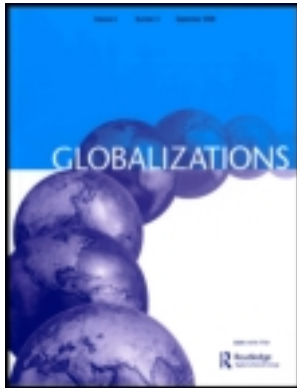


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Publisher: Routledge

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Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Globalizations

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rglo20>

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Published online: 30 Oct 2013.

To cite this article: W. K. Carroll (2013) Networks of Cognitive Praxis: Transnational Class Formation from Below?, *Globalizations*, 10:5, 691-710, DOI: [10.1080/14747731.2013.828962](https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2013.828962)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2013.828962>

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Networks of Cognitive Praxis: Transnational Class Formation from Below?

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ABSTRACT *This article investigates an emergent component of global civil society: **transnational alternative policy groups (TAPGs)** which in recent decades have generated ideas, both visionary and strategic, for a ‘globalization from below’, which is also a process of transnational class formation. Comparing TAPG-centred networks of cognitive praxis with the broader and more integrated pro-capitalist policy-planning network that is integral to the hegemonic bloc, the study considers whether TAPGs contribute to transnational class formation in ways that are analogous to hegemonic policy groups. Findings support the claim that TAPGs serve as ‘collective intellectuals’ facilitating construction of a counter-hegemonic bloc that transects national borders and poses democratic alternatives to neoliberal globalization. The article briefly considers the challenges TAPGs face in this construction project.*

Keywords: transnational class formation, counter-hegemony, alter-globalization, cognitive praxis, networks and movements

Introduction

In recent years researchers have charted transnational class formation ‘from above’: the emergence of a transnational capitalist class, pulled together by elite networks of interlocking corporate directorates, transnational policy-planning boards, and such institutions of global governance as the International Monetary Fund (cf. Carroll, 2010b; Gill, 1990; Robinson, 2004; Sklair, 2001; Van der Pijl, 1998). Although a literature on ‘globalization from below’ has developed since introduction of the term two decades ago (Falk, 1993), the actual shape and form of transnational class formation ‘from below’ has not been empirically charted. This article examines an emergent component of global civil society: *transnational alternative policy groups (TAPGs)*

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which in recent decades have generated ideas, both visionary and strategic, for a globalization from below, which is *also* a process of transnational class formation. I focus on the networks through which TAPGs exert political and cultural influence, in dialogue with subaltern classes and democratic movements. Comparing TAPG-centred networks of cognitive praxis with the broader and more integrated policy-planning network that is integral to the hegemonic bloc, the study considers whether TAPGs contribute to transnational class formation in ways that are analogous to hegemonic policy groups, and briefly discusses the challenges TAPGs face as transnational counter-hegemonic actors.

On Class Formation and Historical Blocs

Within historical materialism, class formation has been envisaged both as a structural process tied to the rise and reproduction of modes of production and as a collective, agentic ensemble of practices and relations that serve as both premises and results of class struggle (Callinicos, 2004, p. 106; Cottrell, 1984; Van der Pijl, 1998). The literature ranges from highly abstract readings of the extended reproduction of the capital/labour relation (e.g. Palloix, 1975; Poulantzas, 1975), to Holloway's (2010) recent interpretation of class formation as radically contingent upon our 'making capitalism' by continuing to alienate our creative agency and its product. Although one might doubt his hyper-voluntarism, steeped in the notion that capitalism can be transcended by an agglomeration of individual choices to stop making it, Holloway is surely right to characterize the future as radically open. What is needed, however, is a sociologically adequate account of the play of agency and structure in both replicating the past and opening alternative futures. Here, Nilsen's Marxist theory of social movements is a useful intervention. 'Social movements emanate from and are grounded in the collective skilled activity of both dominant and subaltern groups' (Nilsen, 2009, p. 115). A movement from above strives to maintain or modify a dominant structure in ways that reproduce and/or extend the power of dominant groups and their hegemonic position within the social formation (Ibid., p. 115); a movement from below pursues an alternative project of reform or transformation. In its more agentic moment, then, class formation involves *the formation of movements from above and from below*. What distinguishes *transnational* class formation are its 'transnational practices': 'practices that cross state borders and do not originate with state actors or agencies' (Sklair, 2001, p. 107).

This study is grounded in neo-Gramscian thought on hegemony, counter-hegemony, and the role of intellectuals in class formation (Cox, 1987; Femia, 1981; Gill, 1995; Morton, 2007; Rupert, 2002; Thomas, 2009). In this perspective, each fundamental group or class creates, as integral to its own being, organic intellectuals—organizers of a way of life—who provide leadership in economic, cultural, and political domains.¹ This leadership is crucial not only to the functioning of institutions but to the conduct of social movements, from above and from below. Since the late 1960s, an extensive research literature on the social organization of corporate elites has focused on policy-planning groups as key sites for organic intellectuals of the big bourgeoisie (e.g. Carroll, 2010b; Carroll and Shaw, 2001; Domhoff, 1967). Such groups inhabit and help animate what Habermas (1989) has termed the liberal public sphere—or its late capitalist remnants—a bulwark of bourgeois hegemony founded, among other thing, upon exclusions of subaltern voices (Eley, 1991).

Just as hegemonic think tanks and policy groups engage in knowledge production and mobilization (KPM) that organizes political projects of the dominant class (Carroll and Shaw, 2001), *alternative policy groups* are sites of cognitive praxis from below²—linking into the various life-worlds of social movements and facilitating 'convergence across difference' (Conway, 2004,

p. 260) among diverse oppositional forces. These groups inhabit and help sustain what, following Fraser, we might call 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, p. 67; cf. Angus, 2001; Negt and Kluge, 1993 [1972]).

Such counterpublics, especially as they are networked across national spaces and issue domains, vivify a *historical bloc* for democratic globalization—a prospect nicely captured at the World Social Forum (WSF) in the notion of a ‘movement of movements’. In this sense, alternative policy groups are protagonists in a political and cultural war of position to win space within global civil society for counter-hegemonic alternatives (Carroll, 2010a; Carroll and Sapinski, 2010; Katz, 2006). From a Gramscian perspective, class formation from below entails precisely these political and cultural processes, grounded in capitalist economic relations of appropriation and accumulation, but not reducible to them. Although such processes often entail specific reforms, they may also promote a ‘cathartic’ passage from the economic-corporate frame within which subordinates define their interests in narrow, instrumental terms, to an ethico-political project that brings formerly disparate identities onto common ground (Carroll, 2010a; Gramsci, 1977, p. 367). Such a bloc is not easily assembled, and to the extent that it emerges, it might be expected to include a networked plurality of counterpublics that establish among themselves some degree of unity in diversity (cf. Sanbonmatsu, 2004, p. 130; Stephen, 2009, p. 494).³

This article focuses on *transnational* alternative policy groups (TAPGs) that research and promote democratic alternatives to neoliberal globalization and in the process furnish intellectual leadership in class formation from below. In mapping the networks TAPGs sustain through their cognitive praxis, I situate them as transnational counter-hegemonic actors on the contested terrain of global civil society. The latter has been defined as ‘the realm of non-coercive collective action around shared interests and values that operates beyond the boundaries of nation states’ (Glasius et al., 2006). Although the concept has been idealized as a coherent collection of world citizens moving forward toward social justice, I see global civil society as a field of struggle, distinct from the global economy and the inter-state system yet internally related to both. In short, it comprises a ‘terrain for legitimizing and challenging global governance’ and a ‘discursive space’ (Ford, 2003, p. 129) that helps reproduce global hegemony (cf. Munck, 2006). Within this space, conventional think tanks and policy groups play an active role in integrating a hegemonic bloc: they not only produce knowledge that informs and legitimizes neoliberal governance, they also mobilize that knowledge through extensive elite networking, thereby helping to form a strategic consensus within the dominant class (cf. Carroll and Carson, 2003; Carroll and Shaw, 2001; Carroll and Sapinski, 2010). In the next section of this article, I provide a brief history of this process as an aspect of class formation from above.

Networks have also been shown to be both prerequisites for and emergent elements of social movements from below (Diani, 2011). A Gramscian conception of class formation thus directs our attention to the activist networks that TAPGs as centres of alternative KPM help sustain and enrich, and to the following multifaceted research question:

Do TAPGs play roles that are analogous to hegemonic policy groups: do they help carry a networked configuration of transnational counterpublics; do they integrate an historical bloc around democratic globalization?

Subsequent sections of this article offer an empirical analysis that speaks to this question.

A Brief History of Think Tanks and the Making of Neoliberal Hegemony

To understand the role of alternative policy groups in class formation from below, the history of conventional think tanks in the making of neoliberal hegemony is worth recounting. Global civil society has long been dominated by a cosmopolitan bourgeoisie, reflecting the superior material and cultural resources of a dominant class (Van der Pijl, 1998). In the twentieth century a network of business-oriented think tanks and policy groups entered the field, and by the century's closing decades a new breed of 'advocacy think tanks' (Abelson, 1995) were shaping the neoliberal project of market-centred society (Macartney, 2008; Stone, 2000).

In this way, the history of conventional think tanks fits within a narrative of class formation from above. In the early twentieth century, the United States took the lead in the elaboration of these centres of intellectual leadership (Abelson, 1995). Linked into the circuitry of state policy networks, mainstream media, and corporate elites, think tanks of the right have since the 1970s become important sites of KPM in the construction of a neoliberal discursive field (Carroll and Carson, 2003; Carroll and Shaw, 2001; Carroll and Sapinski, 2010; Gill, 1990; Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009).

But the roots of neoliberal advocacy go deeper, and were transnational in character from early on (Van der Pijl, 1998, p. 130). Friedrich von Hayek's founding of the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS) in 1947, when Keynesian corporate liberalism was gaining ascendancy, was a key moment in the invention of neoliberalism. Hayek, an activist intellectual *extraordinaire*, recognized the need to rebuild anti-socialist science in order to create anti-socialist intellectuals, and to establish anti-socialist knowledge centres that could process and disseminate ideas (Plehwe and Walpen, 2006, p. 33). Although the Society laboured in obscurity for over two decades, it assembled networks and cultural resources to mount an effective ideological offensive as the post-war class compromise began to dissolve in the 1970s. Its membership (mostly economists) grew from the initial 38 to more than 1,000, and a proactive programme of establishing right-wing think tanks in various countries was implemented, creating capacity in global civil society for a thriving neoliberal culture (Carroll, 2007, p. 44). Thus did the MPS evolve as 'a historical "thought collective" of increasingly global proportions' (Plehwe, 2009, p. 4).

An important elaboration of the MPS network is the Atlas Economic Research Foundation Network, a formation of more than 400 market-oriented think tanks, most of them nationally focused and founded and run with the help of at least one MPS member (Plehwe, 2009, p. 35). 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 LSE in the 1950s, it strives 'to discover, develop and support Intellectual Entrepreneurs worldwide who advance the Atlas vision of a society of free and responsible individuals'.⁴ Funded by wealthy individuals and businesses, Atlas strives to 'connect Intellectual Entrepreneurs to the tools, training, resources, and allies they need to succeed. As their institutions grow, Atlas encourages these leaders to mentor younger organizations entering the Atlas network.'⁵

Not only are vast networks like Atlas well established; these collective intellectuals of corporate capitalism continue to proliferate. George Soros's Open Society Foundation now has a Think Tank Fund to support policy institutes in Central and South Eastern Europe and across the southern Caucasus, and the Ottawa-based Think Tank Initiative, hosted by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), has since its establishment in 2008 funded 52 think tanks in 23 Southern countries.⁶

An instructive tracking of think tanks is provided in James McGann's (2011) *The Global 'Go-To Think Tanks'*. The time series in Figure 1 showing the 6,480 think tanks extant in early 2011,⁷

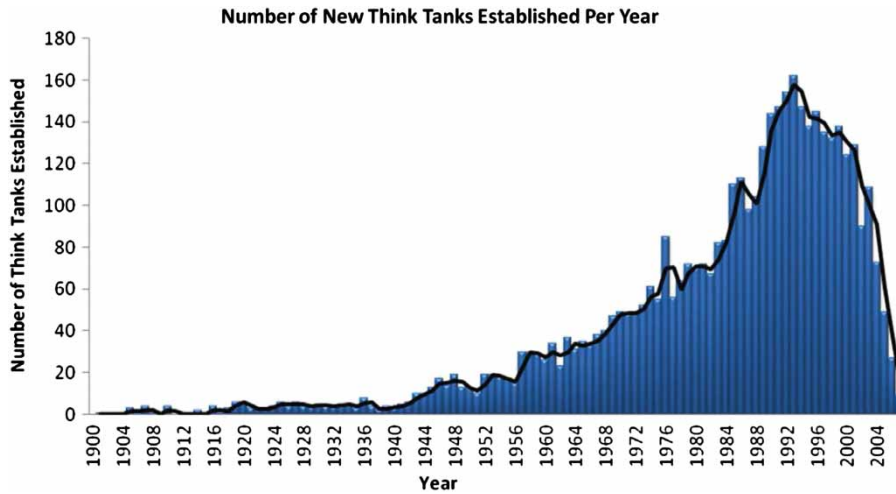


Figure 1. Think tanks established per year, 1900–2008, worldwide. *Source:* McGann (2011).

evinces a slow accretion of think tanks beginning in 1907, until the 1940s, when the curve begins to accelerate, through to the late 1980s. The remarkable number of new establishments from the 1970s through the 1990s reflects both the crisis of the post-war hegemonic project and the elaboration of transnational neoliberalism in its place. This is consistent with Van der Pijl's observation that 'policy planning is typically a product of crisis conditions, when a current concept of control unravels in the face of challenges it cannot satisfactorily deal with' (1998, pp. 117–18).

McGann's report uses 'peer/expert rankings' to identify the 'go-to' think tanks⁸—a reputational method that might be said to give a rough picture, from within the habitus of think tanks themselves, of what dominates the field worldwide. Among the top 25 think tanks detected through this methodology (Table 1), the Anglo-American neoliberal right is well ensconced; however, a plurality of the think tanks occupy the centre right—typically subscribing to a 'realist' view of how to manage inter-state tensions, thus reproducing the global status quo (e.g. the Council on Foreign Relations, Chatham House) or espousing technocratic systems management (e.g. Rand Corporation). The humanitarian centre left also has a presence, contributing seven organizations (although Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are not really think tanks, but activist organizations focused on defence of human rights).⁹ What is conspicuous in its absence is any political position beyond the centre-left project of giving capitalism a human face. In this sense, the Top 25 exemplifies the 'unequal structure of representation' endemic to hegemony (Mahon, 1977). The hard right is well represented by extravagantly funded organizations based in neoliberalism's Anglo-American heartland, and the spectrum extends to the liberal/social democratic left. In fact, none of the alternative policy groups I consider to be key in promoting counter-hegemonic possibilities appears even in the longer list of 75 nominated think tanks in McGann's report (2011, pp. 23–4).

The Emergence and Development of Transnational Alternative Policy Groups

Set against these well-resourced, high-profile purveyors of policy, sites of cognitive praxis 'from below' have been slower to form, much more modestly resourced, and until recently, have

Table 1. Top 25 think tanks worldwide (US and non-US)

	Name	Country	Political orientation
1	Brookings Institution	United States	Centre-right
2	Council on Foreign Relations	United States	Centre-right
3	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	United States	Centre-right
4	Chatham House (aka The Royal Institute of International Affairs)	United Kingdom	Centre-right
5	Amnesty International	United Kingdom	Centre-left
6	RAND Corporation	United States	Centre-right
7	Center for Strategy and International Studies	United States	Centre-right
8	Heritage Foundation	United States	Hard right
9	Transparency International	Germany	Centre-left
10	Peterson Institute for International Economics (FNA) Institute for International Economics	United States	Centre-right
11	International Crisis Group	Belgium	Centre-left
12	Cato Institute	United States	Hard right
13	American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI)	United States	Hard right
14	International Institute for Strategic Studies	United Kingdom	Centre-right
15	Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)	Belgium	
16	Human Rights Watch	United Kingdom	Centre-left
17	Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars	United States	Centre-right
18	Bruegel	Belgium	Centre-right
19	Adam Smith Institute	United Kingdom	Hard right
20	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)	Sweden	Centre-left
21	Open Society Institute	Hungary	Centre-left
22	Urban Institute	United States	Centre-left
23	Center for Global Development	United States	Centre-right
24	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)	China	
25	Fraser Institute	Canada	Hard right

Source: McGann (2011).

tended to operate within national spaces. All this reflects the difficulties in moving from subalternity to counter-hegemony. Think tanks of the right and centre have deep roots in the development of twentieth-century capitalism, with its rationalization of management, administration, planning, and policy. In contrast, left-wing think tanks are a recent invention, and transnational groups of this sort are more recent still.

However, neoliberalism's ideological triumph, materialized in the widespread implementation of neoliberal policy in the 1980s and 1990s, created certain structural conditions for a resurgence of counter-hegemonic politics. Market-driven policies tended to increase economic disparities and to degrade public goods (Harvey, 2005; Teeple, 2000), while thinning the social basis for political consent and expanding the range of disaffected social interests (Cox, 1987). 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 (Coburn, 2010; Smith, 2008; Stephen, 2009). Most recently, a protracted crisis of neoliberalism, crystallized in the global financial crisis of 2008 and conjoined to a deepening ecological crisis, has opened opportunities for TAPGs and allied movements to win new space for democratic alternatives. Despite the relevance of TAPGs to the question of transnational counter-hegemony,

the extensive literature on transnationalization of social movements has not focused on them, although the WSF (not a TAPG per se, but a meeting place and, increasingly, a coordinator of action) has attracted much attention (e.g. Conway, 2011; Sen and Waterman, 2012; Smith, 2004; Worth and Buckley, 2009).

In a formal sense, these policy groups resemble advocacy think tanks of the right: they provide intellectual leadership through research, analysis, and knowledge mobilization. Most alternative policy groups resemble the hundreds of neoliberal think tanks that make up the Atlas Network in another way: they are embedded within national polities. For national think tanks of the left or right, the primary mission of influencing the policies of national states limits their political visions and strategies to what can be posed and accomplished within national borders. For right-wing think tanks, whose projects are centred around *replication* of hegemonic capitalist structures and practices, such state-centrism is not particularly problematic, but for the left, defining the national state as the container of politics can limit the scope for radically *transformative* projects, particularly in a post-Westphalian era in which many justice issues transect national borders (Fraser, 2005; McMichael, 2009). Left think tanks that pose their political projects transnationally may offer strategic value in counter-hegemonic struggles; hence the focus, in what follows, on *transnational* alternative policy groups.

Sixteen Transnational Alternative Policy Groups: A Judgement Sample

My analysis here is centred upon a judgement sample of 16 major TAPGs, each of which satisfies these criteria:

- a core function of *knowledge production and mobilization* that challenges existing political-economic hegemonies and that presents alternatives, creates new paradigms, etc.;
- a significant part of that cognitive praxis takes up transnational issues and speaks to transnational counterpublics;
- 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).

These 16 groups were selected from a larger set of 84 international organizations engaged in research and knowledge production, typically in combination with other activities. 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 (YIO)*, a well-established source of information on the organizations of global civil society (Smith, 2008; Smith and Wiest, 2012). The sample was stratified to include representation of major regions of the Global North and South. The 16 selected organizations met the three specified selection criteria particularly well, compared to the other organizations.¹⁰

Although selection criteria required only that each group be active as a centre of KPM at the time of data collection (late 2011), there is considerable variance in year of establishment (see Table 2). Four groups formed in the mid-1970s, at the culmination of the 1960s' protest wave, and as the crisis of the post-war era set in. After 1976 there was a near-hiatus of a dozen years, during which just two TAPGs were established, both in 1984. In the past couple of decades, and particularly from the mid-1990s to 2005, TAPGs proliferated, as an intellectual aspect of the global democracy movement, but also as critical responses to the crises and contradictions of neoliberal globalization.

Table 2. 16 Key TAPGs

Est'd	Name	Location	On WSF Int'l Council
1974	Transnational Institute (TNI)	Amsterdam	Yes
1975	Third World Forum (TWF)	Dakar	*
1976	Centre Tricontinental (CETRI)	Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium	Yes
1976	Centre de recherche et d'information pour le développement (CRID)	Paris	Yes
1984	Third World Network (TWN)	Penang, Malaysia	Yes
1984	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)	Manila	Yes
1989	Instituto del tercer mundo (ITeM)	Montevideo	Yes
1990	Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RLF)	Berlin	
1994	International Forum on Globalization (IFG)	San Francisco	Yes
1995	Focus on the Global South (FGS)	Bangkok	Yes
1995	ZCom	Woods Hole, MA	Yes
1997	Network Institute for Global Democratization (NIGD)	Helsinki	Yes
1998	People's Plan Study Group (PPSG)	Tokyo	
2001	Centre for Civil Society (CCS)	Durban	
2005	Alternatives International (ALTINT)	Montreal	Yes
2005	India Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement (CACIM)	New Delhi	

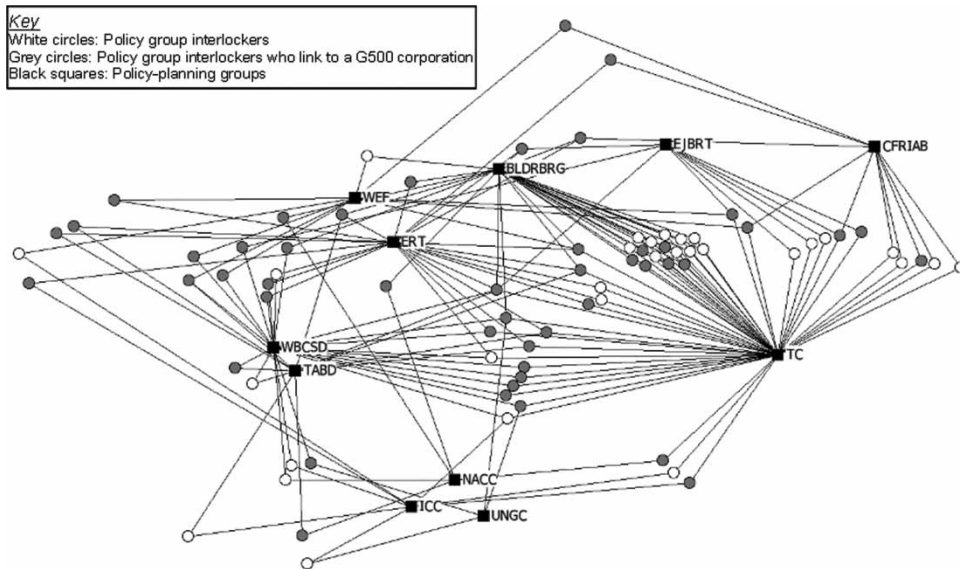
*Participates in World Social Forum International Council through World Forum for Alternatives, a joint venture with CETRI.

These 16 groups are diverse in organizational form and political priorities, including the extent to which they focus their efforts on *prefigurative* KPM, that is, cognitive praxis relevant to the construction of alternative futures, as distinct from the critique of existing reality. Groups such as the Third World Network, the Tricontinental Centre (CETRI), and Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) focus on critique of current political-economic conditions and policies; Critical Action – Centre in Movement (CACIM) and the Network Institute for Global Democratization emphasize the construction of ‘open spaces’ for political dialogue; groups like Focus on the Global South (Focus), International Forum on Globalization, the Transnational Institute (TNI), and ZCom consciously strive, in combination with critique, to formulate counter-hegemonic projects that prefigure actual alternatives to neoliberal capitalism, as in Focus’s ‘deglobalization’ paradigm, TNI’s ‘Alternative Regionalisms’ initiative, and ZCom’s ‘participatory economics’ programme. Despite these specificities, which are explored in depth elsewhere (Carroll, 2013), the political sensibilities of all 16 groups seem to converge upon a conception of sustainable human development that blends radical-democratic and ecological imaginaries (Ibid.).

Networks of Transnational Policy Groups, Hegemonic and Alternative

In the study of hegemonic policy groups sociologists have employed network analysis to map the inter-organizational relations that link such groups to each other, and to corporate elites. My

study of the making of a transnational capitalist class documented the recent consolidation of a network of hegemonic policy boards and leading corporate directorates that enhances corporate capital's capacity to act, through the former, as a class-for-itself (Carroll, 2010b, pp. 226–7). An indication of how transnational policy boards contribute to class formation is given in Figure 2, which uses data from that earlier study to depict the multiple board affiliations that knit together 11 leading organizations of this kind as of early 2007. 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.



Acronyms used

- BLDRBRG: Bilderberg conferences
- CFRIAB: International Advisory Board of the Council on Foreign Relations
- EJBRT: EU-Japan Business Round Table
- ERT: European Round Table of Industrialists
- ICC: International Chamber of Commerce
- NACC: North American Competitiveness Council
- TABD: TransAtlantic Business Dialogue
- TC: Trilateral Commission
- UNGC: United Nations Global Compact
- WBCSD: World Business Council for Sustainable Development
- WEF: World Economic Forum

Figure 2. Interlocks among 11 transnational policy groups as of early 2007. *Source:* author's data.

An adequate answer to our research question—whether TAPGs play integrative roles in transnational class formation analogous to hegemonic policy groups—requires analysis not only of TAPGs but of the major transnational social movements that are in dialogue with them. As a first step, we can consider what sort of network might connect our 16 TAPGs *to each other*, and how it compares to the elite network of hegemonic policy boards.

The network of TAPGs needs to be approached as a formation that is both multi-tiered (existing both at the level of individual activist intellectuals and at the level of groups and organizations) and multiplex in the nature of its social relations (consisting in various kinds of ties). In Figure 3, we see the inter-organizational relations, as of late 2011, with Southern-based TAPGs shown in light grey and Northern-based TAPGs shown in dark grey. Organization-to-organization ties have been gleaned both from listings in the *YIO* and from TAPG websites. The depth and strength of these can be difficult to assess from the information at hand, and the mapping is almost certainly incomplete, since *YIO* listings (and websites) vary in the extent to which they report partners.¹¹

Although 14 of the 16 groups form a weakly connected component, the sociogram shows that, with the exceptions of TNI and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Northern TAPGs tend not to engage in extensive inter-organizational networking. The US-based groups, ZCom and IFG, are isolates, and Tokyo-based PPSG is brought into the network only by TWF's nomination. Four of the five European-based groups form a chain-like configuration, while Paris-based CRID links to Montreal-based Alternatives International. Seven ties join Northern and Southern groups, with the TNI, Centre for Civil Society, and particularly the Third World Forum playing cross-regional integrative roles. Focus also links to both Northern and Southern groups by virtue of its relation with TNI; however four Southern groups (CACIM, DAWN, TWN, and ITeM) connect only with other Southern groups.

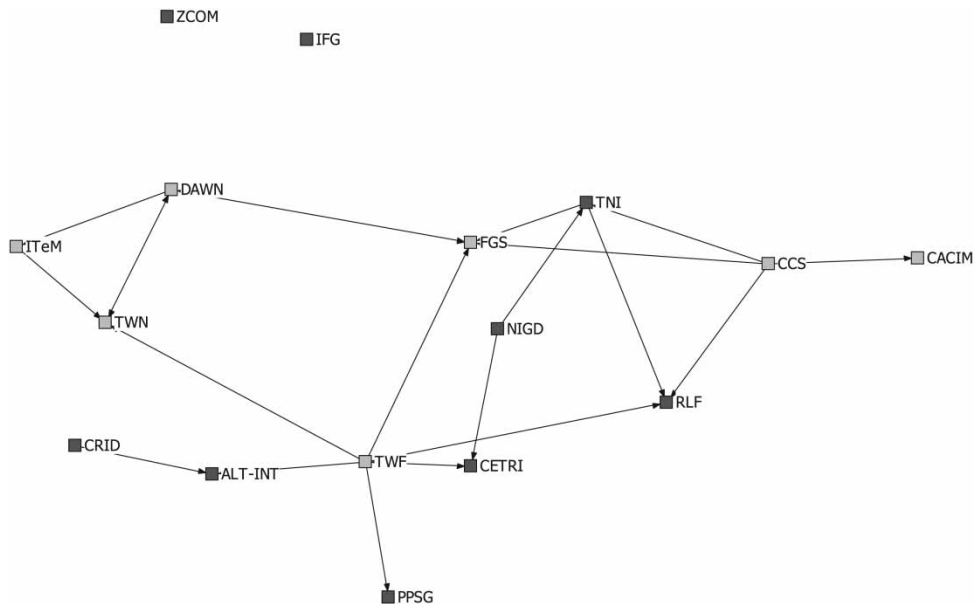


Figure 3. Inter-organizational relations among 16 TAPGs.

If inter-organizational relations show some evidence of regional clustering, the direct participation of 11 of 16 groups on the International Council (IC) of the WSF mitigates any North–South disjuncture (see Figure 4). The IC is the WSF’s planning group, and has representation from 129 organizations.¹² For TAPGs, it is clearly the great attractor—a key site for dialogue and collaboration—for the formation of subaltern counterpublics. Adding membership ties to the WSF IC (represented as a large circle) pulls all 16 TAPGs into a connected configuration, corroborating findings from surveys of WSF attendees on the integrative importance of the Forum for the global left (Reese et al., 2008).

Although its administrative office remains in Porto Alegre, since the 2004 Forum in Mumbai the WSF has been not only an open space but a mobile one. If we locate the WSF according to its incarnation at Dakar (closest in time to our network data—February 2011, and taking care not to impose the IC on top of the Dakar-based Third World Forum), we arrive at the map in Figure 5. Nodes and lines are colour-coded according to Newman groupings, an exploratory method of identifying groups in a network on the basis of shared connections (Newman, 2006). The WSF IC mediates between an entirely Southern group (in red) and a larger group for which TWF is the pivot (in bright green); however, several other TAPGs also link longitudinally and form their own groups (notably, the cluster in gold, for which Durban-based CCS is the pivot).

As a multi-tiered formation, the network of TAPGs is constituted both by the relations among groups and by cross-memberships and other practices of activist intellectuals that traverse group boundaries. Figure 6 adds to our earlier sociogram the activists closely associated with any of the 16 TAPGs, as white triangles, showing ‘interpersonal’ ties created by *overlapping group memberships*—when an activist plays a significant role in two (or more) TAPGs. As noted earlier in Figure 2, such cross-membership is quite common within the hegemonic bloc; however, in this

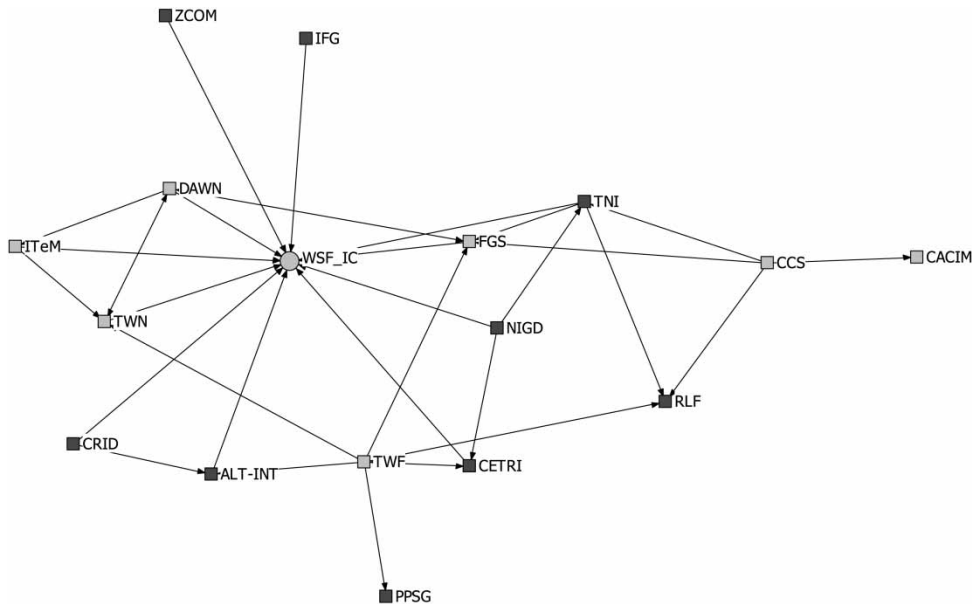


Figure 4. Inter-organizational relations among TAPGs and WSF International Council.

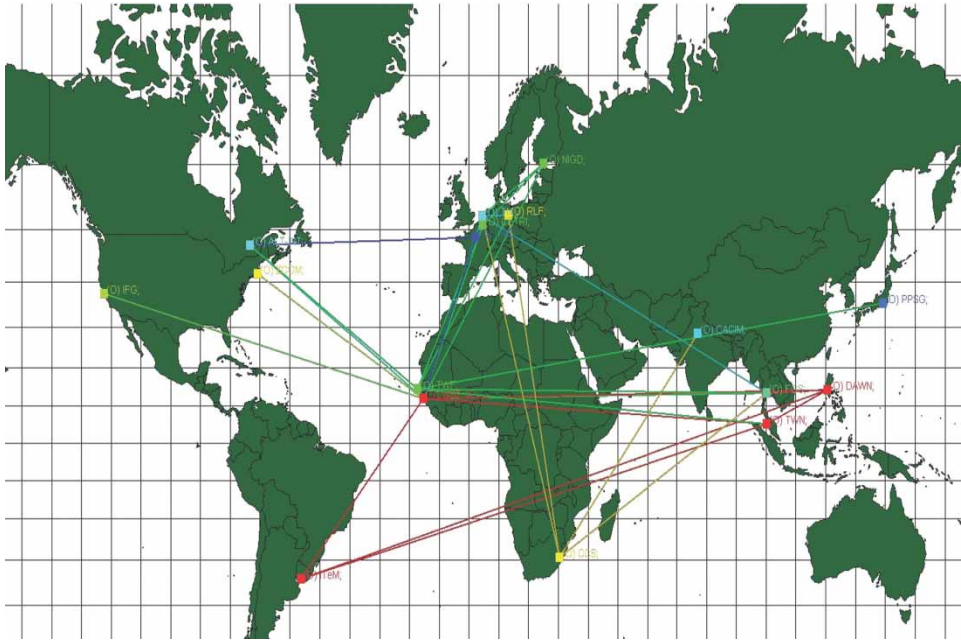


Figure 5. Spatial plot of the network of TAPGs plus WSF IC

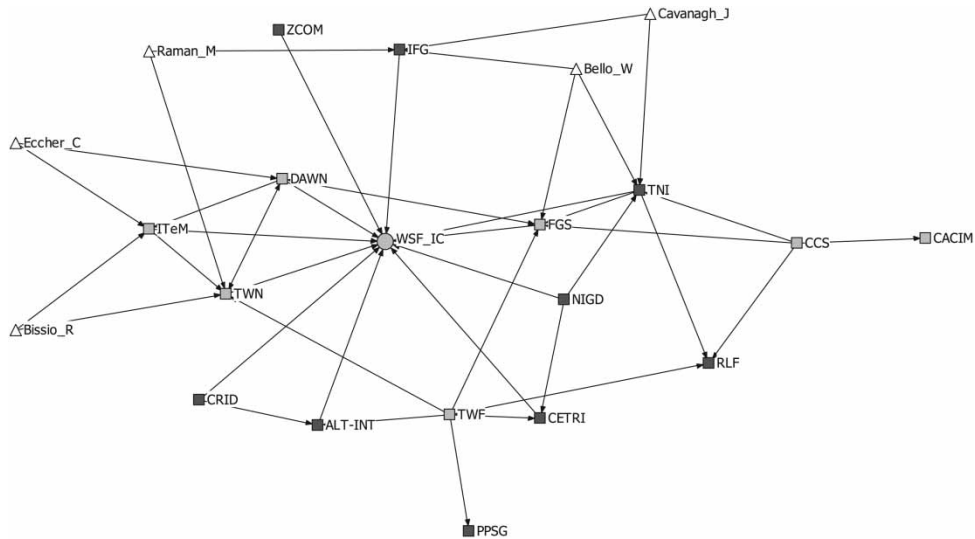


Figure 6. Inter-organizational and interpersonal relations among TAPGs and WSF IC.

alter-globalization network it is rare. Among core activists, most groups have no overlapping memberships with other groups; individuals with cross-memberships number just five, compared to the 81 interlocking board members that connect the hegemonic policy boards into a connected network. The five activists with multiple affiliations knit six of the 16 TAPGs into a

connected network; in comparison, all 11 hegemonic policy boards are linked through membership overlaps into a connected network, and each pair of boards is either directly linked or connected at one remove. Indeed, the density of overlapping memberships among the hegemonic policy boards is 0.719 (i.e. 72% of all pairs of boards share one or more members); compared to 0.050 among the TAPGs.

However, the global network of TAPGs is more than a set of cross-memberships and organizational linkages; it is *continually instantiated* through the practices of activist intellectuals as they cooperate and collaborate. Consider for instance, the session ‘Alter-Globalization: How Actors Contest Globalization’, one of hundreds of sessions at the 2011 WSF.¹³ The session brought together key activists from four of our TAPGs—NIGD, CETRI, CCS, and FGS—around a major book project (Pleyers, 2011). These crosscutting ties, in this case a collaboration of TAPGs based in Helsinki, Belgium, Durban, and Bangkok, point to vibrant transnational counterpublics, and to the importance of WSF as an open space for their elaboration.

The final day of the 2011 WSF featured a series of 38 ‘Assemblies of Convergence’ on major crosscutting themes, each organized by sponsoring groups ranging in number from 2 to 38. The point of these assemblies is to go beyond ‘open space’ discussions, to formulate strategies and action plans for creating change. Seven of our 16 TAPGs co-organized a total of nine assemblies, as depicted in Figure 7. Montreal-based Alternatives International, itself a coalition of seven groups, co-organized four assemblies; FGS collaborated in three; CACIM, CRID, and NIGD co-organized two each; TNI and CCS co-organized one a piece. Here we can discern the facilitative role that several TAPGs played, spanning across political domains—as in CACIM’s co-sponsorship of the assemblies on the Global Network for Collective Rights of the Peoples (GLOBALRIGHTS in the sociogram) and the Road Map of Struggles: Cop 17, Rio + 20 and After (COP17_Rio in the sociogram). Equally, it is clear that at the Forum, TAPGs were joined by many movement groups playing similarly facilitative roles—Paris-based ATTAC, São Paulo-

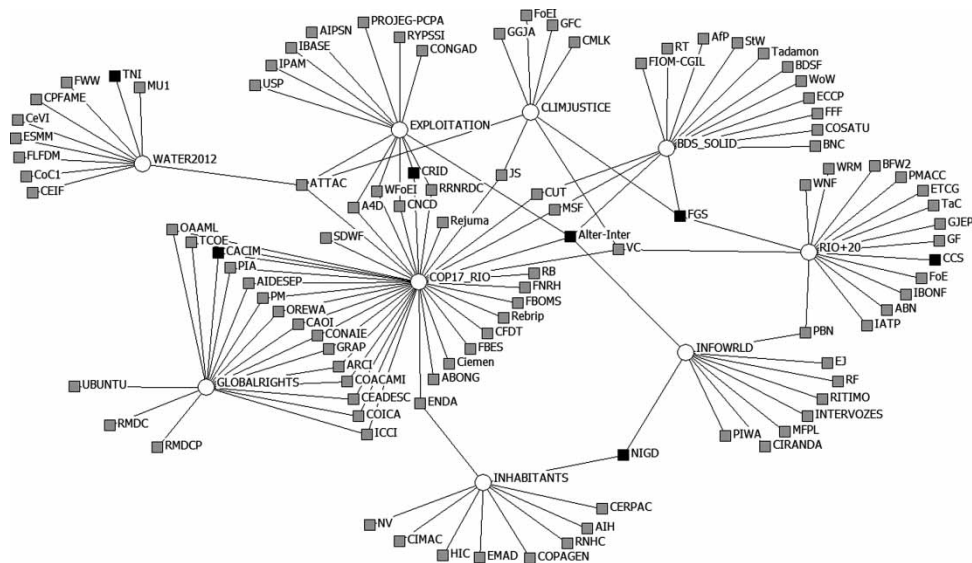


Figure 7. Assemblies of convergence co-organized by seven TAPGs, WSF 2011.

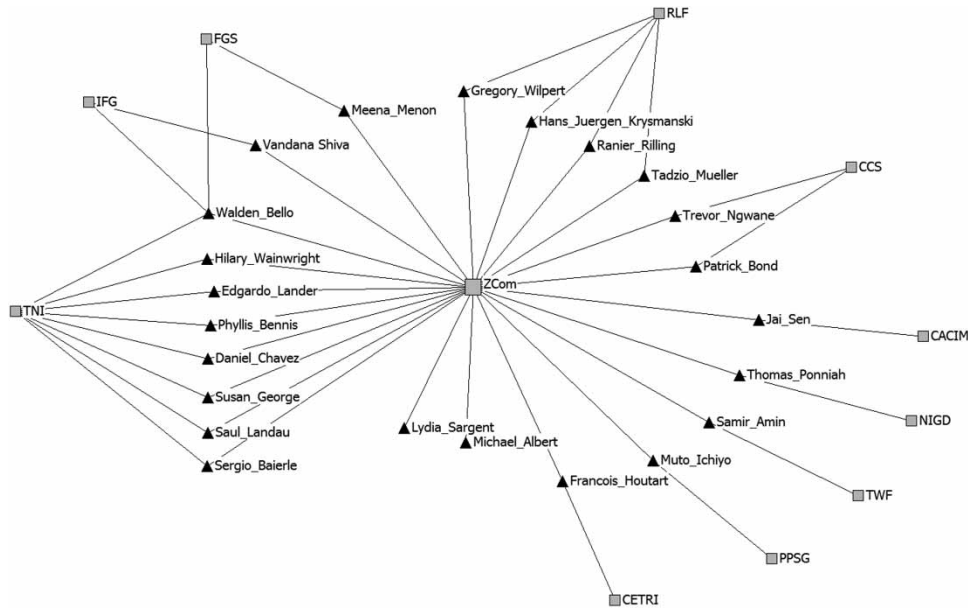


Figure 8. The network of ZCOM contributors active in TAPGs.

based Via Campesina, Amsterdam-based Friends of the Earth International, Manila-based Jubilee South, and UK-based Pambazuka News, to cite a few key ones in the network. At the WSF, TAPGs collaborate with a diverse set of movement groups, alternative media groups, and NGOs, creating a horizontally networked, transnational counterpublic.

A particularly important instance of this phenomenon, which I take to be integral to class formation from below, is that of ZCom's Zspace site, an attempt to build an online community of the global left. Earlier, we saw that ZCom does not appear to have inter-organizational ties to other TAPGs, nor are its key protagonists (a small collective that includes Lydia Sargent and Michael Albert) active in other TAPGs. In the network of inter-organizational relations, ZCOM is effectively an isolate, although it does participate on the WSF IC. However, if we consider how Zspace brings its contributing writers into a shared space, we find that key activist intellectuals associated with TAPGs participate extensively in this transnational counterpublic (see Figure 8). As a site for producing and mobilizing counter-hegemonic knowledge, Zspace pulls together the work of activist intellectuals from 11 of our 16 TAPGs (including ZCom itself), taking in such high-profile contributors as Vandana Shiva, Patrick Bond, Samir Amin, Thomas Ponniah, Hilary Wainwright, Susan George, Gregory Wilpert, Jai Sen, and the ubiquitous Walden Bello.¹⁴ In these examples from the WSF and from ZCOM, we can discern the integrative role that TAPGs play in creating and sustaining the transnational counterpublics that are integral to class formation from below.

Conclusion

These findings point toward a nascent historical bloc in which TAPGs figure importantly, a network of counterpublics organically articulated to a range of movements opposing neoliberal globalization (if not capitalism). They may be taken as *prima facie* evidence of transnational

class formation from below. Granted, this process is dramatically overshadowed by the far more extensive and established bloc that sustains capitalist hegemony, as direct comparison of policy-group networks made clear. Compared to the tightly knit network of interlocking hegemonic policy boards, the sparseness of the TAPGs network is striking, though not surprising. In class terms, it reflects massive resource disparities, but also the difference between a hierarchically organized minority and a largely disorganized majority whose structures are more horizontal. The former is inherently easier to pull together via ties among the relative few at the top; the latter—what Santos (2008) has termed ‘a global left’ inheres in a multitude of loosely organized social circles, a rhizomic form that minimizes the likelihood of very many overlapping memberships.¹⁵

These networks extend well beyond the interconnected policy groups, but in distinctive ways. The hegemonic bloc’s hierarchical organization makes elite interlocking a common practice, and this creates an extensive, institutionalized corporate-policy network. Within the counter-hegemonic bloc dialogical venues such as the WSF—both as open space and as movement of movements—enable TAPGs to participate in more episodic, loosely organized networks spanning across many political domains, as in the Assemblies of Convergence. Such networking can help launch more durable processes of movement-building and class formation from below.¹⁶

As suggestive as they are, these findings raise as many questions as they answer and beg for clarification through more in-depth inquiry. One set of questions has to do with how the networks sketched in this article actually contribute to transnational class formation and to counter-hegemonic politics. *How* do they facilitate political development beyond the fragments of single-issue politics encased within nation states? How do TAPGs, as key network-builders, foster cooperative practices *among* various subaltern collective actors, countervailing against competitive pressures that often pit groups against each other in struggling for funds and members (Pozner and Rao, 2006)? Do TAPGs, like their hegemonic counterparts (Carroll and Sapinski, 2010), serve as ‘brokers’, bridging across geographic spaces (e.g. North–South) and movement domains to foster the ‘unity in diversity’ that is taken as a criterial attribute of a counter-hegemonic historic bloc (Butko, 2006; Massicotte, 2009)? Alternatively, are there ways in which the global network is factionalized by structural holes and cleavages, as in the fissure between ecological and social justice politics that plagued activist networks in the 1990s (Foster, 1993)?¹⁷

Another set of questions interrogates the roles TAPGs actually play in practice, and the challenges they face. How do they actually function as ‘think tanks of a different sort’, combining research and analysis with democratizing practice? How do they support protest politics (criticizing neoliberal globalization and helping to mobilize resistance) while fostering what Williams (2008) has termed *generative* politics—developing and advancing alternatives to neoliberal capitalism, what I earlier called prefigurative cognitive praxis? How do TAPGs, in their repertoires of action, instantiate such generative politics, through practices such as participatory research strategies, horizontal forms of organization, dialogical communicative practices with allies (including alternative media), and ‘critical, democratic pedagogy’ (Conway, 2004, p. 72)? Alternatively, what are the inertial challenges in counter-hegemonic cognitive praxis: how do established approaches predicated upon professional expertise, bureaucratic organization, and monological communication get replicated as these groups strive to have tangible impact with modest resources? In short, how do TAPGs face the challenge of reaching massive, diverse potential constituencies and creating new political methodologies that go against the grain, giving shape to emergent oppositional and prefigurative practices?

In fieldwork currently in progress, I am engaging ethnographically and dialogically with a number of TAPGs to get a grounded picture of how their networks, discourses, and practices

contribute to transnational class formation, and the challenges they face as collective intellectuals. Networks, discourses, and practices can be distinguished thematically, but in actuality they interpenetrate. Indeed, networks are ‘produced and transformed by the discourses and practices circulating through them’ (Juris, 2008, p. 11), and to have effect within a global field, practices and discourses must be extensively networked. The architectonic mappings presented here must be complemented with thick descriptions and reflections on how TAPGs actually formulate knowledge and mobilize it among social movements. Only then will we be in a position to address whether in the post-2008 conjuncture transnational class formation from below is proceeding beyond the narrow horizons that Smith depicted in 2008:

The democratic globalization network—a very loose and mostly unselfconscious collection of actors seeking more participatory and responsive forms of global policy—. . . lacks cohesion and has failed to clearly articulate a vision of globalization that can compete with that of its rival, neoliberal network. (2008, p. 226)

A final question is whether what we are observing with TAPGs and the global networks in which they participate is class formation from below or *from the middle*. Generally, the activists who animate these groups are not themselves deeply placed within subalternity. They are, like many movement activists, well educated and comparatively resource rich; typically they are members of what Van der Pijl (1998) has astutely called the cadre stratum—a diverse formation of professionals and administrators to whom a good deal of capitalist authority is delegated, who may align themselves either with the capitalist bloc or against it.¹⁸ To the extent that activist intellectuals are ‘organic’, their close relation to the subordinate class may be more a political accomplishment than an existential fact preceding activist careers.

Indeed, TAPGs, and their activist intellectuals, face the continuing challenge of embedding themselves in the world of on-the-ground movements that are often motivated by local, militant particularisms. Master frames of global justice, the stock-in-trade of TAPGs, may resonate only weakly with local issues (Snow and Benford, 1992), or to put the matter pragmatically, their relevancies need to be established. Theory, including the critical discourses these groups produce and circulate, ‘becomes a *material force*’, as Marx (1844) put it, ‘as soon as it has gripped the *masses*’. To the extent they are successful in meeting this challenge, TAPGs may play a catalytic role in ‘connecting the dots’ across localities and issue areas, in building a transnational movement of movements that is grounded in local struggles yet has capacity to think and act transnationally. If and as they establish organic relations with grassroots movements contesting the power of globalizing capital, TAPGs participate directly in transnational class formation from below. At the same time, as shown here, much of what TAPGs do is to elaborate transnational counterpublics that may predominantly engage members of the cadre class—a process more akin to class formation ‘from the middle’.

Of course, the prospects for democratic transformation of global capitalism hinge precisely on the creation of an historical bloc aligning segments of the cadre class—social professionals, scientists and engineers, artists, journalists, and scholars—with subalterns on the receiving end of various forms of domination.¹⁹ In this urgent and difficult construction project, TAPGs have a role to play.

Acknowledgements

The research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I appreciate the research assistance of Brendan Harry and J.P. Sapinski.

Notes

- 1 In his classic essay, Gramsci wrote that ‘every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc.’ (1971, p. 5).
- 2 On the concept of cognitive praxis, see Eyerman and Jamison (1991, p. 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 article, cognitive praxis and KPM are used interchangeably.
- 3 What makes this a process of *class formation* is not any essentialized identity, as in the notion of a teleologically unified labour movement, but the practical critique of capitalist appropriation and the search for democratic and social alternatives in satisfying human needs. As Lebowitz has astutely argued, many struggles of those obliged to sell their labour power to satisfy their many-sided needs are class struggles directed against the structural power of capital and the ruling principle of valorization, even as they reach beyond the workplace. The sellers of labour power struggle over a wide range of needs—including needs for community, for health, education, and ecological well-being. ‘Rather than an inherent opposition between “new social movements” and the struggle of workers as a class against capital, the former should be seen as expressing *other* needs of workers and as the development of *new* organizing centres of the working class. . . . And, insofar as they are directed against capital’s position as the owner of the products of social labour, such struggles have the potential of *unifying* (rather than maintaining the separation) of all those who have nothing to sell but their labour power’ (2003, p. 186). As understood here, class formation from below involves precisely this sort of counter-hegemonic movement.
- 4 See <http://atlasnetwork.org/blog/2010/01/mission/>, accessed 22 September 2011.
- 5 Ibid. For an interactive map showing the 400-odd right-wing think tanks that comprise the Atlas Network, go to <http://atlasnetwork.org/global-network-directory/>.
- 6 See, respectively, <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/thinktank/>; http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Programs/Social_and_Economic_Policy/Think_Tank_Initiative/Pages/About.aspx.
- 7 Since the chart is based on organizations extant in 2010 (leaving aside groups that formed in earlier times but did not survive until 2010), it exaggerates the rate of formation in recent years.
- 8 The 6,480 think tanks nominate expert panellists, who make the final decisions, which are announced at the UN in January (in this case, 2011).
- 9 The other five centre-left groups are also in various ways focused on human rights policy and on the address of governments and intergovernmental bodies. Two additional organizations are not clearly in any of these left–right categories, namely the Centre for European Policy Studies and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.
- 10 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 produces and mobilizes alternative knowledge in various forms 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 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.
- 11 The *YIO* lists a variety of types of relationships between organizations: resource and financial flows between organizations (as when an organization supports another one by providing funding, office space or other types of support); information flows (as when an organization acts as a consultant or advisor for another one, or is an accredited observer at meetings); partnerships and collaborations taking the form of short-term joint projects or long-term alliances; coordination of an organization by another one, (e.g., representation on the board or coordinating committee); and the various flows and collaborations taking place between organizations and their membership. For the purposes of this study, *all* these links were considered indicative of a substantial relationship between organizations (see Katz, 2006 for a similar use of *YIO* data). Although the *YIO* provides

- extensive listings of INGOs, its coverage is not complete. In the case of TAPGs that did not have an entry in the *YIO*, I gathered data on links judged to be equivalent to *YIO* relationships, from the organizations' websites.
- 12 A full list of IC members is available at http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=3_2_1&cd_language=2, accessed 28 September 2011.
 - 13 A description of the session and its participants is available at <http://www.cetri.be/spip.php?article2059&lang=fr>, accessed 22 September 2011.
 - 14 Currently, ZCom is attempting to strengthen its capacity to promote collective action, through the IOPS Project. IOPS (International Organization for a Participatory Society) 'seeks to win a new participatory society based on solidarity, equity/justice, diversity, self-management, and ecological stewardship', <http://www.iopsociety.org/>, accessed 17 June 2013.
 - 15 Indeed, the IFG and TNI are both loci of overlapping memberships in great part due to the high-profile 'fellows' (Walden Bello being a prime example) who compose their boards, an arrangement that formally resembles organizations of the transnational capitalist class and that points to an elite of alter-globalization intellectuals.
 - 16 A recent example of how such networks can transcend the episodic is the Climate Space, organized within the 2013 WSF by Focus, TNI and a host of partners. Climate Space featured 14 sessions, culminating in a Convergence Assembly that addressed strategic-action issues (<http://climatespace2013.wordpress.com/2013/03/13/events-of-the-climate-space-in-tunisia/>). Focus Executive Director Pablo Solon, interviewed during the WSF, stated that 'after this forum, we're going to have the Assembly of Strategies. And there is going to be a discussion. We think that it's not to build a new network, it's more to build a process. A process linking social struggles with environmental struggles. I am trying to find which are the concrete battles that we can win. Because, a movement . . . is built by concentrating the energy on some specific issues at some specific moment in order to achieve a concrete victory that can galvanize the whole movement' (quoted in Kramer, 2013).
 - 17 A companion article, focusing on the organizational ties that link TAPGs to other international organizations, takes up some of these issues by means of quantitative network analysis. We find that TAPGs mediate extensively between civil-society groups based in different regions of the world-system, and between groups pursuing different political projects (Carroll and Sapinski, 2013). These findings reinforce what has been shown here on the basis of ties among TAPGs themselves and practices linking them to activist groups.
 - 18 As the division of labour advances within hierarchical forms of capital and state, 'the need for control and direction of collective labour, and the task of maintaining social cohesion under conditions of advanced division of labour, brings forth a specific stratum of functionaries' (Van der Pijl, 1998, p. 136).
 - 19 To return to Van der Pijl's rich text, twentieth-century history contains no instance of the working class taking over directly from capital. Instead, 'in every revolutionary situation, the cadres . . . immediately seized the reins of power from the faltering bourgeoisie, either to "lead" the workers or to repress their aspirations, and always terminating working class autonomy. . . . What these experiences . . . teach us is that the cadre stratum requires a reunification with the working class to merge into the "proletarian" historic subject, humanity reclaiming its alienated self' (1998, pp. 164–5).

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