus video on this, at <http://focusweb.org/content/video-latin-america-asia-learning-our-roots-conversation-vivir-bien>, accessed 27 August 2013.

<sup>89</sup> For the three TNI initiatives see <http://www.tni.org/briefing/remunicipalisation?context=599>, <http://www.tni.org/work-area/public-services-democracy> and <http://www.tni.org/work-area/alternative-regionalisms>, accessed 25 August 2013.

in 2007 with the *Manifesto on Economic Transitions: Powering-Down for the Future*. Edited by Jerry Mander, the *Manifesto* (the result of a joint initiative between IFG, the Institute for Policy Studies and the Global Project on Economic Transitions) contains an analysis of the ‘triple crisis’ facing humanity, a vision of a future transformed and a focused presentation of strategies for realizing the vision.<sup>90</sup>

In Berlin, the Institute for Critical Social Analysis has devoted considerable attention to what I am calling prefigurative cognitive praxis, through its research on transformation/transformational research:

what we try to find out, is: are there people or are there concepts or are there ideas or initiatives from below, but also from the ‘top’ when you have in mind intellectuals and concepts. Can we find initiatives from ‘below’ – trade unions, cooperatives? What we now have is an ‘energy village’.... ‘Energy village’ just means reorganizing the whole production of energy on a local and regional level. There are a lot of initiatives now going on. So always looking for new ways where some elements of a transformative process are going on (Lutz Brangsch).

Steffen Kuehn, at the Academy of Political Education explained that the approach to prefigurative cognitive praxis there is not to ‘produce’ it but to ‘collect’ it.

We would try to see what is already out there, and what are the small fragments that could be put together. This is maybe new creation of work that we try to do – put small things together into a bigger thing, and organize frameworks for discussions that may create new stuff. So I think part of our self-description and self-understanding is being a think tank, but in terms of alternatives, we rather try to get stuff together that is already happening and get it promoted, get it in touch with other alternatives. That’s more or less the approach. By all those processes, trying to maybe get a new idea of what is possible and get these ideas spread to as many people as possible, so they can decide whether they would like to join or stay aside and stay boring [laughter]. ...So like this, recreate a community in the villages, get some new space for political participation, for example, because now the village itself has some income and they can discuss whether to put it in the kindergarten, whether to put it in new streets, and they are not fully dependent on the next political level. Stuff like this. So how does it work to get all the normal people of such an area involved into a participatory project, and how to promote this so you don’t have only small spots somewhere, but get this like a mass movement or something. Is this possible or not? Discussions like that.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> The *Manifesto* is available at <http://www.global-vision.org/papers/IFG-manifesto.pdf>, accessed 28 August 2013.

<sup>91</sup> Steffen also noted the constraints RosaLux faces in its prefigurative work. As a political-educational foundation, it can hold discussions but cannot finance actual projects in the world.

‘I think very often to get things in practice you need practical examples that themselves cannot be realized by us. ... things have to grow from the grassroots, and we can try to facilitate this, but we we’re not the actor who makes it happen itself. ...as we are not really a part of the social movements of grassroots campaigns, we are not the ones who get alternatives to life. On the other hand, many of our alternatives are strongly utopian, so of course, I can discuss a society where growth is overcome. But this is not something that I can put in practice just on a small scale. I can discuss small initiatives with people, how to overcome certain ideas of convention, but at the same time I couldn’t finance, as the Foundation, projects that are not really political education. It’s more that I could pay for the discussion that people have on it, or I could promote books that they write on it, but I couldn’t get the thing itself financed.’

Back at the Institute for Critical Social Analysis, Rainer Rilling articulated a particularly promising idea in prefigurative cognitive praxis, that of the ‘entry project’. The concept of entry project has been developed collaboratively in the past decade by Dieter Klein, Michael Brie, Lutz Brangsch, Mario Candeias, Rainer Rilling and others at the Institute. As Michael Brie states in a 2010 paper, ‘Entry projects are socio-cultural learning processes of the transformation of relations and the self-transformation of the actors.’<sup>92</sup> Following from Dieter Kline’s work, an entry project is seen as realistic – implementable in the foreseeable future – and as leading to improvements in the lives of subalterns, particularly the socially disadvantaged. Such projects can mobilize grassroots actors for social change by counteracting the TINA syndrome that destroys collective agency. In Dieter Klein’s analysis,

in accordance with the idea of future-oriented change as a transformational project, entry projects for solutions to immediate problems should show the way to an opening for further-reaching developments, and contribute to a roll-back of the dominance of capital, to a democratization of societal decision-making processes, and to the civilization of conflicts by means of the weakening of repressive elements (Brie 2010:3).

Rainer Rilling gave me the concrete example of an entry project for free public transport.

We tried to find fields for entry projects – for example, people should not pay for the public transit here in the town. We pay for this in other way; it costs nothing for them. It’s an illusion, but it’s a politically powerful illusion and it has a lot to do with social policy. It has a lot to do with basic needs. It has to do with big questions. It’s just a small suggestion. You don’t have to buy something when you want to travel here in the town. You just get it.<sup>93</sup> It’s kind of an ‘entry project’, and [when] the ruling class says ‘no’ [we see] that this is an entry project, because in the background there are these big questions, and that’s the reason why they don’t allow it. It has nothing to do with financial problems. It’s purely an ideological thing. And when you talk about the whole field of commons, it has to do with entry projects: the real access questions which are the beginning of self-empowerment.

Projects such as these, which have both social-justice and ecological value, can accumulate as elements of change which, over time, make what seem now to be impossible transformations possible.

Entry projects resemble the ‘non-reformist’ reforms that André Gorz (1967) discussed in *Strategy for Labour*, a key text of the 1960s. Unlike reformist reforms (which are always geared toward the preservation of the system) non-reformist reforms prioritize social needs, making ‘a positive difference in people’s lives’

---

<sup>92</sup> Michael Brie, 2010, ‘Entry Projects to a Politics of Solidarity’, p. 1. Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Brussels Policy Paper, available at [http://rosalux-europa.info/publications/newsletter\\_en/mbrie\\_entry\\_projects/](http://rosalux-europa.info/publications/newsletter_en/mbrie_entry_projects/), accessed 25 August 2013.

<sup>93</sup> In January 2013, Tallinn became the first capital city in the EU to provide free public transport to its citizens. See the RosaLux- sponsored site, Who Owns the World?, <http://www.who-owns-the-world.org/en/2013/08/26/tallinn-free-public-transport/> -- itself a good example of online alt knowledge mobilization. Accessed 11 September 2013. As reported in Huffington Post, the initiative not only decommodifies an important service (reducing economic inequity) while encouraging less automobility; it is expected to boost city tax revenue, as the registration requirement wins the city more taxable residents, who can contribute to the vitality of the urban core. See Tanner (2013) at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/04/estonias-capital-introduces-free-public-transportation\\_n\\_3014589.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=world](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/04/estonias-capital-introduces-free-public-transportation_n_3014589.html?utm_hp_ref=world), accessed 11 September 2013.

(McEwen 1999: 16), while challenging power structures in a way that moves society toward greater democracy. As McEwen (1999: 18) notes, both method and substance are important:

Regardless of the content of reforms, if the method of reform does not challenge the alienation of most people from control over their economic lives, its positive, democratic implications will be limited. Democratic initiatives, non-reformist reforms, cannot simply be for the people; they need to be of the people and by the people as well.

As alt knowledge ‘in practice’, entry projects need to develop and find traction within inclusive, dialogical processes – which brings us again to the overlaps and intersections among the modes of cognitive praxis I have discussed.

### *Conclusions*

In this chapter I have characterized the repertoire of alt knowledge production and mobilization in terms of eight interrelated modes of cognitive praxis. If the value of a conceptual dissection lies in increased clarity about the parts and the whole, the danger lies in reification of the categories. Clearly, these modes of praxis implicate each other as internally related facets of a whole. Indeed, if we reflect on how each of the 16 transnational alt policy groups engages in multiple modes of cognitive praxis, we get a complicated picture along the lines of Figure 6.<sup>94</sup>

Two modes – challenging hegemony and building solidarities dialogically – are basic items in the toolkit. Empowering the grassroots, engaging (whether as outsiders or insiders) with state bodies, systematizing and disseminating alt knowledge, and integrating theory and practice are more selectively invoked. Creating spaces for reflection and invention and prefiguring alternative futures from present practices appear less commonly as modes of cognitive praxis. Nearly all TAPGs challenge hegemony, but only four of them engage extensively in prefigurative praxis. The mapping shows a great deal of diversity in how transnational alternative policy groups go about producing and mobilizing knowledge for social change.

For practitioners of alt KPM, this review may have value as a form of knowledge systematization (one of our eight modes), supporting reflexive efforts to improve practice. Any intervention in producing and mobilizing alternative knowledge can be fruitfully interrogated as to whether and how it instantiates each of the modes of cognitive praxis. Also, I hope that practitioners can learn from each other by thinking about the various instances discussed in this chapter as well as the following one.

This chapter has presented an analysis of the modes of cognitive praxis on which transnational alternative policy groups draw in fashioning their interventions in alt knowledge. I have emphasized eight interlinked modes, as facets of a repertoire of alt KPM that offers many combinations of strategies and practices to alternative policy groups. In closing off this discussion, let me point out the indebtedness of this approach to a *dialectical* view of knowledge and transformation. There are two particularly important senses of dialectic in the typology: most evidently, the dialectic of theory and practice, which links quite directly to creation of critical spaces where this can thrive and to the re/trans/formation of practice. It is this instance of the

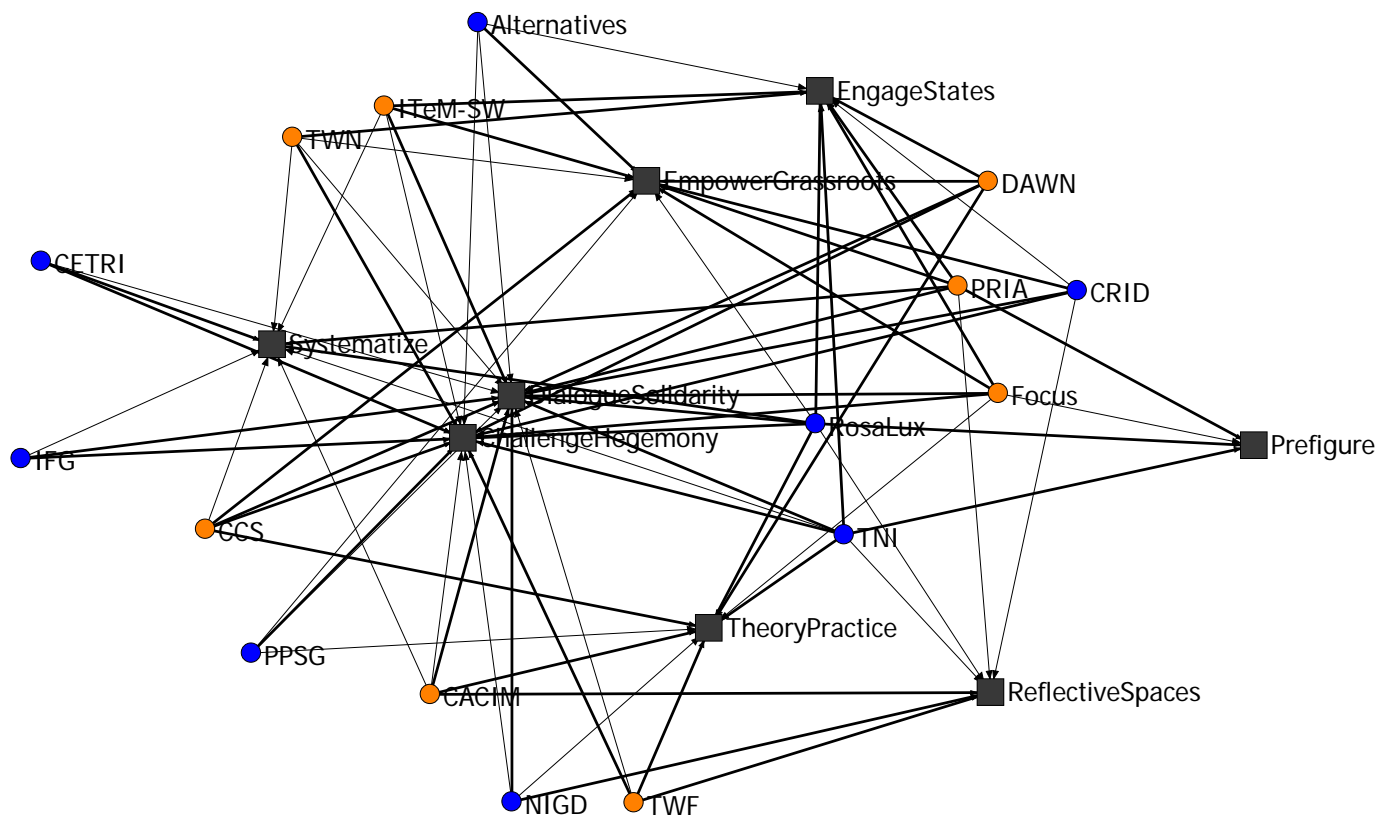
---

<sup>94</sup> In this diagram, I show what I judge to be the main modes of cognitive praxis each TAPG uses with dark lines, and secondary modes with light lines. The 16 TAPGs and eight modes are placed in a joint, two-dimensional space, according to the affinities TAPGs have for specific modes of cognitive praxis, using a spring-embedded algorithm. The configuration represents my own judgments, based on interviews and relevant documents.



dialectic that carries forward the foundational analysis of Marx in his 11 Theses of 1845. But equally important is a second, ancient sense of dialectic, most evident in the building of solidarities through dialogue, which is closely imbricated, as we have seen, in other modes of cognitive praxis such as grassroots empowerment and challenging hegemonic knowledge. This second instance is the classic, Socratic dialectic, taken up by Plato and epitomized in the notion that ‘truth resides in the dialogue.’ In this rendition, dialectic is seen ‘as the art of engaging in dialogue, and this union of dialectic and dialogue, in turn, as knowledge’ (Notomi 2004, paragraph 22).<sup>95</sup> Sound knowledge arises out of dialogue, but so do the solidarities that enable democratic movements to move effectively together. In helping to build such solidarities, in facilitating grassroots mobilization, in challenging hegemonic ideologies, in engaging with the state and other dominant institutions, transnational alternative policy groups play an important role in fostering what Jürgen Habermas has called *communicative democracy* – a situation in which all parties participate on a level playing field in the decisions that shape their lives.<sup>96</sup>

Figure 6. Predominant modes of cognitive praxis used by 16 TAPGs



<sup>95</sup> Notomi, Noburu, "Socratic Dialogue and Platonic Dialectic. How the soul knows in the Republic", *Plato 4* (2004), <http://gramata.univ-paris1.fr/Plato/article48.html>, accessed 17 August 2013.

<sup>96</sup> See Habermas's (1984, 1987) *magnum opus*, *The Theory of Communicative Action*. For an application to issues of global justice see Nancy Fraser's (2005) helpful essay.

In the basic conceptual framework I have developed here, alt KPM operates within a double dialectic. To put the matter in the most general of ways, it is in a forward movement, combining *dialogue* among well-informed publics with the iterative *integration of theory and practice*, that alternative knowledge can not only thrive, but have a transformative impact.

## Chapter 5: The repertoire of alternative knowledge production and mobilization: a compendium of practices

Formulating alternative knowledge from emancipatory practice, and helping to give it life within such practice, involves many concrete activities. Based on interviews with 91 participants in 16 transnational alternative policy groups, this chapter offers a compendium of the actual practices that may be said to comprise a repertoire of alt knowledge production and mobilization. Compared to Chapter 4’s analysis of modes of cognitive praxis, the presentation here is more fine-grained and concrete. To produce it, JP Sapinski and I analyzed hundreds of statements from interviews detailing how alt knowledge is formulated and mobilized. We grouped the statements into six broad categories, shown in Table 5. The right-hand column of the table indicates what percentage of participants explicitly gave examples that fall under each category. Interestingly, the most widely cited type of practice is *networking*, although roughly half of participants cited *research and analysis*, *training and learning* and *outreach*. These four are very much at the centre of the work that transnational alternative policy groups undertake. In a sense, they distinguish TAPGs as a type of organization within the global left, with a characteristic repertoire of practice. We can see in this nucleus both knowledge production and knowledge mobilization: research and analysis are important of course, but TAPGs devote a great deal of attention to spreading alternative knowledge through outreach, training/learning and networking, and in emphasizing all three forms of knowledge mobilization they help to build stronger solidaristic relations within and among movement communities. The project on which I am reporting focuses on alternative policy groups, not movement organizations, so it is also not surprising that *action*, in the sense of directly political activity, was cited by a relatively small number of participants, along with internal organizational and governance practices relevant to alt KPM.

Table 5. Types of alt knowledge practices cited by participants

Name	Description	% <sup>a</sup>
Research and analysis	The work of gathering information and producing analyses.	44
Training and learning	Provide opportunities for activists and other constituencies to learn, develop skills, etc.	47
Outreach	Practices that reach out to publics and counterpublics.	59
Networking	Connecting people and/or groups together.	64
Action	Actions undertaken by the group to mobilize, protest, lobby, etc.	16
Internal	Internal organizational and governance practices	9

<sup>a</sup> Percentage all interviews (n=91).

Below, I unpack each of these categories and offer a few instructive examples which I hope will be of value in fleshing out this practical aspect of alt KPM. I begin with the family of practices that are integral to alternative policy groups as producers of knowledge, namely, research and analysis.

### *Research and analysis*

This category refers to both the conduct of original research – gathering and analyzing data of various kinds – and the production of critical analysis often from existing research sources. The latter, a cost-effective way of engaging with substantive issues without deploying the considerable resources that original research often

requires, is the most popular research/analysis practice among participants (see Table 6). Half of all participants who specifically mentioned research and analysis described the production of critical analysis as a KPM practice.

*Table 6. Relative incidence of research and analysis practices*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>%<sup>a</sup></b>
Information collection	Collect relevant information, through research, contacts with people or organizations, etc.	35
Producing critical analysis	Critically analyze events, situations, etc.	50
Participatory research	Research that involves the community at all levels, as a dialogue between researchers and community.	13
Accessible analysis and concepts	Work to make accessible to everyone complex analyses of issues, make sure that concepts are developed in a way that they are usable by activists and groups.	10
Critical analysis tools and concepts	Construct concepts, comparative indices, etc. that can be used to critique analyses from hegemonic institutions.	13

<sup>a</sup> Based on all interviews that mentioned research and analysis practices (n=40).

Good examples of research and analysis are the critical papers (and sometimes book-length works) on neoliberal trade and investment regimes, and on ‘false solutions’ to climate change, which are produced at Focus, TNI, CCS, IFG, TWN and DAWN. At TNI and CRID the production process is often highly collaborative, as in TNI Fellows meetings and CRID’s facilitation of transversal analysis within the platforms it helps sustain. More than a quarter of participants who told me about specific research/analysis practices did make reference to some form of original research. TWN uses Freedom of Information legislation to research corporate patent claims, for instance. TNI’s critical analysis of drugs policy is based in extensive original research:

There are very few who are actually reading the thick reports, but you need them to be able to draw on and to show that you are not just thinking out loud – that you are actually grounded in your own original research and moving close to the ground and actors – the direct sources of information. And I do think that is a sort of added value that especially a lot of the policy makers see in us (Martin Jelsma).

Participatory research, combining knowledge production with social empowerment, was cited as an important approach to the conduct of original research, particularly though not exclusively at PRIA. In TAPGs, research and analysis can also entail the production of tools and concepts for critical analysis, with an emphasis upon making concepts and analyses accessible to broad publics. ITEM/Social Watch’s Gender Equity and Basic Capability indexes are exemplary, as are the Citizens Report Cards and Gender Audit tools PRIA has developed. As I noted earlier, critical concepts developed by TAPGs, such as land sovereignty, can become helpful ways for counterpublics and general publics to frame issues, if they are expressed and explained in accessible language. Patrick Bond offered a number of good examples of accessible, critical frames, based in the tactic of ‘finding the meme’:<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> An important innovator in this approach is the San Francisco-based Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly Smartmeme). See <http://www.storybasedstrategy.org/>, accessed 7 September 2013.

It's finding the meme. So it's finding the ways that a story emerges from deeper analysis. ... So the 'meme-ing' that I've worked on a little bit here, like Conference of Polluters – COP 17; BRICs from Below; and maybe even 'sub-imperialism: no thanks' – we've had a few in WSSD where the 'S's turn into dollars –the World Summit on Sustainable Development when it was hijacked. ... So I think if we take our big areas of work, like global political economy and if we talk about 'banksters'; we talk about global political ecology and climate change. We have all kinds of little metaphors for that and ways to tackle the major polluters in the country – many of them right here in South Durban – local struggles. ... We struggled around 'carbon trading?'; that's so weird. What do you mean 'carbon trading'? What am I supposed to do? How does it work? And we end up with, 'it's privatization of the air.' Everything is being sold, so the air itself is being carved up, so parts of it can be polluted, and if you don't pollute it, you get money for that. It's privatized air. They privatize the air; they privatize the water – so we need to stop that, because only the rich will be able to buy the air eventually, which is our way of saying, 'this is the commodification of everything now, isn't it?' So this would be an attempt to say a simple meme for a complex problem that doesn't distort it and simplify it beyond its reality.

### *Training and learning*

As we have seen, a great deal of alternative knowledge gets produced and especially mobilized within various sorts of training and learning, often within a radical-pedagogical framework. Most participants who described these kinds of practices gave a rich assortment of examples from workshops, seminars, courses and teach-ins that their groups have organized (see Table 7).

*Table 7. Relative incidence of training and learning practices*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>%<sup>a</sup></b>
Workshops, seminars, courses, teach-ins	Offer training/learning opportunities (in traditional format).	60
On-line or distance training, courses, etc.	The group offers distance training (on-line or otherwise).	9
Mutual learning and participatory learning	Training activities organized on an egalitarian basis, as opposed to 'top-down' teaching/training. Emphasis is on sharing expertise and knowledge.	12
Internal debates	Hold internal debates about current issues, etc. as a way to build positions and arguments.	16

<sup>a</sup> Based on all interviews that mentioned training and learning training practices (n=43).

As we have seen, fostering democratic leadership capabilities within such contexts (in pragmatic recognition of the paradoxical fact that the transition from life based in hierarchy cannot occur without leadership)<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup> As Gramsci (1971:144) recognized, the need for leadership cannot be wished away in an anarchistic conceit. There is instead a fundamental political question at stake. 'In the formation of leaders, one premiss is fundamental : is it the intention that there should always be rulers and ruled, or is the objective to create the conditions in which this

figures significantly in the cognitive praxis of DAWN and PRIA. Marina Durano described some of the process in DAWN Training Institutes:

The young women get to understand where we are all coming from. So there are sessions that are more formal about courses. There are sessions that are about skills: speaking – give a three minute speech. You are in the UN right now and this is the theme of the conference. What is a DAWN speech? Everybody has to go through that, so it's skills and it's analysis at the same time. You're given a chapter from a World Bank World Development Report – let's look at this as a group. What's our critique? Those kinds of activities are part of the usual lecture about the main issues on this and that. Then there is a layer which is the informal, outside the day course, that is about building trust among the participants and also the interaction among them, so they can get to know each other so that they don't quarrel with each other, because they will quarrel with each other. There will be misunderstandings. So how can you be more tolerant of each other, if you like, or more accepting -- understanding that we're diverse and how to come together in that diversity and also be political about it so that we learn from each other. So there are portions that are built around that, so that the girls can get to know each other and also with the rest of the DAWN team who come in and out, because nobody can stay for two weeks – it's difficult. Journals are used, which are there – that's personal for them, but they are encouraged to write every morning to reflect upon what was learned yesterday. They are also asked to organize a session or two about themselves, and they share whatever they want to share about themselves.

Other groups such as TNI, RosaLux, CRID, CCS, PRIA and Focus are heavily engaged in helping to build skills and critical capacities among activists. CCS has offered videography training for activists, as part of its multimedia KPM strategy. Seminars and teach-ins are an important way of informing publics and sharpening critical analysis at PPSG, CCS, IFG and other groups. RosaLux offers an enormous range of seminars for students and activists (more than a thousand per year in Germany alone, according to Lutz Brangsch). When I interviewed him, Alex Demirovic told me of a symposium that would occur the next day on the relationship between democracy and capitalism, which about 50 people were expected to attend. RosaLux's Political Academy runs 'Rosa's Salon', where musicians, movement activists and politicians and others with different political perspectives (feminist, queer etc.) present and discuss their work in an exchange that emphasizes both diversity and common ground. CRID's Summer School for International Solidarity, of course, is another excellent example.

For alternative policy groups, learning also takes the form of internal discussion and debate. CETRI's Francois Polet explained that

We have our internal debates and also a certain diversity. There isn't a homogeneity of points of view on all subjects inside the CETRI, but the exchanges that we have between colleagues about the understanding, notably, for the moment, concerning the Arab Spring... these exchanges among ourselves are very important ... in the construction of a certain ideological identity, ... a certain type of approach to the North-South stakes, to alterglobalization, etc. So, there is a reciprocal stimulation among colleagues.

---

division is no longer necessary? In other words, is the initial premiss the perpetual division of the human race, or the belief that this division is only an historical fact, corresponding to certain conditions?.' The latter position commits one to addressing the issue of leadership in a counter-hegemonic voice, as in the thoughtful, empirically-based reflections on collective leadership in Sutherland, Land and Böhm's (2013) recent work.

At RosaLux's Institute for Critical Social Analysis, a conscious effort is underway to develop new forms of collaboration and colloquia where colleagues can collectively come to terms with politically salient concepts, debates, viewpoints and critiques. CRID, itself a network that opens outward, has taken up the big question of what it means to be a collective actor for international solidarity in a world where, amid uneven development and crisis, we now find NGOs based in the South and immiseration in Southern Europe. At Focus, internal discussions and debates are helping to update its critical concept of de-globalization within the context of climate crisis and within a strengthened analysis of gender. At Social Watch, the global network of Watchers is involved in shaping the theme of each annual report, which then provides a focus for collaborative learning across countries, building a transnational culture of solidarity. These instances demonstrate that the production of alternative knowledge requires ongoing discussion, reflection, debate and knowledge synthesis among its practitioners.

Whether internal to the group or 'external', learning at TAPGs is a practice that involves mutuality, as in PRIA's online 'communities of practice', in which practitioners potentially from around the world generate knowledge of an issue through discussion. In India, Focus's Afsar Jafri has organized workshops with farmers groups in which there is a 'two-way traffic of ideas' around issues like climate change:

I know that okay, climate change is impacting agriculture, but unless you go and talk to those farmers, you don't know – they'll tell you this bird used to come in our field in this and this month; now it is not coming. Or in this month, we used to have rains; now the rains are not there. Earlier the rains used to be for thirty days; now it's shaved to fifteen days. So these are the things they will tell you. Or if you go to Kashmir, the farmers will tell you – 'we used to grow apples at this altitude, but now even in January it's not that cold, so we have shifted our orchards to that height.' These things you learn; this is the practical information which is equally important, if you are putting forth a position paper on climate in agriculture and the impact of climate in agriculture.

### *Outreach*

Outreach entails the many practices that mobilize alternative knowledge for publics and counterpublics (see Table 8). In a mass-mediated (and social-mediated) world, outreach is often equated with media work, but important forms of outreach occur as unmediated, face-to-face communication – at TAPG-organized conferences and public debates, or at conferences and social forums, organized by others, at which TAPGs make presentations. Some TAPGs engage in grassroots community outreach. At CCS, Community Scholar Mama Duduzile Khumalo told me she is 'able to get information from here to the communities, or to bring the communities to the university,' in the latter case to attend, often in great numbers, Dennis Brutus Memorial Debates.<sup>99</sup> At these high-profile events, where outreach takes the form of in-reach, eroding the social distance between the university and Black communities, CCS arranges transportation and provides food. Critical analysis presented through lectures then circulates more broadly, as attendees 'go back to the community and discuss it' (Ma Dudu). Since 2003, when it organized the first national convention of folk art in India, PRIA has made use of folk art in its own community campaigns. As Manoj Rai recounted,

---

<sup>99</sup> World-renowned political organizer and one of Africa's most celebrated poets, Dennis Brutus was closely associated with CCS until his death in 2009. See <http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/default.asp?4,79> and <http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/default.asp?11,22>, accessed 18 September 2013.

Last time we undertook educational campaign during a time of local election, so we used this group of snake dancers, and they weaved the story around the parties' agendas, and they did street plays, street dances. We also used puppeteers. We will give them themes to build and they will build a puppet drama around that. We used drama groups to reach to the people....

Table 8. Relative incidence of outreach practices

Name	Description	% <sup>a</sup>
Media production	The group produces media (magazines, books, newsletters, etc.) or makes its content available for other media outlets to distribute.	78
Social media	Use of social media for outreach.	57
Mainstream media coverage	Prepare press releases, work to get coverage of major events/conferences, appearances on mainstream TV or radio, contributing op/eds to newspapers etc.	11
Interventions	Participation by the group or its members in conferences, debates, etc.	7
Organizing conferences and debates	The group organizes conferences and debates to exchange views and challenge hegemonic knowledge.	6
Engaging with counter-hegemonic forums	Present and defend their ideas at counter-hegemonic gatherings such as the WSF and others.	4
Community outreach	Reach out directly into communities to involve people in projects, research, activities of the group.	7

<sup>a</sup> Based on all interviews that mentioned outreach practices (n=54).

Notwithstanding strong examples like these, media in the modern sense – both alternative and mainstream – figure heavily in many instances of outreach (including of course face-to-face press conferences). This reflects the fact that media is ‘a pivotal site for broader political and cultural struggles’ as it inhabits the ‘seam’ between what Habermas (1987) calls system and lifeworld (Hackett and Carroll 2006: 203). In a media-saturated world, both ‘the political and politics’ are ‘articulated through, and dependent on,’ media that both reflect and constitute social practice (Dahlberg and Phelan 2011: 4-5).

TAPGs are themselves producers of alt media in many ways (see Table 9 for an overview). Their products range from the publication of books, reports, and regular or occasional analytical papers through magazines, newspapers, newsletters and bulletins, pamphlets and flyers, to films, radio, and other media. At most TAPGs, many of these products (with the partial exception of books) are available for free on the website or to subscribers (TNI's free e-news goes out to over 10,000 subscribers). Books often take the form of collaborative, edited volumes, as in CACIM's series on the World Social Forum and TNI's book of 22 case studies on alternative water provision, which helped launch the Reclaiming Public Water Network, and CCS's various collections on political contention ranging from local issues in Durban to global scale. In the Global South, where a digital divide continues to limit Internet access for many people, groups like RosaLux (through the Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation) and Focus have used radio to reach communities, while CCS uses the SMS messaging system in view of the fact that its constituency are much more likely to have a mobile phone than to have Internet connectivity.



Table 9. TAPGs and the types of media they produce<sup>a</sup>

TAPG	Reports	Books	Magazines	Newsletter	Video/DVD	Radio/Podcast	Web news	Listserv	Facebook	Twitter	Youtube	SMS	Knowledge Commons	Library
Alter-Inter			X	X			+		X	X				
CACIM		X						X					X	
CCS	X	X			+		+	X	X		X	X		X
CETRI	X		X	X			X							X
CRID			X	X			X							X
DAWN	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X			
Focus	X	X	X	X	+		X		X	+	X	X		
IFG	X	X					X	X	X	X				
ITeM/SW	X			X			+		X	X	X			
NIGD		X								X				
PPSG		X	X	X			X	X		X				
PRIA	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X	+
RosaLux	+	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			+
TNI	X	+		X	X	X	+	X	X	X	X			+
TWF								X						
TWN	X	X	X				X		X	X	X			

<sup>a</sup> An x denotes active production of the media, + denotes an especially high level of activity. All TAPGs maintain websites.

Outreach is often carried out in partnership with other progressive groups, particularly alt media groups and organizations. Issues of the UK based *Red Pepper*, edited by Hilary Wainwright, regularly contain TNI

content. *Pambazuka News* often features analyses by CCS; NIGD and TNI also have good relations with *Pambazuka*. CRID's *Altermondes* magazine has occasionally worked in partnership with the leftist *Liberation*, to bring its analyses to a broader public (augmenting the number of distributed issues from 4,000 to 120,000). Several TAPGs work with Inter Press Service (IPS), which is in spirit alternative yet also linked into the mainstream media circuitry.<sup>100</sup> Third World Network has a relationship of mutual aid with IPS in which each uses the other's material. ITeM/Social Watch DAWN, TNI, CCS, Focus and IFG all use IPS for outreach.

Outreach also gets directed to the mainstream, characteristically through press releases and press conferences but also through short articles and op-ed pieces that appear in local or national newspapers, sometimes as regular columns. The latter engage the general public in an accessible manner that introduces some critical ideas without going beyond the breach of mainstream thought. Focus's Walden Bello has had a regular column in a major newspaper. Patrick Bond, referring to the CCS's Eye on Civil Society column in the Durban *Mercury*, said, 'those little 800-words, if they're done properly to reach the audience where they're at, are a sort of Saul Alinsky, then you feel you've done something: you've got a little pithy kind of column out.'

All TAPGs use Internet-based communication in their outreach, and some have developed elaborate websites (see Table 10) and social media initiatives. Listservs are common; blogging has become more common, along with micro-blogging via Twitter. Focus's Pablo Salon is a frequent Tweeter (and re-Tweeter) to more than 2000 followers; other Focus staff are also quite active on Twitter. Focus also has an extensive collection of short videos on Blip; many of CCS's videos can be downloaded from its website; other TAPGs have their own Youtube channels or use Vimeo as a video platform. Most TAPGs maintain their own social-network media sites, typically through Facebook, though LinkedIn and Disqus.com are also used. Breaking with the hegemony of English, Social Watch's website and Facebook, updated daily, is in English, Spanish and French; TNI's website includes a considerable amount of material in Spanish; many of PRIA's publications are available both in English and Hindi, and their website offers machine-translation in 58 languages.

Social media has been very effective in drawing people to alternative policy groups. Several years ago, PRIA started an e-campaign on sexual harassment, which is still ongoing, to which were added Facebook, Twitter and a website – PRIA CASH.<sup>101</sup> As Nandita Bhatt recounted, 'a lot of people have approached us in our gender work through their connections with us through the Facebook and Twitter.' At PPSG, in the midst of the ongoing Fukushima nuclear disaster (March 2011 ff), a younger generation of activists has been joining in numbers through the website, in stark contrast to the way PPSG formed a decade and a half ago, out of face-to-face networks. Focus's IT expert and librarian, Raffy Simbol (aka Qiqo) has set up automatic links among Facebook, Twitter and the Focus website, which have proven very useful in outreach, communications and low-intensity political mobilization. Dorothy Guerrero (also an active Tweeter) told me that the Focus's social-media presence helps in recruiting support for internet campaigns:

Our IT manager is quite good in connecting the Facebook account and our Twitter account and our website together, so everything that is in the website – it will be in our Facebook in a

---

<sup>100</sup> IPS, a member of the WSF International Council, describes its mission as "giving a voice to the voiceless". See <http://www.ipsnews.net/about-us/>, accessed 12 September 2013.

<sup>101</sup> 'CASH' stands for Campaign Against Sexual Harassment. See the highly informative website at <http://priacash.org/>, accessed 10 September 2013.

matter of seconds, and if any one of us Tweets, it will be in our website and it will be in our Facebook in a matter of seconds. So we have that automatic linking. And we find that useful in many senses, because that's also how we get signatories to some of our campaigns from the not usual suspects that we reach when it comes to certain signature campaigns. If you put that in Facebook, you get a lot of responses and support from groups that never heard of Focus before, or have never attended a Focus event before.

Table 10. Addresses for TAPG websites

TAPG	Website url
Transnational Institute (TNI)	<a href="http://www.tni.org">www.tni.org</a>
Third World Forum (TWF)	<a href="http://www.forumtiersmonde.net">www.forumtiersmonde.net</a>
Tricontinental Centre (CETRI)	<a href="http://www.cetri.be">www.cetri.be</a>
Centre de recherche et d'information pour le developpement (CRID)	<a href="http://www.crid.asso.fr">www.crid.asso.fr</a>
Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)	<a href="http://www.pria.org">www.pria.org</a>
Third World Network (TWN)	<a href="http://www.thirdworldnetwork.net">www.thirdworldnetwork.net</a>
Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)	<a href="http://www.dawn.com">www.dawn.com</a>
Third World Institute/Social Watch (ITeM) / Social Watch	<a href="http://www.item.org.uy">www.item.org.uy</a> , <a href="http://www.socialwatch.org">www.socialwatch.org</a>
Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RosaLux)	<a href="http://www.rosalux.de">www.rosalux.de</a>
International Forum on Globalization (IFG)	<a href="http://www.ifg.org">www.ifg.org</a>
Focus on the Global South (Focus)	<a href="http://www.focusweb.org">www.focusweb.org</a>
Network Institute for Global Democratization (NIGD)	<a href="http://www.nigd.org">www.nigd.org</a>
People's Plan Study Group (PPSG)	<a href="http://www.peoples-plan.org">www.peoples-plan.org</a>
Centre for Civil Society (CCS)	<a href="http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za">ccs.ukzn.ac.za</a>
Alternatives International (Alter-Inter)	<a href="http://www.alterinter.org">www.alterinter.org</a> , <a href="http://www.alternatives.ca">www.alternatives.ca</a>
India Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement (CACIM)	<a href="http://www.cacim.net">www.cacim.net</a> , <a href="http://openspaceforum.net">openspaceforum.net</a>

Clearly, these various communications platforms are now crucial to alt knowledge mobilization, particularly as many of them break decisively from the mass-media, monological form, and allow for dialogue and discussion. A good example of the latter is the WorldSocialForum-Discuss<sup>102</sup> mailing list that is lightly moderated by Jai Sen and CACIM, which includes scores of activist intellectuals from many countries, North and South.

<sup>102</sup> For details go to <http://openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=MailingList:WorldSocialForum-Discuss>, accessed 18 September 2013.

This is not to deny the continuing importance to alt knowledge of monological communication, which of course is the means by which critical analysis is typically conveyed, whether in print or electronically. Here too, new communications technologies open opportunities to innovate. For instance, during my interviews at RosaLux in October 2012, *IfG* Director Michael Brie told me of a collaborative initiative underway to place content, including the ABCs of Alternatives, on (German) Wikipedia, taking advantage of Wikipedia's open-source policy. Michael expressed the desire to see if, using Internet resources, 'other groups and foundations, think tanks, initiatives can better combine their knowledge' – an eventuality toward which this project is also inclined. CACIM's publishing arm, OpenWord, offers an example of innovation in the online delivery of research and analysis. According to its website, OpenWord

aims to practise and promote a culture of open publishing. It critically engages with emerging practices and principles in this area, such as copyleft, open, and non-conventional models of content ownership regimes. OpenWord will constantly attempt to push these boundaries and spell out ever-clearer and more empowering principles in the crucial areas of the authorship, ownership, and dissemination of knowledge.<sup>103</sup>

### *Networking*

By networking, I mean connecting people and/or groups together, particularly in durable social relations of knowledge production and mobilization. Networking strengthens movement communities and counterpublics, and quite often bridges across them or across places. I reviewed many of these practices earlier, under the rubric of building solidarities dialogically. In Table 11 it is evident that the most common networking activities are collaborations between transnational alt policy groups and other organizations – whether in joint activities or joint research. A good example is the Civil Society Reflection Group, which included three participating TAPGs. In June 2012 the Group produced a special issue of *Development Dialogue* entitled 'No Future without Justice', which critically analyzed the global crisis and presented a vision and policy framework based on sustainability, present and future (inter-generational) justice, and inclusive, accountable governance.<sup>104</sup> As Roberto Bissio explained,

the challenge here, was, in a sense, how do we create some thinking that can go beyond the 'business as usual' approach, but at the same time still engage in a dialogue? We tried to be a few steps beyond what the system can accept now, but it's not so unrealistic.

In a similar project, PRIA collaborated in 2011-12 with groups based in South Africa, Tanzania, Uruguay, the Netherlands and the UK in *Civil Society @ Crossroads*, which published 'a global synthesis document' based on 'civil society stories from 16 countries,' with summaries in eight languages.<sup>105</sup> TNI routinely collaborates with other alt knowledge producers – many of its reports are jointly published. CRID's One

---

<sup>103</sup> See <http://openword.in/about>, accessed 10 September 2013.

<sup>104</sup> *Development Dialogue*, no. 59, June 2012. Participating groups included Third World Network, DAWN and Social Watch as well as Global Policy Forum, Terre des Hommes and Frederich Ebert Stiftung. Yoke Ling Chee, Gigi Francisco and Roberto Bissio were among the coauthors.

<sup>105</sup> See <http://www.pria.org/civil-society-at-crossroads->, accessed 10 September 2013.

Planet Only (*Une seule planète*)<sup>106</sup> created a network of European organizations in a project of collaborative KPM that led, among other things, to a special issue of *Altermondes*. Obviously, such practices do promote dialogue, but through that they also point in the direction of a consensus or at least convergence in alternative thinking.

Table 11. Relative incidence of networking practices

Name	Description	% <sup>a</sup>
Collaboration with other organizations	Joint activities, joint research with other organizations/groups.	55
Convening	Bringing together people (intellectuals, activists, etc.), including those who may not otherwise meet, through meetings, seminars, discussions, projects and campaigns.	47
Contacts with governments or IGOs	Establishing and maintaining contacts with governments and IGOs.	24
Contacts with activists or intellectuals	Maintaining contacts and collaborating with activists, intellectuals, authors etc. active on the global scene, who can bridge between North and South, who provide inspiration for the group's ideas, etc.	19
Cross-border contacts and collaboration	Collaboration on common projects with people or organizations located in multiple countries.	19

<sup>a</sup> Based on all interviews that mentioned practices of networking (n=58).

Other kinds of networking fall under the rubrics of convening (see above, pp. 84-7), engaging with state and intergovernmental bodies (sometimes as a bridge between the grassroots and policy-makers; see above, pp. 71-8), connecting with key activists/ intellectuals, and bridging across national borders. Regarding the last two categories, a central aspect of CETRI's project has been to create a North-South dialogue that learns from and cognitively empowers the South. As Francois Polet told us,

a large part of our work is publishing, and we are in contact with critical authors, let's say, from the South, university professors or actors from social and political movements from Africa, Latin America, Asia. And the goal, is to make known their point of view on North-South themes, themes around the development, etc. As a result, our own analyses come out of reading these authors, exchanges with these authors; they also emerge from the contacts that we have with the academic world, at once in the South and in the North.... Of course, ... we also read authors from the North, professors from the North that seem to us particularly good for marrying critical and engaged thinking but [that also show] a certain sociological lucidity in terms of political analysis.

At DAWN, the cumulative product of several decades of transnational feminist cognitive praxis is a broad network of 'DAWN associates', which is not a formal category but a transnational community of activist-scholars who often participate in meetings convened by DAWN.

---

<sup>106</sup> See <http://www.uneseuleplanete.org/spip.php?rubrique4&lang=en> and <http://www.uneseuleplanete.org/spip.php?article117&lang=en>, accessed 10 September 2013.

RosaLux is especially active in building transnational networks. Its North-Atlantic Left Dialogue is an attempt to develop a continuous working relationship between left and socialist intellectuals and academics in Europe and North America (USA/Canada) for the purpose of discussing the distinctive challenges to the political, social and cultural left working and struggling in the highly developed northern capitalist countries.<sup>107</sup>

Through its Center for International Dialogue and Cooperation, RosaLux also networks extensively across borders. Katharina Puehl described efforts in the past year to strengthen transnational feminist knowledge-producing networks:

we developed a thematic or conceptual line called *Gender and Migration* and there was a workshop held in Viet Nam by the colleague who is running the Hanoi office – Nadja Charaby – on that very topic. We met with our people from the Asian region, so we are now about to develop a plan over two or three years to have workshops here [Germany] and India, China and Viet Nam to work on that line, and that always means to bring in partner organizations which come from unions, social movements, NGO's, academia, politicians – it depends. But that's always the attempt: to network across different audiences and experts on that topic.

Both TNI and IFG, as we have seen, have transnational activist-scholar networks inscribed in their organizational DNA, and on this point Walden Bello's contribution as a left organic intellectual *extraordinaire* must be acknowledged. Founding Executive Director of Focus on the Global South, Walden has also been a long-serving board member of the International Forum on Globalization and Fellow of the Transnational Institute, thus linking TAPGs across three continents.

Networks are often contrasted with hierarchical-bureaucratic organization, and in interviews, the importance of building North-South networks on the basis of equal partnership was emphasized repeatedly, at PRIA Global Partnerships, at RosaLux's Centre and at other groups. An excerpt from my interview at TNI with Pien Metaal of the Drugs and Democracy program will make the point clear:

what we've been doing in the past two to three years is setting up a Latin American research team. It's been one of my main tasks for the past year – the first thing, of course, is that by creating a regional group of people, the structure itself already gives it an interesting advantage because you can compare the results from different countries in the same region. ... I think another important fact is that we come up with the idea, but we want them to become 'owners' of their own group. I don't know what a good word for it is in English, but we want to initiate things and then be able to 'lose' it and get rid of it and have it be part of a dynamic that has a proper force; it doesn't need us any more as a group of people from outside that 'know better'.

### *Action*

Just 15 participants made explicit reference to political action in describing the repertoire of knowledge production and mobilization. In Table 12 we can see that such action predominantly involves organizing and mobilizing for action – as in some of the platforms that CRID hosts (including the Week of International

---

<sup>107</sup> See <http://left-dialogue.blog.rosalux.de/>, accessed 10 September 2013.

Solidarity), or the counter-events that PPSG organized in opposition to the G-8 summit in Hokkaido (2008), and that CCS co-organized to coincide, respectively, with the FIFA World Cup's coming to South Africa in 2010, COP 17 in Durban (2011) and the BRICS summit in 2013.<sup>108</sup>

Table 12. Relative incidence of action practices

Name	Description	% <sup>a</sup>
Organize campaigns	Organize campaigns of action that involve many actors and groups.	33%
Mobilize organizational actors	Mobilization of organizations that can act on an issue, whether NGOs, governmental, etc.	33%
Advocacy and lobbying	Advocacy and lobbying with governments, UN, IGOs, etc.	33%

<sup>a</sup> Percentage of all interviews mentioning political action as a practice (n=15).

At Focus, Clarissa Militante reflected on the links between organizing and participating in campaigns, networking and knowledge production. She captured quite clearly the tension between being both an activist within a dynamic campaign and a researcher wanting to produce and disseminate reliable knowledge:

A big part of our work, especially the work that is done by the program officers, is really being involved in campaigns, network building – that's the strength of our programs and it's not very easy to do that network building, so I see the hard work that's involved in it. That's also where we start the knowledge production – information gathering – by starting partnerships with different organizations. The whole network building thing where you first talk with them, initiate discussions with them on issues where we can have a common perspective and then you have several meetings – eventually some loose coalitions are formed. Some are really more formal ones. We get to participate in these coalitions and have a lead role, in fact, and that is where the knowledge is – much of the information that eventually becomes knowledge because of these various inputs from other groups – ideas of other organizations. Even on just a very specific issue, for instance, like climate change, climate justice. But the other hard task is really putting together all this information and producing knowledge, like informal research after the network building, the campaigns – the launch of the campaigns – a big part of it also is research. Because at certain points in time of the campaign, we would feel that we would strengthen the campaign by producing states of play or situation or contextual analyses which we cannot do without the research. And our program officers are very good in research – well trained. Yes, as I told you, they have backgrounds in

<sup>108</sup> At the time of writing, the most recent of these counter-events, which go back at least to late-1990s protests at the World Economic Forum (prefiguring the WSF), has been held in St. Petersburg, simultaneously with the G-20 Summit. The Counter-Summit for G-20 was organized by the newly-formed Post-Globalization Initiative, 'a coalition of movements, non-governmental organizations, labour unions and individuals which are brought together not only by the common need to criticize the "Washington consensus" and current global economic order but also by the common will to design new policies and alternative strategies to overcome the current crisis.' The Counter-Summit was co-sponsored by TNI and Focus, among other groups, and featured TWF's Samir Amin as a plenary speaker. See <http://pglobal.org/about/>, accessed 11 September 2013.

sociology, so they really do research although it's really difficult combining the two most of the time to produce that published report and to do the campaigning.

Marie Bodeux gave a succinct summary of the close relations between political action and research in a recent French initiative to construct an alliance of science and society, in which her group, *Les petits débrouillards* (a member of CRID), participates. The goal

is precisely to create a hybrid alliance that attaches to research institutions popular education movements, international solidarity movements, social and solidarity economy enterprises, digital technologies, a wide variety of actors, but with specific objectives.

As we have seen in previous chapters, TAPGs engage in political action and processes of a more institutionalized sort, deploying 'insider strategies' within UN bodies, for instance. This is another element in the repertoire of alternative knowledge production and mobilization, and for some groups an important way of putting knowledge to work strategically. As DAWN coordinator Gigi Francisco explained,

we are actually quite good in looking at alternative compromise texts that don't in reality compromise much. In other words, we know what the UN thinks and how the UN thinks, what it thinks at the moment, etc. Who are the factions...so we are able to advise governments as well as UN agencies what to secure and what could be a compromise language in order to make sure that we secure women's rights and [rights concerning] sexual orientation and gender identity.

PRIA has put considerable effort into 'influencing government policy vis-à-vis devolution of powers and functions to local self-governance institutions,' as Namrata Jaitli told me, again, combining alternative knowledge with strategic political action. Some TAPG protagonists deliver briefs and speeches in parliaments. The day before I interviewed him in December 2012, NIGD's Teivo Teivainen had given an invited address to the Parliament of Finland on post-millennium development goals and Finland's role in international negotiations. Teivo presented a strong critique of the hypocrisy of 'global partnerships' subtended by the World Bank and IMF, and urged Finland's politicians to 'take their ridiculous references to democratic global partnership away if they are not going to make those demands concrete when talking about institutions like the IMF and the World Bank.'

### *Internal practices*

All the groups participating in this project share a commitment to the democratization of knowledge, which implies that the practices, within TAPGs, by virtue of which knowledge is produced, are themselves democratic. In Chapter 3, the discussion of specific alt knowledge projects intimated that transnational alternative policy groups are organized in distinctive ways, to accomplish objectives which are variegated rather than uniform. This implies differing organizational and governance practices, which enable distinct approaches to producing and mobilizing knowledge.

CACIM, for instance, has resisted all forms of institutionalization, opening up space for radical individuality yet also posing possible issues of continuity, which in the literature are sometimes placed under the rubric of the 'founder's syndrome' (Brown 2008). If on the one hand the avoidance of institutionalization has contributed to an enhanced level of respect, affection and affect, it has also tended to keep CACIM's founder at the centre of the affinity network – so much so that, as Jai Sen told me, 'there's some people who feel, and at one level understandably, that CACIM is me.'



At the other end of the continuum, RosaLux is a fairly large, transnational organization, responsible to the German state. In fulfilling its bargain with the state, RosaLux must account for all funds dispensed, and this implies a formal organization with clear lines of authority and accountability. Within these organizational constraints, the actual KPM practices at the Institute for Critical Social Analysis are collegial, cooperative and effective in producing alternative knowledge, particularly in comparison to the practices within neoliberalized German universities. As Rainer Rilling explained,

We are a very transparent institution. We are a quite democratic institution. We decide together what we want to do. We have, in the institution, hierarchical structure and sometimes it's a very powerful directorate we have. But we have a trade union group – all these things you should have when you have an organization like this – and, for example, we have this Institute and we discuss every question [as to] what we should do in the scientific field, which persons we should cooperate with and so on. We do all this together. So I think that's quite a good type of alternative knowledge. It's really different. If you look today at university, it's terrible – especially in Germany.

The *IfG* functions on the basis of a high degree of self-organization which extends to self-time management and 'almost 100% participatory budgeting', according to Institute Director Michael Brie.

All of the colleagues here at the Institute have their own field of work, a special field of work and so there is no chance to direct them in a very detailed way – no chance at all. This is clear, so the problem is more to bring together to create a common space of thinking, of common methods of working and so on. ... just on Monday we had a one day meeting concerning political problems concerning our work – and this is all exclusively done on the basis of consensus. I can't imagine any other way to do it. We have a drop box where the agenda of the meetings is openly discussed; and the report to the board of the Foundation was done, not by the director but through the drop box, discussed and so on – so it's all based totally on consensus.

As Michael Brie explained, horizontal practices of cooperation are being implemented not only within *IfG* but across the Foundation, as more joint projects are undertaken on the basis of cooperatively-made decisions on finances, with the Foundation Board as the decision-maker of last resort.

Other participants told me of internal practices that seem distinctive to TAPGs that fall between CACIM and RosaLux on the continuum of institutionalization. For instance, ITeM/Social Watch, Alternatives International, Third World Forum, CRID and NIGD are organized horizontally, as networks. Social Watch is a vast transnational network that reaches to the grassroots in many countries, through its participating national coalitions, producing alt knowledge through practices of Watching, and mobilizing that knowledge in processes of co-learning within the network as well as through outreach to broader publics. Gus Massiah reflected on how CRID's loose organization enables a 'transition between diversity and unity':

The CRID is a way to think together and to have some collective action. But our action as CRID is the action of our members. This is very important and our members are very diverse. So we have the kind of transition between diversity and unity. Each of our members makes his own choice. And they have some orientations, about global justice and things like this, and freedom, but we do not have a common theory. So CRID is a space to discuss together and after this each of us defines his own orientation and status. This is very important, so CRID is – what you have in common, what action you have in common: To empower, to reinforce the idea of international solidarity in our society and in the world. This is one of our main points. So we do mobilization; we campaign; we participate in international mobilization also on

many things, ... [we] define what we want to make together, and we leave our members to make what they want. This is more or less, and to learn from each other.

TNI and IFG present another organizational form, combining a coterie of left luminaries who were integral to the formation of the group, and who work independently as well as in concert with staff. TNI has been able to grow its staff and its staff-driven programs, which have become its centre of gravity, even as Fellows continue to make crucial contributions to those programs and to the Institute's strategic direction. At IFG, board members have worked in partnership with staff, which according to board member Tony Clarke meant that historically the complement of staff could remain relatively small,

but it took the involvement and engagement of board members and their organizations to make something go. So it was always a partnership... that would form around different initiatives and make it all possible.

In this chapter and the previous one, I have laid out an analysis of the repertoire of knowledge production and mobilization that has developed since the 1970s in and around transnational alternative policy groups. Conceptualized, in Chapter 4, as modes of cognitive praxis, the repertoire incorporates strategically-informed initiatives that

- challenge hegemonic knowledge,
- mobilize alternative knowledge through engagement with dominant institutions, particularly governmental ones,
- empower the grassroots through participation and capacity-building,
- build solidarities through dialogue,
- integrate theory and practice,
- create spaces for reflection and invention,
- systematize and disseminate alternative knowledge, and
- prefigure alternative futures from present practices.

Viewed, in this chapter, as specific practices of producing and mobilizing knowledge, the repertoire is organized around six types, the first four of which are especially integral to transnational alternative policy groups:

- research and analysis,
- training and learning,
- outreach,
- networking,
- action and
- internal organizational and governance practices.

The types of KMP practice reviewed in this chapter help specify how the modes of cognitive praxis gain traction on the ground. It is through various creative combinations of these modes and types of praxis that transnational alternative policy groups co-create counter-hegemonic knowledge, and help put that knowledge into practice within movements, subaltern communities, counterpublics, state and inter-

governmental bodies and (last but definitely not least) general publics. In reflecting on how to accomplish all that in the most effective ways, it may be helpful for readers to review how these elements of practice are incorporated into your own spaces, and workplaces, labour processes, campaigns and projects.

## Chapter 6: Convergent visions: the ends of alternative knowledge

Much of what I have conveyed from conversations with activist-researchers, scholars and practitioners participating in this project has had to do with the *means* of alternative knowledge: how it is produced and mobilized as a resource for transformative politics. But what of its *ends*? Positivist social science has long maintained an embargo on so-called teleological explanation, but of course in the realm of human practice what happens has a lot to do with the purposes people pursue. Alternative policy groups fashion their strategies and practices not only in response to what are seen as problematic features of extant reality, but on the basis of social visions – conceptions of a feasible and desirable future.

In interviews, after probing the practices of alt knowledge, I asked the following question:

At your group, would you say there is a *common vision* of the kind of world you are striving for? If so, how would you sketch it?

Participants articulated diverse but interestingly convergent visions. *Convergence* is a key word here, both across alt policy groups and within them. Convergence is distinct from a settled homogeneity of ideology. At TNI, Daniel Chavez captured the distinction between convergence upon a ‘shared vision’, and lock-step commitment to a ‘common vision’, which resembles a party line. That this sense of solidarity with diversity was evident at all participating group is not surprising. Alt policy groups are committed to producing and disseminating reliable and useful knowledge, a commitment that runs against the grain of political dogmatism of whatever sort. Daniel told me:

I would say in TNI – and that’s been the story of TNI from the beginning – there are shared visions about the world we are striving for. I think that’s quite different from saying there is a common vision or a unified vision, but there is a shared vision which gives a lot of space, in a way, for diverse articulation or different approaches for acknowledging, really, the complexity in a sense of the challenges that we face. But I think there is also a strong commitment to move together in that kind of shared vision of the future.’

Many participants chose in responding to the question to invoke values or strong images of an alternative way of life, which we can glimpse in practices, relations and sensibilities that already exist. Some pointed to specific but wide-ranging radical reforms that have the potential to construct bridges into a transformed future. For instance, at Focus’s New Delhi office, Afsar Jafri’s reference to Our World is Not for Sale conveyed the vision of a de-commodified world order while calling attention to an important movement network that Focus, IFG and others helped found:

If you look at a particular sector like trade, we have said ‘Our World is Not for Sale’. That is a big network which has brought out a common vision on trade issues. What kind of multilateral trade regime we want, and we don’t want this free trade bilateral talks and negotiations. So that is the common vision we have come out with. Similarly, on agro-ecology; it is a common vision which is for food sovereignty – it’s a common vision in the agriculture sector. These are the common visions which we have.

In reflecting on participants’ responses I found it helpful to group the ‘convergent visions’ into several categories. As with the forms of cognitive praxis, these overlap substantially – which is what convergence signifies. Here is a very brief summary of the ends that project participants see themselves working toward.

### *Substantive fulfillment of the human rights agenda*

Since the late eighteenth century, a fundamental achievement of the left has been the establishment of human rights. Any vision of a better world beyond our deeply troubled one must place human rights at its foundation, which is not to countenance imperialist interventions carried out under the cover of the ‘responsibility to protect’ human rights. Roberto Bissio, coordinator of a transnational alternative policy group that monitors social citizenship rights internationally, told me that

the human rights agenda, if it is seriously packed together with a sustainability agenda, can provide a vision and an alternative. On the basis of pieces that everybody has already agreed to. Putting them in place, putting them together, making them effective is what has not been agreed to. But the principles and the basics for an alternative policy are already there.

Substantively, Ana Zeballos (also of ITeM/Social Watch) described the future alternative as ‘the kind of world where there is no poverty, where gender equality [thrives], with democracy based on human rights, with justice.’ Another participant cautioned that authentic advocacy is a difficult ethical project:

I think that everybody basically wants the same thing. They want dignity; they want human rights. But which of those people would be willing to have dignity and human rights just for themselves as individuals, and which of them would fight and stay on the front line and jeopardize their own security until everybody has access?

### *Beyond one size fits all. Plural social forms*

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century we can appreciate the value of diversity – of biodiversity, of cultural diversity – in part because of imminent threats to it and in part due to the manifest problems of modernist projects – whether the industrialization of agriculture or the construction of uniform and often colonialist, statist programs. Although sometimes celebrated for its diversity, neoliberal capitalism imposes a strong form of abstract uniformity, reducing all of nature, including humanity, to a logic of commodification. Some project participants envisage a world liberated from this straitjacket. At Focus, the concept of deglobalization, discussed earlier, contains such a vision, complete with the principle of subsidiarity – that local decision-making and processes are preferable to disembedded, extra-local ones, wherever feasible. As Andrew de Sousa explained, deglobalization is actually a shared vision that insists on many alternatives:

we have de-globalization as kind of our organizational ideology, right? ... I think that one thing about de-globalization is that we’re saying there’s not necessarily one alternative. It’s that we shouldn’t replace the Chinese capitalist model with Venezuela 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism or something. We’re saying more that we should be creating this world order or whatever you want to call it that allows for diversity – that different countries take different paths. So de-globalization is more like opening up to multiple alternatives. So we have a common vision in that there’s not a common vision.

In its 2002 publication, *Alternatives to Economic Globalization*, IFG presented a social vision encapsulated in ten principles, one of which was subsidiarity. As Victor Menotti recounted, the intent was to lay out ‘the international arrangements that could support the localized production and consumption systems,’ a crucial condition for deglobalization, since globalization has interwoven the fates of us all.

There is a definite affinity between the valorization of diversity and the vision of a world in which all people enjoy real, substantive rights. This was made clear to me in a comment by PRIA’s President. Building on a human rights frame, Rajesh Tandon emphasized the need to respect a plurality of social forms.

My approach is that if you take some core principles of equity, justice, freedom, respect for diversity and dignity – there are many different ways of organizing social economic and political life. Our tragedy is that we are all trying to organize the whole damn thing: ‘There is one way.’ ... There is no one way. ... You can share values; you can share principles – but how you organize yourself, how you manage your commons and resources need not be the same.

### *Diverse voices in dialogue*

In some project participants’ social visions, diversity in social forms is complemented by an emphasis on diverse voices, knowledges and public discourses, and by a concern to create the enabling conditions whereby all can speak and be heard. As Yiping Cai of DAWN said,

I would vision the future where many diverse voices – diverse knowledges – can have space to debate, to argue in a very respectful way and freely, so that we produce those knowledges that can be shared; and also ideas can be exchanged and debated so that people can make their own choices based on informed knowledge and alternatives.

This sensibility was also captured at RosaLux in the idea of a ‘mosaic left’, a diverse formation that thrives within an expanding public sphere. As Mario Candeias emphasized (to borrow the same passage a second time),

We are all interested in transformative things. We’re all into these ideas of ‘you have to build a mosaic’, not *the Party*, *the Union*, *the whatever*. And we’re very clear about some direction that expanding ‘the public’ is one of the very important things – I would say everyone here has this point.

A revitalized public sphere presumes that the subaltern can speak and indeed, that in gaining voice along with substantive rights, she sheds her subalternity. As we have seen, this kind of participatory empowerment is front-and-centre for PRIA.

It’s about facilitating the change – giving people platforms to speak, to voice. Very often, people don’t have a platform. So creating that platform for them, and then once they would come to the platform and speak, then giving or showing them a way that they can use their perspective and their analysis – analyze the situation, and use that analysis constructively. ... How do you connect them to justice? Arm them with all their rights? ... that is how we work in all our projects: connecting the people to justice (Nandita Bhatt).

### *Changing the subject: decolonizing the human spirit, and the spirit of Ubuntu*

Our world is the sedimented product of hundreds of years of colonization and imperialism. For alternative policy groups that work within a transnational field, this reality cannot be averted. Engaging politically with it inspires visions of a decolonized future, already discernible in present practices. At stake here is a transformation not only of social structures and ecologies, but of subjectivity, of human being. The comments of three participants, each of them dealing with the ramifications of colonization as experienced from different locations, illustrate this important aspect of convergent visions.

At CRID Nathalie Pere-Marzano explained how, from Paris, she and her comrades address the legacy of colonization in a practice of self-transformation:

we do share the idea of decolonizing our spirits. ... it starts with this idea of how you get out of conception patterns in your life. It's also how do you see poverty – how do you see poor people, not only as people you should help but how you go further. Because in the Northern countries, we always have had this condescending vision ... we have to really go to another point of view on that. And also how do we not consider ourselves the centre of the world?

Such a psycho-cultural transformation in the North is a co-requisite and enabling condition for global democratization. Yet provincializing Europe goes hand-in-hand with revaluing wisdom from the colonized world, a core element in decolonizing methodologies of knowing (Smith 2012).

Ubuntu is a southern African ethic, vivified in post-apartheid South Africa, which views humans as radically interdependent in the sense of co-creating each other. From her position as administrator at the Centre for Civil Society, Helen Poonen told me of the spirit of Ubuntu that permeates life at the Centre.

For me, the spirit of *Ubuntu* is to make a difference in a person's life. It's 'my people are your people.' So when people come in here, we do not want to see discrimination, racism, xenophobia, homophobia – people that have that mindset. Because this is South Africa – apartheid is dead. I lived apartheid; I was in apartheid; I know; I came out of apartheid. ... also the spirit of *Ubuntu* [means] that if somebody doesn't have something, try and help them within your means. And then on the other hand, that person can help someone else.

The spirit of *Ubuntu*, a vision of solidarity, of mutual care, of community, is also evident in CCS Community Scholar Thami Mbatha's response to my query:

of course, there is a common [vision], but let's say there is still a lot to be done because we have been divided. Our communities all have been divided for so long, we still have a role to play as an institution – Centre for Civil Society – with other formations to unite these divided communities – these divided sectors of our population so as to speak with one voice.

Thami's reflection registers the dismemberment and suffering that colonization, in one of its most brutal 20<sup>th</sup> century manifestations, visited upon the peoples of southern Africa, but also the possibility of overcoming colonization's and apartheid's curse, in a spirit of solidarity and an ethic of care.

### *Participatory democracy*

Some project participants connect their cognitive praxis to a future in which human freedom is actualized in real self-governance. Democracy in this vision is participatory, and radical in the classic sense of getting to the root of the matter: the human condition of deep interdependence. That condition can be managed through hierarchies of class and other relations that severely constrict human freedom, or it can be coordinated through democratic decision-making. Participatory democracy is a procedural form within which the substance of human rights and the spirit of *Ubuntu* can thrive. It moves us well beyond formal institutions of representative democracy, including relations within and between states – whose democratic content has been incrementally hollowed out by neoliberal globalization. In CETRI's Francois Polet's view, participatory democracy amounts to a 'substantive democratization between and within nations – that would be the ideal world.'

The freedom that inheres in participation is distinct from what passes for freedom in neoliberal democracy, namely, the 'freedom to choose' – between one ruler or another, or between one brand of laundry detergent

and another. In participatory democracy, freedom is not a series of private choices, although a basic commitment to human rights safeguards the space for individuals to make their own lifestyle choices. Susan George evoked the deeper sense of freedom that is entailed in participatory democracy. She envisages the possibility of ‘a democratic world; a social and ecological world, and a world in which people have the power to transform their lives.’ Rajesh Tandon offered a complementary conceptualization, grounded in PRIA’s various participatory projects:

We have been almost intuitively focused on capacity as equated with freedom. So implying that – give people the tools of knowledge, of awareness, of skills, of collective organization, but they will determine what they want to achieve.

Sumona Dasgupta elaborated on PRIA’s commitment to deep democracy, and the implication that carries for a ‘renegotiation’ of power relations.

As the slogan says, ‘Making Democracy Work For All’. Which is again, ultimately about power and which is ultimately about fighting injustice and those who are on the periphery and those who are marginalized. So doing something or working to make knowledge useful for the marginalized – those who are marginalized in India. And in that sense, making democracy work for all, so that it is not just about elections, but really about a renegotiation of power.

### *Open, democratic socialism*

Imbued with participatory democracy and a culture of pluralism, a vision of open, democratic socialism resonates in the responses of some project participants. This vision marks a considered distance from the statist forms of ‘command-economy’ planning (and worse) that came to dominate 20<sup>th</sup>-century socialism,<sup>109</sup> and insists that the real alternative to bureaucratic domination is not the dominion of deregulated, footloose global capital, but a thoroughgoing, participatory economic democracy. Democratic socialism offers the vision of a world in which the social power of capital has been transformed into people’s power, exercised within social forms of economic ownership and through participatory-democratic practices of planning and self-management. Two activist-scholars at TNI spoke directly to this issue. Jun Borrás said, ‘I think our common vision is a vague kind of socialist vision in a generic way... a kind of socialism where democracy is taken seriously as well as the ecological question.’ Hilary Wainwright envisages an open, democratic socialism that reaches well beyond the economic, to emphasize social individualism and diversity in combination with solidarity:

I think [at TNI] there’s a strong sense of an emancipatory notion of socialism. I mean there’s a kind of sense of socialism, but of a kind that’s in constant need of renewal and that isn’t equal to the state. So there’s an understanding of emancipatory, transformative actors, beyond the state but attempting to transform the state, so that it’s a resource for transformative politics and transformative movements. So there’s that sort of emancipatory vision. There’s a kind of understanding of collectivities as being made of up individuals, sort of social individualism relational collectivism, so not a rejection of reified collectives that are over and above us. There’s an appreciation of individual creativity, but understood socially. So there’s a very pluralist notion of democracy – yeah, sort of pluralist politics but of a kind that is also concerted. It’s also about coming together at points of concerted unity around particular

---

<sup>109</sup> For an arch but useful critique of statist socialism see Polan (1984). A more balanced and empirically rich account has been offered recently by Lebowitz (2012).



issues, like the war or corporate power or environmental destruction. So it's a combination of valuing creativity and diversity, but also recognizing the importance of unity and focus at different times.<sup>110</sup>

### *Reclaiming the commons*

The modern era has witnessed an enclosure of the commons, first in Europe, as a fundamental element in the creation of capitalism, but currently in all sorts of domains, as transnational corporations scramble to grab land, water, exclusive rights to life forms, control over electronic communications, etc. (Harvey 2003). At Focus, as I have mentioned, Reclaiming the Commons continues to be a central program, enabling Shalmali Guttal and her colleagues to do the political-intellectual work of 'drawing a lot of lines and connecting up the dots' between a collection of struggles that prefigure a better future. As she told me,

the collective wellbeing of people and the planet is a commons, which doesn't necessarily mean that everybody has a right to own everything. So we say that water is a commons; it doesn't mean that human beings have a right to own that water, but it's just that the way you would govern it is from the collective point of view.

Although Focus's own resource constraints prevent it from continuing to work on health and social issues from a 'reclaiming the commons' standpoint, other groups, particularly TNI, are developing alternative knowledge that supports a social vision of a world in which governance from a collective point of view is predominant. When transposed into these fields, reclaiming the commons converges with democratic socialism. TNI's program in Public Services and Democracy, for instance, promotes 'new understandings of welfare that stress the commons and democratization of public provision,' as Hilary Wainwright told me. Similarly, as Hilary continued, the Internet as knowledge commons is an important vision, grounded in contemporary practice, which needs to be defended against 'those that are trying to enclose it.'

Two participants turned 'commons' into a verb: commoning. At Focus, Mary Ann Manahan explained that

we find that the use of the commons is very politically strategic, because you know, you talk about especially natural resources such as water, land, forests as a resource to be governed by all and for the enjoyment of all, for now and also for future generations. And there is the whole idea of commoning, which is I think very important.

Patrick Bond at CCS sees commoning as a resonant vision and strategy for the global left:

we need to think about maybe a global-left strategy we can call 'commoning' and defining commons not just as natural resources or the ideas and the cultural forms that are out there in the public sphere.... We need to common the peoples and common the ideas and the culture and the resources and the state services. I mean, those are a whole set of things where we could probably say commoning is a verb we should be exploring. What would it mean? I think we're just scratching the surface of that. It seems to me to be logically where you go after you run up against the ceiling of the rights discourse.

---

<sup>110</sup> Hilary's path breaking book, *Reclaim the State*, recently published in a second edition (Wainwright 2013) is highly recommended on these issues.

For Patrick, a rights discourse that, following Locke's classic presentation, identifies rights as the property of individuals hits a ceiling when we consider the radically relational character of the human condition, particularly as it lives within the biosphere. 'Commoning' may offer an inspiring and coherent way of encapsulating a number of the prefigurations reviewed above, in a (re)new(ed) vocabulary.

### *Buen vivir: a sustainable society*

As discussed in Chapter 4, *buen vivir* fuels the prefigurative cognitive praxis of several groups participating in this project. Some participants described the vision with slightly different terminology and reference points, but the convergence is clear. For instance, at Alternatives International, Michel Lambert endorsed 'a society which is sustainable', along lines drawn in the Earth Charter which was spearheaded in the 1990s by Leonardo Boff and launched in 2000.<sup>111</sup> The Charter embraces a robust ecological vision that incorporates many of the values reviewed above. Others followed suit in envisioning, as TWN's Yoke Ling Chee phrased it, 'a world where ecologically we nurture nature. We want social justice.' Ichiyo Muto spoke of 'the shared recognition of the negativity of the present world' at PPSG, alongside a positive vision centred around 'decency' and, referring to the ecological madness of globalized consumer capitalism, the 'elimination of excess.' The concern with excess was expressed by Shalmali Guttal in a skepticism toward endless growth (a.k.a. limitless capital accumulation) as an intrinsic good:

We say, 'No, growth does not equal development; growth does not equal equity; growth does not mean the end of hunger; growth does not mean the end of poverty.' The evidence shows that it means the concentration of resources, it shows inequality, etc. so what is a different model then? So I think most people in Focus are on that type of vision.

Shalmali's colleague, Joseph Purugganan, expressed this vision, within the concept of *buen vivir*, as one of balanced and egalitarian development:

I think *buen vivir* more or less captures it – this idea that we should be striving not for more and more, but more balance in our own lives but also how we view progress and development. So I think for me, that is the more recent picture of the kind of system that we are striving for. Across our own programs, I think it is something that would resonate. When you deal with investments, for example, or you look at how the push for corporate investments in mining – the kind of problems that it creates at the community level and the environment. So definitely a vision of less disruptive development – of more balanced development, more egalitarian development is something that we are trying to push for as we are struggling against these agreements, these investment regimes.

What participants seem to be converging upon is a vision of social justice and ecological stewardship, with both terms bearing multiple meanings. Consider as evidence three exemplars.

From Hibiki Yamagushi of PPSG:

Yes, there are actually a lot of pillars in our common vision. For example, we need to demilitarize our society. We need to be an environmentally-friendly society. We need to make our economy human-centric and we need to be gender-sensitive.

---

<sup>111</sup> The Earth Charter and related documentation is available at <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Read-the-Charter.html>, accessed 30 August 2013.

From Shalmali Guttal of Focus:

The common vision has been one where the strongest unit of organization is local, [with] tremendous collective responsibility. People don't have to be living in a kibbutz or a social collective, but if that's what they want to do, that's what they do. But the fact is that democracy is not just casting a vote. It's actually the negotiation of politics. One thing that is non-negotiable is the issue of equity ... it's really trying to build an equitable society where there is respect for nature that is beyond believing that nature is ours to exploit. ... Earth will live without us – look at what happened to the dinosaurs, and we are in that peril too. So the Earth will survive; it's human beings who are in a mess. So to say that we need to save the earth; no – we need to save ourselves and the only way to save ourselves is to save the earth. It's just to protect nature, so there is that. Where markets are subsumed by society – markets are under the control of society. Markets don't rule; it is society that rules.

From Claire Slatter of DAWN:

We're concerned about economic injustice and we're working for a more economically just world, but we also work for democratic development and environmentally sustainable future, and a future in which people's livelihoods are protected. That's the kind of all-encompassing vision. We want a new world; we want to work for a world in which everybody has a place, has opportunities but also enjoys human rights and is able to enjoy participating fully as full citizens....

### *Process issues*

An emancipatory social vision can be a powerful source of solidarity and inspiration. But it only gains validity as people strive to make it real, to prove the truth, the 'reality and power', the 'this-worldliness' of thought in practice, borrowing again from Marx. For counter-hegemonic actors, ends shape means, or they should. As Audrey Lorde (1984) famously wrote, 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.' The actual process of socio-political transformation needs to prefigure its end – which is why participatory, dialogical, democratic, empowering methods are so integral to alt knowledge production and mobilization. This process issue needs to be considered and built into each step toward a better world. As Focus's Jacques Chai Chomtongdi explained,

to develop an alternative kind of product, is not sufficient. We have to develop an alternative process in order to get to the alternative product. Without alternative process – if you go to through the same process, you get the same product.<sup>112</sup>

A second process issue I want to flag at this point has to do with the epochal character of alternative social visions. Above, I have reviewed a host of them, and have argued that a certain convergence is apparent,

---

<sup>112</sup> Jacques-Chai offered this example from his experience coordinating FTA Watch in Thailand:

when we were in trade negotiations..., we campaigned on alternative process on how the government has to consult the people, what would be the role of the parliament, what would impact assessment have to decide based on those kinds of things. So we developed that and we campaigned, and we spent a lot of time on the constitutional amendment, and we got it. We in the past had never had really a proper process; and we now had a proper process of consultation, impact assessment, things like that – look at the alternatives, those kinds of things – building them into the constitution.

across alternative policy groups. At the same time, as I pointed out in earlier chapters, in most places worldwide, the hegemony of neoliberal globalization is, for now, still intact, though fraying at the edges. The various practices and modes of cognitive praxis that comprise a repertoire of alternative knowledge production can all be seen as contributing toward bridge-building between present and future, but we should not delude ourselves as to the imminence of major change. As DAWN's Claire Slatter observed,

There is very definitely a common vision which has to do with building a different kind of world. It's a vision which we work towards, although none of us imagines that this is something that is easily attained or even attained in our or our children's lifetimes or even beyond. But it's still something that provides a kind of framework for why we do what we're doing.

In the circumstances, Bertrand Russell's ethical admonition comes to mind, as another convergent value: 'One must care about a world one will never see.' Still, we need also to keep in mind the 'entry projects' that can make possible, tomorrow, changes that seem out of reach today. Moreover, the radical contingencies that are endemic to global capitalism's organic crisis mean that radical transformation in our time should *not* be ruled out; indeed, it may be all the more necessary if a semblance of *buen vivir* is to be experienced by the majority world in the foreseeable future.

### *Green transformation*

As a final exemplar of knowledge systematization, let me close this chapter by suggesting that a vision of 'green transformation', as presented recently by Mario Candeias (2013),<sup>113</sup> offers one plausible integration of convergent visions into an alternative paradigm that merits sustained attention. Mario outlines four scenarios as competing projects that address the contemporary organic crisis and prefigure alternative futures. Arrayed along a continuum from restoration of conditions for business-as-usual, through transformation within capitalism, to social-ecological transformation, he labels them Authoritarian Neoliberalism, Green Capitalism, Social-Liberal Green New Deal, and Green Socialism (p. 22). The last of these, signaling social-ecological transformation, seems to incorporate many aspects of the various converging visions reviewed above. Although Mario Candeias formulates green transformation within the context of contemporary Germany, the paradigm seems to have much broader relevance.

As a green transformation that breaks from neoliberal capitalism, this project emphasizes, among other policies, (1) decentralization of public decision-making and re-municipalization of infrastructure, (2) the reclaiming of the public sphere and commons through expansion of public services and collective consumption, (3) a shift from top-down, bureaucratic planning to planning based in economic democracy and decentralized participation, and (4) de-globalization and the recentring of economic activity within domestic economies. These policies are convergent with perspectives advocated by groups participating in this project, and with social visions of participatory democracy, pluralism, reclaiming the commons, *buen vivir* and open, democratic socialism. Importantly, Mario's proposal calls for measures that provide for (5) the long term redistribution of wealth through the expansion, over the medium term, of different forms of socialization and social property and (6) the socialization of investment through participatory investment decisions. Such measures, which were not explicitly articulated by many project participants, break from the

---

<sup>113</sup> See 'Green Transformation', available at <http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/green-transformation/>, accessed 30 August 2013.

logic of private capitalist accumulation. Inasmuch as control of the investment function grants substantial control over the economic future, a just and ecologically sustainable world implies democratic control of

Table 13. Features of green transformation (after Candeias 2013: 15)

Feature	Vision	TAPGs
1. decentralisation and re-municipalization of infrastructure	plural social forms, participatory democracy, reclaiming the commons	Focus, TNI, IFG, PRIA
2. expanding the public sphere, public services and collective consumption	reclaiming the commons	Focus, TWN, TNI, ITeM/Social Watch, CCS, Alter-Inter, DAWN
3. economic democracy and decentralized, participatory planning	participatory democracy, open, democratic socialism	PRIA, TWF, NIGD, TNI, Focus, CETRI
4. recentring activity upon the domestic economy, deglobalization	<i>buen vivir</i> , sustainable society	Focus, IFG, PRIA, TNI
5. different forms of socialization and property	plural social forms	IFG, PRIA, CETRI, TNI
6. socialization of investment and participatory investment decisions	open, democratic socialism	TWF, Focus, PRIA
7. industrial conversion and expansion of care economy		DAWN
8. redistribution of societal and gendered divisions of labor		DAWN, PRIA
9. (global) planning of resource flows and maximum quantities		
10. global redistribution, industrial policies and “just transition”		TNI
11. transition to a green-socialist reproductive economy beyond growth	<i>buen vivir</i>	Focus, DAWN, IFG, TWF, PPSG, CCS, TNI

investment, which Mario suggests can be initiated through ‘a network of public banks and the introduction of participatory budgeting at all levels of society’ (Candeias 2013: 16). The project has a strong bent toward feminist and green values. This includes (7) a shift from production of ever-increasing quantities of things to enhanced provision of services in a care economy geared to enriched socio-ecological relations, together with (8) a new division of labour addressing gender equity across four domains of paid employment, family, community and self-development (Haug 2011). To make the green transformation effective at a global level, Mario envisages three transformative processes within an alter-globalization framework. (9) Global planning regarding resource flows will need to ensure a just distribution of wealth while limiting consumption and

addressing reproductive needs; and, as some sectors associated with climate change and depletion of raw materials shrink, others (including the entire care economy) will grow qualitatively. (10) Needs of people worst affected by the climate crisis must be prioritized in a just transition that pulls together ‘the movement for climate justice and the labor movement’ (Candeias 2013: 19). All these processes add up to (11) a ‘transition to a green-socialist reproductive economy beyond growth’ (p. 15), a social vision consistent with *buen vivir*, on which several groups participating in this project are converging (See Table 13).

In contrast to specific entry projects and non-reformist reforms (see above, pp. 110-111), Mario’s proposal is a full-blown counter-hegemonic project, an alternative to the widely mooted ‘green economy’, i.e., to the push towards green capitalism which, as witnessed in 2012 at Rio+20, has tended to gain strength within certain ruling circles as the organic crisis deepens. For a project as ambitious as green transformation the question is whether movements and counterpublics take it up and prove, in practice, its ‘this-worldliness’, or whether it remains abstract, amounting to no more than what Gramsci called “castles in the air” (quoted in Germino 1990: 19). For his part, Mario Candeias locates the agency for green transformation in the ‘mosaic left and transformative left’, but he acknowledges that a radical project of this sort will meet with ‘strong resistance from capital and old elites’ (2013: 15).

Other transnational alternative policy groups have, as I have mentioned, made similar proposals for an alternative paradigm. I have featured Mario’s proposal because the alternatives it advances directly address the unprecedented, double crisis humanity faces, in a way that incorporates many of the values and visions of groups participating in this project.<sup>114</sup> Any one proposal may not appeal in its details to all the diverse elements of an inchoate global left, but still we can discern strong resonances with many of the aspirations for global justice that are given shape and form in the practices of transnational alternative policy groups. Engaging with proposals of this sort can build a basis for dialogue, mutual aid and collaboration among transnational alternative policy groups, and these processes can only strengthen the movements, publics and communities with which such groups engage.

I hope this volume itself makes a contribution to realizing such possibilities.

---

<sup>114</sup> Mario Candeias’s proposal does not explicitly incorporate the visions of ‘diverse voices in dialogue’, or of ‘decolonization of the spirit’, discussed earlier; nor is it couched in terms of the substantive expansion of human rights. In other respects, as I have noted above, green socialism contains elements that go beyond the social visions advocated at participating TAPGs, with the exception of RosaLux. Although very wide-ranging, green socialism, like any counter-hegemonic project, should be taken as inherently open-ended and incomplete. Alternative projects need to be understood not as authoritative blueprints but as resources for communicative-democratic praxis, through which the ends and means of counter-hegemony can be made more inclusive and emancipatory.

## References

- Abelson, Donald E. 1995. 'From Policy Research to Political Advocacy - the Changing Role of Think Tanks in American Politics.' *Canadian Review of American Studies* 25:93–126.
- Abercrombie, Nicholas, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner. 1990. *Dominant Ideologies*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Adamson, Nancy, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail. 1988. *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada*. Oxford University Press.
- Arnstein, Sherry R. 1969. 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation.' *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35(4): 216-24, available at <http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html>, accessed 17 September 2013.
- Bair, Jennifer. 2009. 'Taking aim at the New International Economic Order.' Pp. 347-385 in Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (eds.), *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Balanyá, Belén, Brid Brennan, Olivier Hoedeman, Philipp Terhorst, and Satoko Kishimoto, eds. 2007. *Reclaiming Public Water: Achievements, Struggles and Visions from Around the World*. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.
- Beckfield, Jason. 2003. 'Inequality in the World Polity: The Structure of International Organization.' *American Sociological Review* 68(3):401-424.
- Beder, Sharon. 2006. *Suining Themselves: How Corporations Drive the Global Agenda*. London, UK: Earthscan.
- Bello, Walden. 2003. *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World Economy*. London: Zed Books.
- Bello, Walden. 2009. 'The Virtues of Deglobalization.' *Focus on the Global South*. Retrieved September 5, 2013 (<http://focusweb.org/node/1523> ).
- Bloch, Ernst. 1986. *The Principle of Hope*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Bond, Patrick, Khadija Sharife and Ruth Castel-Branco. 2012. *The CDM Cannot Deliver the Money to Africa: Why the Carbon Trading Gamble Won't Save the Planet from Climate Change, and How African Civil Society Is Resisting*. EJOLT. Retrieved ([http://www.ejolt.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/121221\\_EJOLT\\_2\\_Low.pdf](http://www.ejolt.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/121221_EJOLT_2_Low.pdf) ).
- Bond, Patrick and Khadija Sharife. 2013. 'Payment for Ecosystem Services Versus Ecological Reparations: The 'Green Economy', Litigation and a Redistributive Eco-debt Grant.' *South African Journal on Human Rights* 29(1):144–69.
- Brie, Michael. 2012. *Entry Projects to a Politics of Solidarity*. Berlin: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Retrieved August 25, 2013 ([http://rosalux-europa.info/publications/newsletter\\_en/mbrie\\_entry\\_projects/](http://rosalux-europa.info/publications/newsletter_en/mbrie_entry_projects/) ).
- Brown, Ann. 2008. 'Founder's Syndrome: Leadership Lost and Found.' *SANGONet Pulse* 30 July, available at <http://www.ngopulse.org/article/founder%E2%80%99s-syndrome-leadership-lost-and-found>, accessed 18 September 2013.
- Candeias, Mario. 2013a. 'Creating a Situation That Does Not Yet Exist.' *The Bullet*, August 15. Retrieved August 19, 2013 (<http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/864.php> ).
- Candeias, Mario. 2013b. *Green Transformation: Competing Strategic Projects*. Berlin: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Retrieved August 30, 2013 (<http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/green-transformation/> ).
- Carroll, William K. 2003. 'Undoing the End of History: Canada-Centred Reflections on the Challenge of Globalization.' Pp. 33–55 in *Global Shaping and its Alternatives*. Aurora, Ontario: Garamond Press.
- Carroll, William K. 2006. 'Hegemony, Counter-Hegemony, Anti-Hegemony.' *Socialist Studies* 2(2):9-43.
- Carroll, William K. 2007. 'Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in a Global Field.' *Studies in Social Justice* 1(1):36–66, available at [http://www.academia.edu/4066592/Hegemony\\_and\\_counter-hegemony\\_in\\_a\\_global\\_field](http://www.academia.edu/4066592/Hegemony_and_counter-hegemony_in_a_global_field), accessed 18 September 2013.

- Carroll, William K. 2010a. 'Crisis, Movements, Counter-hegemony: In Search of the New.' *Interface* 2(2):168-198, available at <http://interfacejournal.nuim.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Interface-2-2-pp.168-198-Carroll.pdf>, accessed 6 September 2013.
- Carroll, William K. 2010b. *The Making of a Transnational Capitalist Class: Corporate Power in the 21st Century*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Carroll, William K. 2012. 'Global, Transnational, Regional, National: The Need for Nuance in Theorizing Global Capitalism.' *Critical Sociology* 38: 365-71.
- Carroll, William K. 2013. 'Networks of Cognitive Praxis: Transnational Class Formation from Below?' *Globalizations* 10(5):651-70.
- Carroll, William K. 2014. 'Alternative Policy Groups and Transnational Counter-Hegemonic Struggle.' in *Global Economic Crisis and the Politics of Diversity*, edited by Yildiz Atasoy. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, in press.
- Carroll, William K. and Colin Carson. 2003. 'Forging a New Hegemony? The Role of Transnational Policy Groups in the Network and Discourse of Global Corporate Governance.' *Journal of World-Systems Research* 9(1):67-102.
- Carroll, William K. and Jean Philippe Sapinski. 2010. 'The Global Corporate Elite and the Transnational Policy-Planning Network, 1996-2006: A Structural Analysis.' *International Sociology* 25(4):501-38.
- Carroll, William K. and Jean Philippe Sapinski. 2013. 'Embedding Post-capitalist Alternatives? The Global Network of Alternative Knowledge Production and Mobilization.' *Journal of World-Systems Research* 19(2): 211-40, available at [http://www.jwsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Carroll\\_Sapinski\\_vol19\\_no2.pdf](http://www.jwsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Carroll_Sapinski_vol19_no2.pdf), accessed 18 September 2013.
- Carroll, William K. and Murray Shaw. 2001. 'Consolidating a Neoliberal Policy Bloc in Canada, 1976 to 1996.' *Canadian Public Policy* 27(2):195-217.
- Cavanagh, John and Jerry Mander, eds. 2002. *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World Is Possible*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Coburn, Elaine. 2010. 'Resisting Neoliberal Capitalism: Insights from Marxist Political Economy.' Pp. 194-226 in *Relations of Global Power: Neoliberal order and disorder*, edited by G. Teeple and S. McBride. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Cox, Robert W. 1987. *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History*. Columbia University Press.
- Cox, Robert W. 1995. 'Critical Political Economy.' Pp. 31-45 in *International Political Economy: Understanding Global Disorder*, edited by Bjorn Hettne. London: Zed Books.
- CRID. 2012. *Analyse transversale du processus de Systematisation de l'Universite d'Ete de la Solidarite Internationale 2012*. Paris: CRID.
- Dahlberg, Lincoln and Sean Phelan. 2011. 'Discourse Theory and Critical Media Politics: An Introduction.' Pp. 1-41 in *Discourse theory and critical media politics*, edited by Lincoln Dahlberg and Sean Phelan. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Day, Richard J.F. 2006. *Gramsci is Dead : Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*. London: Pluto Press.
- De Sousa Santos, Boaventura. 2006. *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond*. London: Zed Books.
- Dean, Jodi. 2012. *The Communist Horizon*. London: Verso.
- Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era and Red de Educación Popular Entre Mujeres de América Latine y el Caribe. 2000. *About Women's Powers and Wisdom: Debates on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation*. Montevideo: Red de Educación Popular Entre Mujeres de América Latine y el Caribe.
- Domhoff, G. William. 2006. *Who Rules America? Power, Politics, and Social Change*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Eyerman, Ron and Andrew Jamieson. 1991. *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*. Penn State Press.



- Franco, Jennifer and Jun Borrás. 2012. *A Land Sovereignty Alternative: Toward a People's Counter-Enclosure*. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.
- Fraser, Nancy. 1990. 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: a Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.' *Social Text* 25/26:56–80.
- George, Susan. 1988. *A Fate Worse than Debt: A Radical Analysis of the Third World Debt Crisis*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.
- George, Susan. 1997. 'How to Win the War of Ideas: Lessons from the Gramscian Right.' *Dissent* Summer:47–53.
- George, Susan. 2008. *Hijacking America: How the Religious and Secular Right Changed What Americans Think*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Germino, Dante. 1990. *Antonio Gramsci: Architect of a New Politics*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press.
- Gill, Stephen. 1995. 'Theorizing the Interregnum: The Double Movement of Global Politics in the 1990s.' Pp. 65–99 in *International Political Economy: Understanding Global Disorder*, edited by Bjorn Hettne. Halifax: Fernwood Books.
- Gill, Stephen. 2012b. 'Leaders and led in an era of global crises.' Pp. 23-37 in Stephen Gill (ed.), *Global Crises and the Crisis of Global Leadership*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gill, Stephen. 2012c. 'Organic crisis, global leadership and progressive alternatives.' Pp. 233-254 in Stephen Gill (ed.), *Global Crises and the Crisis of Global Leadership*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Glasius, Marlies, Mary Kaldor, and Helmut Anheier, eds. 2006. *Global Civil Society 2005/6*. London: Sage. Retrieved ([www.gcsknowledgebase.org/blog/y20056/book-20056](http://www.gcsknowledgebase.org/blog/y20056/book-20056)).
- Goldman, Michael. 1998. *Privatizing Nature: Political Struggles For the Global Commons*. London and New York: Pluto Press.
- Goldsmith, Edward and Jerry Mander. 2001. *The Case Against the Global Economy*. London: Earthscan.
- Gorz, André. 1967. *Strategy for Labor*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Greenwood, Davydd J. and Morten Levin. 2007. *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*, second edition. London: Sage.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hackett, Robert A. and Yuezhi Zhao 1999. *Sustaining Democracy? : Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity*. Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Hackett, Robert A, and William K. Carroll. 2006. *Remaking Media: The Struggle to Democratize Public Communication*. London: Routledge.
- Harvey, David. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Haug, Frigga. 2011. '4in1-Perspektive – Kompass für die politische Praxis.' *LuXemburg* 2:122–27.
- Holloway, John. 2002. *Change the World Without Taking Power*. London: Pluto Press.
- Jessop, Bob. 1983. 'Accumulation Strategies, State Forms and Hegemonic Projects.' *Kapitalstate*, No. 10/11.
- Jessop, Bob. 2002. *The Future of the Capitalist State*. Cambridge (UK), Malden (MA): Polity Press.
- Joseph, Jonathan. 2002. *Hegemony: A Realist Analysis*. London: Routledge.
- Kellner, Douglas. 2002. 'Theorizing Globalization.' *Sociological Theory* 20(3):285–305.
- Leibowitz, Michael A. 2012. *The Contradictions of 'Real Socialism': The Conductor and the Conducted*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Leibowitz, Michael A. 2013. 'The State and the Future of Socialism.' *Socialist Register* 49: 345-67.

- López Montaña, Cecilia, Alma Espino, Rosalba Todaro, and Norma Sanchís. 2007. *Latin America, a Pending Debate: Contributions in Economics and Politics from a Gender Perspective*. Montevideo: REPEM / DAWN / IFC.
- Lorde, Audrey. 1984. 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House.' in *Sister Outsider*, edited by Audrey Lorde. Berkeley: Crossing Press.
- Macartney, Huw. 2008. 'Articulating Particularistic Interests: The Organic Organisers of Hegemony in Germany and France.' *British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 10(3):429–51.
- Magdoff, Fred and John Bellamy Foster 2011. *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Mander, Jerry. 2012. *The Capitalism Papers: Fatal Flaws of an Obsolete System*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint.
- Mander, Jerry (ed.). 2007. *Manifesto on Global Economic Transitions: Powering-down for the Future*. San Francisco: International Forum on Globalization.
- Mander, Jerry and Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (eds.). 2006. *Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Globalization*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Marx, Karl. 1845. 'Theses on Feuerbach.' Originally published in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 1938. *The German Ideology*. New York: Lawrence & Wishart. Available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/original.htm>, accessed 21 August 2013.
- McEwen, Arthur. 1999. *Neo-Liberalism Or Democracy? Economic Strategy, Markets, and Alternatives*. London: Zed Books.
- McNally, David. 2006. *Another World Is Possible: Globalization and Anti-Capitalism*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing.
- McNally, David. 2011. *Global Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance*. Oakland (CA): PM Press.
- Menotti, Victor. 2011. 'Individuals of Undue Influence.' Pp. 1–57 in *Outing the Oligarchy: Billionaires who Benefit from Today's Climate Crisis*. San Francisco: International Forum on Globalization.
- Milios, John and Haris Triandafilidou. 2013. 'Taking Power In and Beyond the State.' *The Bullet*, August 19. Retrieved August 19, 2013 (<http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/866.php>).
- Notomi, Noburu. 2004. 'Socratic Dialogue and Platonic Dialectic. How the Soul Knows in the Republic.' *Plato* 4. Retrieved August 17, 2013 (<http://gramata.univ-paris1.fr/Plato/article48.html>).
- O'Connor, James. 1987. *The Meaning of Crisis*. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Polan, Anthony J. 1984. *Lenin and the End of Politics*. London: Methuen.
- Postman, Neil. 1985. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. London: Penguin.
- Rehmann, Jan. 2013. 'Connective Party or Return to a 'War of Maneuver'?' *The Bullet*, August 16. Retrieved August 19, 2013 (<http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/865.php>).
- Sen, Gita and Caren Grown. 1987. *Development, Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*. London: DAWN and Earthscan.
- Sklair, Leslie. 2001. *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. Oxford (UK) and Malden (MA): Blackwell Publishing.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 2005. *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*. Oxford, UK: AltaMira Press.
- Smith, Jackie. 2008. *Social Movements for Global Democracy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies* second edition. London: Zed Books.
- Snow, David A. and Robert D. Benford. 1992. 'Master Frames and Cycles of Protest.' Pp. 133–55 in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, edited by A. D. Morris and C. M. Mueller. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press.
- Stephen, Matthew D. 2009. 'Alter-Globalism as Counter-Hegemony: Evaluating the 'Postmodern Prince'.' *Globalizations* 6(4):483–98.

- Stone, Diane. 2000. 'Think Tanks Transnationalization and Non-Profit Analysis and Advocacy.' *Global Society* 14:153–72.
- Sutherland, Neil, Christopher Land and Steffen Böhm. 2013. 'Anti-leaders(hip) in Social Movement Organizations: The Case of Autonomous Grassroots Groups.' *Organization* Prepublished June 5, 2013 as doi:10.1177/1350508413480254.
- Tanner, Jari. 2013. 'Tallinn, Estonia's Capital, Introduces Free Public Transportation For Residents.' *Huffington Post* 4 April, available at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/04/estonias-capital-introduces-free-public-transportation\\_n\\_3014589.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=world](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/04/estonias-capital-introduces-free-public-transportation_n_3014589.html?utm_hp_ref=world), accessed 11 September 2013.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1994. *Power in Movement*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 2005. *The New Transnational Activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Teeple, Gary. 2000. *Globalization and the Decline of Social Reform: Into the Twenty-first Century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Thomas, Paul D. 2009. *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*. Leiden (NL): Brill.
- Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading (MA): Addison-Wesley.
- Van der Pijl, Kees. 1998. *Transnational Classes and International Relations*. London: Routledge.
- Wainwright, Hilary. 2013. *Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy*, second edition. London: Verso.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1989. *The Modern World System III: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy*. New York: Academic Press.
- Zacune, Joseph. 2013. *Privatising Europe: Using the Crisis to Entrench Neoliberalism*. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.

## Appendix 1. Interview guide

### *Practices*

1. Can we begin briefly with your account of how [TAPG] came into existence, and the role you have played in its development to date? (ascertain participant's current position.)

By **alternative knowledge** I mean analyses, strategies and social visions that *challenge predominant ideas* about how our lives are organized and lived, and that *point to and advocate alternative practices*, values, institutions, and so on.

2. Can you tell me how, in your work at [TAPG], you go about **producing and formulating** alternative knowledge? (Probe about the main *areas of focus*, *lasting projects* etc.)

3. Can you tell me how, in your work at [TAPG], you go about **mobilizing** alternative knowledge, i.e., *getting that knowledge to those who need it*?

4. Who is the knowledge *for*? How does your intended audience influence how you produce and mobilize knowledge?

5. How is work at [TAPG] **organized** – what *division of labour* exists and how does [TAPG] deal with issues of *leadership*, *hierarchy* and *the need for efficiency*?

6. Conventional think tanks like the Brookings Institution or the International Crisis Group create knowledge for managing the *status quo*. In your experience, *are there particular challenges* in attempting to produce knowledge that has **transformative potential** for social and political change? *How does [TAPG] deal with such challenges*?

7. Here are some practices for producing and mobilizing alternative knowledge. Can you tell me *whether and how [TAPG] makes use of them*?

- working with IGOs, governments and other institutions to influence policy
- producing/mobilizing reliable **knowledge that disrupts 'conventional wisdom'**
- building solidarity with allies through **dialogue**
- **participatory approaches** to empower the disadvantaged and oppressed as knowledge creators

8. In producing and mobilizing alternative knowledge, *do you experience a tension* between '**mainstreaming**' and '**marginalization**' – between initiatives that may reach large audiences but fail to challenge entrenched power, and initiatives that do challenge power but reach only small audiences? Are there ways that [TAPG] attempts to *mitigate* this tension?

9. Some observers distinguish between **protest politics** (criticizing bad policies and helping to mobilize resistance), **lobbying** (trying to influence policy) and **generative politics** (developing and advancing alternatives at the grassroots and in civil society). *How does your work at [TAPG] relate to these three kinds of politics? Overall, which kind of politics is [TAPG] most engaged with? Can you provide any salient examples?*

10. How does [TAPG] relate to **mainstream media**, that is, dominant institutions of public communication? *Does it have a communications strategy for getting covered by mainstream media? What are the key challenges with mainstream media?*

11. What roles does [TAPG] play in **alternative (including social) media**, that is, outside of mainstream or corporate media? *Can you tell me the names of the key alt media groups you work with? Do you think of [TAPG] as a producer of media?*

12. [TAPG] mostly works with ideas, texts, media. What are the **challenges** you face in bringing those ideas to life – *in helping to put them into practice?* Are there specific **strategies or techniques** you use in making alternative knowledge *useful* to activists?

### ***Framing***

13. What would you say are the major problems or injustices that [TAPG] addresses in its work today?

14. The globally dominant policy framework has been called neoliberalism, and many see it as serving those with wealth and power. If we think of the dominant policy framework as telling a powerful story that writes us all into its script, how does [TAPG] try to *counter that narrative, to change the story?*

15. In the early 1980s, Margaret Thatcher declared ‘there is no alternative’ to putting the market at the centre of human affairs. Three decades later, *is [TAPG] working toward a more humane, greener capitalism, or toward an alternative to capitalism itself?*

16. At [TAPG], would you say there is a *common vision* of the kind of world you are striving for? If so, how would you sketch it?

- How, if at all, does ‘democracy’ figure in the vision: in what ways; with what meanings?
- How, if at all, does ‘ecology’ figure in the vision: in what ways; with what meanings?
- Are there other key terms and values that inform this vision?

17. In your work at [TAPG], *do you experience a tension* between ‘**the national**’ and ‘**the transnational**’? For instance, major problems may require transnational action, yet the world is organized into national states? Can you talk about that? Are there ways in which [TAPG] tries to get around this problem?

18. Is [TAPG] involved with the World Social Forum or similar wide-ranging initiatives to create another world? Please explain how. How effective is the WSF as Open Space and as Movement of Movements?

19. Do you see [TAPG] as part of an alter-globalization movement, or a ‘global left’? If so, what is [TAPG]’s *distinctive role* in that? In your view, is there a need for the global left to become more organized in ways that promote *coordinated action*?

20. Some analysts hold that global capitalism has entered an *organic crisis* in which ‘the old is dying and the new cannot be born’, and that this crisis has economic, political, cultural, and ecological dimensions. **What are your thoughts on the contemporary crisis:** *how deep and organic is it? What do you see as the key opportunities and threats posed by the crisis* for the alter-globalization movement or global left?

## *Networks*

21. [TAPG] works to create change within a larger field of so-called ‘global civil society’. Can you tell me **the names of the five or so key groups** you work with or have close contact with, in your position at [TAPG]? For each, what is the nature of your collaboration?
22. Has [TAPG] been involved in any of the following international political initiatives; if so, in what capacities and with what impact?
- conferences sponsored by the UN, from Nairobi in 1985 and Rio in 1992 forward;
  - international campaigns, from the blocking the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in 1998 and the 1999 Battle in Seattle, to recent initiatives like the Occupy movement.
23. Does [TAPG] actively cultivate relationships that **bridge across differences** – e.g., north-south, different kinds of movements, classes, demographics? *What are the main differences that you try to bridge? How has [TAPG] created such bridges [through specific programs, through a certain approach to communicating and mobilizing knowledge?]*
24. Some activists warn of the ‘NGOization’ of movements; that is, their institutionalization and depoliticization as NGOs seek legitimacy and funds from the powerful. In your experience, *is NGOization a problem in alter-globalization politics? If so, how does [TAPG]’s work relate to NGOization?*
25. What are [TAPG]’s *main sources of funds? Names of key funding bodies?* How does the issue of *funding shape [TAPG]’s activities?* Is core funding secure? Does funding tend to be project-based?
26. Some say that in the so-called ‘age of austerity’ after the crisis of 2008, it is now more difficult for progressive NGOs to obtain funding and thus to maintain the same level of activity. *What is the situation with your group; how has [TAPG] adapted to austerity?*
27. I would like this study to be of maximal value to the groups and individuals participating in it. Do you have any suggestions as to *how the research and reporting-back might accomplish that?*

## *Background*

Education, Year of Birth, Place of Birth, Current residence, Nationality

I am interested in learning more about the history of [TAPG]. Are there any key documents (beyond the website) that would help me reconstruct that history? How might I access them?

## Appendix 2. A statistical profile of participants

Table A2.1. Participants' position within their TAPG

<b>Position</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Associate/intern	13	14%
Staff	41	45%
Director of a unit	15	16%
Deputy director	3	3%
Executive Director/chair/president/leader	19	21%
Total	91	100%

Table A2.2. Participants' function within their TAPG

<b>Function</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Activist scholar	40	44%
Administration	17	19%
Research/scholarship	15	16%
Activist	8	9%
Communications	8	9%
Other combinations	3	3%
Total	91	100%

Table A2.3. Gender distribution of participants

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	44	48%
Male	47	52%
Total	91	100%

Table A2.4. Age distribution of participants

Age	n	%
20-29	6	7%
30-39	14	15%
40-49	29	32%
50-59	18	20%
60-69	12	13%
70-79	4	4%
80+	2	2%
Not ascertained	6	7%
Total	91	100%

Table A2.5. Participants' affiliation, residence, and place of birth, by region<sup>a</sup>

Region	TAPG headquarters	Residence	Place of birth
North America	9%	9%	10%
Western Europe	36%	34%	26%
Japan	5%	5%	7%
Asia	34%	33%	31%
Sub-Saharan Africa	10%	10%	9%
Latin America	5%	8%	11%
Eastern Europe	0%	0%	1%
Middle-East/North Africa	0%	0%	2%

<sup>a</sup> Percentage of all respondents (n=91).



*Table A2.6. Participants' main field of study*

<b>Field of studies</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Social sciences/humanities/philosophy	45	50%
Economics/political economy	9	10%
Other professions	8	9%
Human professions	7	8%
Management/accounting	6	7%
Natural sciences/engineering	4	4%
Not applicable	2	2%
Not ascertained	10	11%
Total	91	100%

*Table A2.7. Participants' level of education*

<b>Level of education</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
No post-secondary	3	3%
Incomplete post-secondary	4	4%
Diploma	3	3%
Bachelor's degree	16	18%
Post-graduate degree	6	7%
Masters/Law degree	19	21%
PhD or equivalent	27	30%
Not ascertained	13	14%
Total	91	100%