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The Limits of the Anti-Globalisation Movement

The globality of the anti-globalisation movement and its socially, politically and societally differing roots mean that a definitive profile of the movement is unlikely to develop. Kraushaar argues that one can, however, crystallise out one clear factor amid this analytical uncertainty: the limits to the movement.

"Do you want to be anywhere else except here, at the 'Battle of Seattle'? We have come to stop this crazy trade system. Today we are going to march into the history books... Today we are going to begin this march. This is the first day... Come on! Let's go!"¹ These words, which betray no lack of self-confidence, were spoken by the president of the American transport workers' union just before the start of the biggest demonstration seen in the United States since the end of the Vietnam War.

On 30th November 1999 more than 50,000 opponents of globalisation² march through Seattle, the Pacific coast city in the extreme north-west of the USA. Not least thanks to the presence of the headquarters of the "Microsoft" computer company it is often thought of as the capital of "digital capitalism". The third ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is being held there. The representatives of the 134 member states want to adopt a declaration initiating a new round of liberalisation of world trade as well as of the necessary financial transactions. The aim is to open up new areas, such as the agrarian and services sectors, to global free trade. Opposition has been expressed in many countries. The demonstration is led by thousands of trades unionists from the USA and Canada. In addition there is a lively mixture of environmentalists and Anarchists, Christians and Third World activists, feminists and eco-farmers, civil rights, consumer protection and human rights campaigners and opponents of genetic engineering. Through the streets echo slogans like "The WTO has got to go. The people came and stole the show", "We're citizens, not only consumers", "The world is not for sale" and "No globalisation without participation". When some masked demonstrators begin to smash the windows of banks and expensive shops, the police intervene. They try to disperse the stone-throwers using batons, tear gas and rubber bullets. A total of 600 demonstrators, including many uninvolved in the stone-throwing, are arrested. Since the majority are not prepared to divulge their identity, they are still in police custody several days later. In order to discredit the aims of the demonstration as those of an insignificant minority, Mike Moore, the Australian president of the WTO, declares: "There may be 50,000 demonstrating against the WTO outside, but in China there are 1.2 billion eager for their country to become a member."³ Nevertheless, on the night of 2nd/3rd December Moore and the American chairwoman of the meeting, Charlene Barshefsky, are forced to "suspend" the conference. In reality the move is a confession of failure. The differences between the

member states with respect to further liberalisation of the world market are too great to be overcome under the given conditions.

The demonstrators celebrate the unsuccessful outcome of the WTO conference as their victory, the result of their own determined action. Most independent observers, however, see the cause, rather, in the mistaken conference diplomacy of the Clinton administration, which at the beginning of a presidential campaign evidently believed it had to show it was tough. Still, most agree that, irrespective of the real or supposed causes, the failure of the WTO's so-called "Millennium Round" would give the international protest movement against globalisation a considerable boost.⁴

At any rate two American journalists, who followed events on the ground, come to this conclusion: "What we saw in Seattle... was the flowering of a new radical movement in America and across the world, rambunctious, anarchic, internationalist, well informed and in some ways more imaginative and supple than kindred popular eruptions in recent decades."⁵ And President Clinton – then still in office – declares after the five turbulent days: "I advise the people at the WTO, to listen to the protests."⁶

The conflict over globalisation

Opinions differ radically on globalisation. What to some is the indispensable condition of progress and prosperity, appears to others as a cancerous affliction of society. One thing, however, is indisputable. There are winners and there are losers. On one side there are big companies and banks, which can frequently chalk up extremely high rates of profit, innovative small and medium-sized firms as well as workers with qualifications which are in especially great demand and on the other side there are both large numbers of wage earners, forced to accept falls in real income, a worsening of working conditions, the necessity of frequent job changes and a tremendous fear of unemployment, and parts of the traditional middle class, in particular the self-employed, some of whom are even losing the basis of their livelihood. The economic dynamic, which is undoubtedly in a position to produce an unprecedented abundance of commodities and goods, simultaneously widens the scissors between rich and poor. It exacerbates divisions between one district of a town and another, between towns, between regions and between so-called developed and under-developed countries. Social inequality appears – thus far at least – an inevitable result of this worldwide transformation process.

The dispute over globalisation is a recent one. That is also true of the category itself. For some it is the key concept for a dynamic understanding of economy, politics and society, for others merely a catchword which is supposed to denote an internationalisation of markets. Significantly, neither "global" nor "globalisation" appear as concepts in the traditional history of philosophy. Only in the field of international law, following the expansion of the *ius publicum europaeum* in the mid-19th century, is there an older use of the category, in order to describe an international legal order. The debate in the social sciences, dominated by Anglo-Saxon literature, did not begin to develop until the mid-90's since when it has grown at an extravagant rate.

Despite this recent boom, globalisation is, in fact, a historical process which has quite clearly already been under way for several centuries⁷ but is only now on the point of developing a specific political-economic regulatory apparatus. Marx and Engels already had a well-developed sense of the establishment of the world market and of the immense impact of the social and economic

consequences.⁸ As long ago as the mid 19th century they took for granted two of the key terms of recent debates, deregulation and denationalisation. They were convinced that the development of the productive forces would become so powerful, that no national boundary and no social or cultural bond would be able to withstand it and impede the formation of a global market. This process would draw "even the most barbarian nations into civilisation". "The cheap prices of its commodities," they remark mockingly, "are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production..."⁹ The long desired and meanwhile completed admission of a Communist state like China to the World Trade Organisation appears as a contemporary confirmation of this prediction.

Given the polarisation of debate it is evident that there can hardly be a generally accepted concept of globalisation. It is nevertheless quite possible to formulate a degree of preliminary understanding, allowing globalisation first of all to be regarded as the "worldwide integration of economic activities".¹⁰ But already at the next step, the clarification of what that encompasses, views diverge radically.¹¹ It seems only logical, that firm advocates of neo-liberalism see globalisation as meaning completely unrestricted freedom for economic activity. Percy Barnevik, for example, the President of the Asea-Brown-Boveri Group, defines globalisation "as the freedom of our group of companies, to invest where and when it wants, to produce what it wants, to buy and sell where it wants, and to reduce as far as possible all restrictions through labour laws or other social regulation".¹² In short, the maxim of his multi-national company is to do and not to do whatever it wants.

To opponents of the neo-liberal model there is an evident tendency for market economies to turn into downright market societies, whose institutions would only function in accordance with the principle of profit maximisation. "The concept of a market society describes a societal condition, in which environmental legislation, public health care, consumer protection, labour laws and the like... are regarded not as social progress, but as impediments to international trade, to direct foreign investment and capitalist economic growth."¹³ According to that logic social relations would increasingly become transformed into pure exchange relations. The economic historian Karl Polanyi had already warned against the enforcement of such a liberal economic utopia in his seminal study, *The Great Transformation*, written during the Second World War. In it, he argued that the idea of a self-regulating market was "a crude utopia": "Such an institution could not survive for any length of time, without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have destroyed man physically and transformed his environment into a wilderness."¹⁴ He thus articulated the fears of those globalisation sceptics and opponents, which underlie the anti-WTO movement which has been growing with such speed in the last two and a half years.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO)

The WTO was only set up in 1995. It was the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) concluded in 1947, which was supposed to put an end to every form of protectionism in world trade. In the face of the growing interdependence of trading partners, however, it became more and more evident that it would not be sufficient to regard free trade solely as a question of customs regulations. The increasing intensity of trade relations meant that a body was required which could lay down binding rules

of competition and act as a mediator in case of conflicts.

Decisions of the WTO are binding on all members and can be enforced against states, which do not adhere to them, by means of economic sanctions. The supreme organ is the ministerial conference, which has to meet at least once every two years. On the committees of the WTO each member country has one vote. Consequently the hundred or so developing countries have a majority.

The WTO suffered perhaps its most serious setback so far, when, due to lack of political acceptance, it was forced to withdraw the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), which provided for a comprehensive ban on discrimination against foreign investment.¹⁵ It was not only opponents of globalisation who had organised a worldwide campaign of protest against it, there had also been increasing doubts in several OECD states, notably France, where a sell-out of national interests was feared.

The WTO's headquarters are in Geneva and it has the status of a special agency of the United Nations. It has equal status to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In the eyes of the opponents of globalisation the power of these three institutions to determine the legal framework of international currency, finance and trade regulation is far too great and hardly subject to control; hence they are mockingly called the "unholy trinity".

The anti-globalisation movement

Since the five days of Seattle there has been no let-up in the wave of anti-globalisation protests.¹⁶ Seattle was followed last year (2000) by the demonstrations¹⁷ at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, at the Spring Meeting of the World Bank and the IMF in Washington, at the Asia-Pacific Economic Summit in Melbourne, at the annual meeting of the World Bank and the IMF in Prague, at the EU Summit in Nice, at the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, in Brazil, and this year (2001) by protests at the Economic Summit of American states in Quebec, at the EU Summit in Göteborg and at the G8 Summit in Genoa. Given that, on the one hand, the popularity of the anti-globalisation movement has been constantly increasing, while approval of WTO decisions has been declining, it is unlikely that the protest activities will come to end, it is rather more probable that they will intensify and spread.

One of the greatest weaknesses of the anti-globalisation movement is the extreme degree of fragmentation of its participants.¹⁸ The attempt to divide it into three main groups and to see it as a coalition of organised workers' movement, organised ecology movement and so-called internationalists, as, for example, Jim O'Connor¹⁹ has done for the United States, is too general and does not at all grasp the phenomenon. Given the social heterogeneity and the variety of ideological positions, which at the extreme can even produce a temporary fusion between protectionists and anti-protectionists, then any alliance of interests can certainly not be very solid.

The fragmentation into the most diverse small groups, which must also be seen as an index of the vitality of the protest milieu, can to some extent be compensated by the building of networks.²⁰ Increasingly important in this respect, in addition to older established organisations like "Greenpeace", "Medico International", and "Friends of the Earth", is Attac, founded on the initiative of the left-wing monthly *Le monde diplomatique*, and advocating taxation of international financial transactions.²¹ Starting in Paris, in the course

of only two or three years this alliance has spread throughout western and central Europe and now has over 50,000 members in 26 countries. Attac has meanwhile proved very popular in Germany also, as was recently shown by a congress at the Technical University in Berlin attended by over 4000 members and sympathisers, including such a prominent left-winger as Oskar Lafontaine, the former chairman of the SPD.

But what is the source of the attractiveness of an organisation, which has given itself the ponderous name Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financières et pour l'Aide au Citoyen (Association for the taxation of financial transactions for the benefit of citizens)? Hardly anyone would be seriously interested in the group, if it did not create the impression, that it could make an extraordinarily complex phenomenon comprehensible, if it did not give the appearance of being able to deliberately convert the phantom of the critique of globalisation into pragmatic activity. Attac probably owes its ability to mobilise people, in the first instance, to this pseudo-concreteness.

More indicative of the almost insurmountable weakness of the anti-globalisation movement, however, is that while it updates many ideological illusions, most of which point towards the historically failed rhetoric of class struggle, it lacks any programme for influencing supranational institutions such as the WTO and hence for changing the globalisation course currently being pursued.²² Dominant among most of the campaign groups is a more or less pronounced actionism. The hopes entertained by some, of being able to halt the thrust towards deregulation and denationalisation, appear at any rate to be illusory.

The anti-globalisation movement is probably most successful in terms of issuing appeals. While it can draw attention to defects in the process of economic liberalisation and – by way of media-produced attention – indirectly effect changes, it cannot stop the process, and is certainly unable to present itself in this context as an independent subject.

Given the ever more brutal discrepancy between economics and politics evident in the course of globalisation, the anti-globalisation movement can basically only aim for one thing – to expose the weak legitimisation of the supranational institutions controlling the process. A weakness which is, in turn, a symptom of the general democratic deficit of such institutions. It may turn out to be rather difficult, however, to offset this – as the erosion of the United Nations' scope of action by the Security Council has shown.²³ It is an altogether positive sign, that debate in the social and political sciences has increasingly concentrated on such issues of democratisation.²⁴

The Globality of the opponents of globalisation

Transnationality, both in aim as well as form, was an essential feature of earlier protest movements. Quite apart from the classic working class movement, which had raised the banner of internationalism, there were in the late 1940's and early 1950's already two movements in Western Europe which aimed explicitly at abolishing or overcoming the nation state – the World Citizenship movement and the European Movement. While the first soon foundered on the fundamentalism of its supranational utopia, the second was more or less absorbed into the pragmatic step by step advance of European integration.

A third transnational movement of the time, the Communist World Peace Movement, only pretended to pursue aims going beyond the nation state.

Ultimately it articulated its interests solely in order to strengthen the Soviet bloc. Rather different were two peace and disarmament movements which emerged at the end of the 1950's – the anti-nuclear and the Easter Peace March movements [cf. the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament – CND – in Great Britain – *trans.*]. They saw themselves from the start as an expression of anti-militarist currents which transcended both national and bloc borders. Of particular importance was co-operation with the anti-nuclear movement in Japan where, because of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there was an extremely high level of mobilisation. The link established between Europe and Japan on the one hand and between Japan and North America on the other, simultaneously created the first important network for the co-ordination of protest activities.

Apart from the peace movements which always a priori had a transnational orientation,²⁵ there was, in the 1950's and 1960's, another fundamental current, which gave rise to numerous groups and organisations – anti-colonialism. With the new division of the globe after the Second World War, which led to a weakening of the two major colonial powers, France and Britain, anti-colonial struggles were given a great boost. Although the two European powers had been on the winning side at the end of the war, they were about to face a series of defeats in conflicts with their colonies. On the Indian subcontinent, elsewhere in Asia, and in Africa one country after another was able to achieve independence.

In the era of de-colonisation internationalism made a breakthrough – even if the achievement of state sovereignty took place on a national basis. When in 1965, it turned out, that in order to secure its strategic interests, the USA was prepared to conduct not only a covert, but also an open war in Vietnam, this was seen in all parts of the world as a serious setback. The world power, which had backed the United Nations in almost every conflict, now appeared to be reverting to the colonialist or imperialist past. In the United States itself this led in a very short space of time to the emergence of an anti-war movement, which rapidly began to co-ordinate its activities groups in other countries. The first international protests against the Vietnam War already took place in 1965 and soon stretched around the world, becoming more intense in a series of waves in the years that followed. Without any involvement of larger organisations and with very limited technical resources, it was nevertheless possible to carry out concerted protests across tens of thousands of miles. From San Francisco to Sydney, from New York to Tokyo, from Copenhagen to Cairo, from Montreal to Sao Paulo and from Washington to London, Paris and Rome there was evidently no need of any great powers of persuasion to get the opponents of the war onto the streets. In the twinkling of an eye a signal had been given. A context had been established, in which word "worldwide" was taken seriously. The present Foreign Minister of Germany, Joschka Fischer, who was himself an opponent of the Vietnam war, was therefore right to conclude, at an international conference in 1993 in Prague, that a "transnational orientation had been an essential element of the movement of 68".²⁶

What did indeed turn "1968" into extraordinary phenomenon, albeit one that is difficult to grasp, is above all the fact, that it was the first global rebellion.²⁷ Although there is, thus far, nothing like a conclusive explanation as to how it came about, hardly anyone now denies the movements's globality.²⁸ Especially conspicuous was the parallelism of reformist and revolutionary projects of societal transformation in East and West, as exemplified in the "Prague Spring" and the "Paris May".

The linking of Paris and Prague does not, however, stand only for the failure of desires for freedom and independence, but also for a step towards the elimination of the boundaries between the two power blocs. The connection between West and East Europe to some extent anticipates the historic turning point of 1989 / 90 / 91, which began with the fall of the Berlin Wall and ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The chance coincidence in time of "Prague Spring" and "Paris May" achieved a synchronisation effect, which for one thing made European integration after the end of the Warsaw Pact easier, but which also pointed in another direction.

Together with the impetus resulting from the decades-long process of decolonisation, there resulted a coupling of First, Second and Third Worlds, which in a way was a precursor of today's globalisation. Even though the linkage produced by the 68 movement with its political objective was still very wide-meshed, it was accompanied by a considerably tighter cultural standardisation. The triumphal progress of pop culture which, with rock music and Hollywood films at the forefront, has been dominated by the United States, is an index of the globalisation of youth culture. In comparison to economic globalisation, which has meanwhile advanced furthest, political globalisation has made the least progress, while that of culture, measured by the dynamic it displays, may be placed somewhere between the two.

Immanuel Wallerstein is the scholar who has done most to promote reflection on the movement of 68 in terms of globalisation. Although the theses put forward at the 1988 Brooklyn College colloquium, "1968 as a global event", may be seen as exaggerated in certain respects, the choice of perspective is nevertheless noteworthy.²⁹ His analysis of the 68 phenomenon from the outset dismisses local factors as being of secondary importance and systematically proceeds to a global level of interpretation. He maintains that 1968 was "one of the great formative events in the history of the modern world system". The year marked a break, since which the structures of this system have been undergoing long-term change. The principal target of the movements coming into existence at this point was the unchallenged American hegemony between 1945 and 1967. A second target was the old left, the Communists just as much as the Social Democrats and the Left nationalists, who were criticised or challenged by the 68 movement in the various countries. By assuming a tendency to globalisation already occurring in the post-Second World War period, thanks to the supremacy of the United States, it is possible for him to place the simultaneous emergence of 68 movements – he mentions the USA, France, Czechoslovakia and Mexico as outstanding examples – in a context which allows the conditions of a common interpretation to become discernible. Even if his sketch leaves many questions open, it presents a kind of matrix, in which apparently quite contingent movements suddenly assume a role within a logic of cultural, political or economic globalisation.

The high level of awareness of the opponents of globalisation of the globality of their protest actions may be gathered from the statement of a Swedish demonstrator involved in the clashes at the EU Summit in Göteborg in June 2001. "We are not dreaming of some kind of golden age of the welfare state in the dim and distant past. But if capital and states become global, then in order to be successful the struggle of the social movements must also become global. We are not against globalisation, but we believe in a globalisation from below. Here, in the global social movements, democracy in the true sense of the word is taking shape."³⁰ It appears to be this democratic deficit that motivates the majority of activists to protest, and not a general hostility to globalisation. Accordingly the target of the protest would be the power of definition of an

economic liberalisation process, which is practised by a handful of multi-national companies. "Globalisation from above" was answered, if one adopts the slogans of the demonstrators, by "globalisation from below".

The images from Göteborg which went round the world via TV, almost without exception showed scenes from street battles with a clearly overextended police force. Yet out of more than 20,000 protestors only a few hundred had taken part in the violent clashes. Virtually nothing was said about the legitimacy of the protest aims of the vast majority. Nor about the fact that the demonstrators did not communicate with each other – as the press suggested – by mobile phone. In order to avoid monitoring of discussions about the route of the demonstration, they relied on a very traditional means of communication and transport – bicycle couriers.

Genoa as climax

After the clashes in Göteborg it was rather evident that a further increase in activities and further escalation could be expected at the G8 Summit in Genoa. The very large numbers attending the Genoa Social Forum, GSF, to which, as the local co-ordinator of protest, more than 700 groups affiliated themselves, revealed the extent of the preliminary mobilisation.

What then happened in July in the Italian port entirely eclipsed earlier similar events, both in terms of the security measures on the one hand and of the forms of mobilisation and of violent activities on the other. After the excessive blocking of streets by the authorities in the old town of Genoa which gave rise to an unpleasant degree of foreboding, the clashes which followed made it unmistakably clear that what was involved here was the crossing of an invisible boundary in the public conduct of conflicts. A situation characterised by the martial behaviour of the security forces as much as by the determination to resist on the part of the demonstrators increasingly took on the appearance of civil war. The death of 23 year-old Carlo Giuliani, who was shot attempting to attack a Carabinieri jeep with a fire extinguisher, produced a shock, but this did not, however, prevent the Italian police from forcing their way into a GSF building in the middle of the night and ill-treating hundreds of globalisation opponents. It was evident, not only to observers and commentators, that in July 2001 in Genoa the anti-globalisation movement had reached a climax. Although the media alternated between criticism of the willingness of a minority of demonstrators to use violence and of the over-reaction of the Carabinieri, it soon turned out that the protest was now meeting with a positive response from leading European politicians. The Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Jean-Claude Juncker, like the German chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, made every effort to show how seriously they took the protests of the globalisation critics.³¹ Under the impression of the spectacular reports from Genoa the wind suddenly seemed to shift in Germany as well.³² The topic of the critique of globalisation did not only find its way into the discourse of the parties represented in the Bundestag and of the Federal Government. Politicians like the Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, who had refused to be distracted from the course they had adopted, promptly came under pressure. The legitimacy of many of the globalisation critics' economic, social and ecological demands was no longer simply denied, but instead became the subject of political debate. The civil war scenario which for days dominated the streets and squares of Genoa also left its mark on the heads of government of the most powerful industrialised nations in other ways. In future such summit events are to be scaled down to smaller formats and revert to the more intimate fireside chats such as still took place in 1975 in Rambouillet. It is very

doubtful, however, whether this declaration of intent can contribute to restoring the shattered legitimacy of such summits. At any rate the next G8 meeting in 2002 is to take place in the seclusion of a village in the Canadian Rockies. However, the local opponents of globalisation have already begun to draw up plans and rehearse scenarios as to how the few access routes can be successfully blocked.

Limits of the anti-globalisation movement

The question posed by movement researchers, whether the globalisation opponents constitute a loose alliance of extremely heterogeneous currents and groups rather than a real social movement,³³ which could be reduced to a common denominator in terms of origins, programme and interests, is of subordinate interest as far as an assessment of the difficulties apparent at the last large-scale demonstrations is concerned. It is evident that the opposition to globalisation can never achieve the supposed coherence of the workers', women's or environmental movements and hence there will probably be a much greater element of analytical uncertainty. Socially, politically and geographically it is recruited from such diverse sources, that for the present no more precise profile is to be expected.³⁴ What can be clearly established, however, given the present state of development of this movement phenomenon, whose dynamic can hardly be overestimated, are the limits of the anti-globalisation movement.

First: Any critique of globalisation, which attempts to overcome economic liberalism, in that it refers to supposed alternatives has thus far failed to provide proof of their practicality. Capitalist world trade appears to be both without shadow and without alternative. None of the still existing Communist states exerts any kind of exemplary attraction. On the contrary, as is especially clear from the case of China, they themselves are trying to establish suitable links to world trade, to the commodity and financial flows of the capitalist determined world market. Since the collapse of the Socialist planned economies there is only an immanent critique of worldwide capitalism.

Second: Every radical critique of globalisation appears to re-activate an anti-capitalist rhetoric, which has historically forfeited essential aspects of its claim to validity. To that extent, parts of a movement which finds itself not only in opposition to the present all-powerful economic and modernisation course, but are also aiming at a systematic economic alternative, are plunging into the unknown.

Third: The anti-capitalist rhetoric attracts various radical left-wing groups, which had disappeared into insignificance over the years and long ago lost any kind of legitimacy. The necessary critique of globalisation must not, however, become a resuscitation programme for those parts of the Left on which history has already passed its verdict. The hope, that the old dream of a social revolution can now be revived via the detour of the critique of globalisation is as monstrous as it is unrealisable.

Fourth: The history of the various protest movements of recent decades has again and again shown that violence gets attention and so lends protest actions the appearance of political significance irrespective of the legitimacy of their goals. This is especially true of the opposition to globalisation. Due to the continuously growing media presence it is virtually caught in a militancy trap. The more peaceful its protests, the smaller the impact on a media determined public sphere. And the reverse: The more violent – as proved once again by

the incidents in Göteborg and Genua – the protests, the greater is their public resonance. The cost of overcoming the attention threshold through the employment of violent means is, however, usually very high. Illegal action invariably and promptly wrecks what it is in the course of constituting in terms of public attention. In particular deliberate rioting by minority groups repeatedly threatens to split the movement. It is doubtful whether the proposal of the New Economic Foundation in London to agree a "code of protest", a commitment to non-violent action, can contribute anything to escaping this dilemma.

Fifth: There is something spectre-like about the struggle against globalisation. The polyvalency of the key word, which oscillates between the various dimensions of economics and politics, culture and society, has a correspondence in the diffuseness of possible adversaries. The actual addressee of the of the protests is often unclear. Is it the multi-national companies, supranational organisations or individual states or their governments, or all of these at once? Globalisation is an abstraction, which while it certainly finds expression in a multitude of concretisations, is hardly tangible in terms of structure. Above all there is no longer any reliable distinction between inside and outside. The opponents of globalisation are themselves caught up in and function within the logic it determines. The possibility, as in the days of anti-imperialist or anti-colonialist struggle, of positioning oneself outside the system of domination seen as the enemy, is blocked. Summit meetings offer the demonstrators, looking for occasions providing any feasible point of action at all, little more than arenas for appearances which are as spectacular as possible. Since they lack an insight into and influence on economic decision-making processes, they search for an opportunity to articulate their protest. This supposes that pressure on the political representatives of the most powerful states can indeed influence relevant economic decisions. That, however, could be a fiction. Even if the demonstrators in Seattle really did have an influence on the failure of the WTO meeting, which is very debatable, it would be rash to draw the conclusion that this could be a promising strategy. Preventing the passage of WTO resolutions is one thing, having a constructive effect on the process of globalisation quite another.

In the shadow of Islamist terrorism

Ever since four passenger jets were hijacked and two of them struck the twin towers in New York, causing them to collapse, the world has held its breath. Nevertheless the belief, that after 11th September nothing would be as it was before, has meanwhile been rejected as an overhasty reaction, even by those who at first felt certain that the rupture of the terrorist attacks had been more profound than what was expressed in TV broadcasts and other reports in the mass media.

There is, however, at least one group or current which will not need to make allowances for this correction of perceptions. For it, the supposed over-reaction, that after 11th September nothing would be as it was before, continues to be valid in an unchanged and quite specific sense. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have had very divergent and varied consequences, in the semiotic field among others. Precisely because no one has claimed responsibility for the attacks, their symbolic charge expanded immeasurably. The crash of the twin towers was seen not only as an attack on New York's tallest office blocks and thereby on the architectonic capitals of the United States, but also as an attack on the pinnacle of world trade.

Since then every anti-capitalist action by opponents and critics of globalisation risks being seen as symbolically making common cause with the Islamist terrorists. What had been expressed as a critique of the World Trade Organisation, could now suddenly have led to a devastating blow against the World Trade Center. One of the figureheads of the critique of globalisation has remarked laconically: "First the window of Starbucks is smashed – and then the World Trade Center."³⁵ This statement demonstrates an elementary difficulty: There now appear to be only differences in degree, and no longer anything which could be seen as a qualitative difference, between the indisputably legitimate critique of globalisation and terrorism, for which there can be no legitimisation whatsoever, neither social nor economic, neither religious nor cultural.³⁶ The actions of the terrorists could be seen as representing nothing more than an intensification within the framework of one and the same logic of radicalisation and escalation.

This danger of a lack of capacity of discernment or – put the other way around – of an excessive desire for identification is also reflected in a contribution by a prominent Social Democratic ex-politician. The former director of the Hamburg Peace Research Institute, Egon Bahr, has provocatively called the Al-Qaida terrorist organisation an "NGO", a non-governmental organisation.³⁷ Such a description may point to the fact, that what is involved here is no longer a question of a war in the conventional sense, in which states face one another, but it simultaneously elides any qualitative difference with respect to legitimate actors in the international arena.

¹ Maria Mies, *Globalisierung von unten. Der Kampf gegen die Herrschaft der Konzerne* (Hamburg, 2001) p 10.

² In this paper the terms opponents of globalisation or supporters of the anti-globalisation movement should not be as implying that this position inevitably involves a general opposition to globalisation. A critical attitude to the process of economic globalisation is not, as is indeed often pointed out, identical with a wholesale rejection of globalisation. In fact the most important groups in this spectrum advocate it, albeit in a democratically managed and controlled form.

³ Rainer Tetzlaff, 'WTO – Protest and Verheissung in Seattle. Worum geht es bei der "World Trade Organisation"?' in *Gegenwartskunde* 3 (2000) p 275.

⁴ Cf. Steven Greenhouse, 'Seattle protest could have a lasting influence on trade', in *The New York Times* (8th December 1999).

⁵ Alexander Cockburn/Jeffrey St. Clair, *Five Days That Shook The World. Seattle and Beyond* (London/New York, 2000) p 1. A similar note was also struck in initial responses in the review sections of German daily newspapers. Cf. Marc Cooper, 'Seattle ist erst der Anfang', in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (8th December 1999).

⁶ *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2000) p 102.

⁷ Cf above all the books of Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System I. Capitalist Agriculture and the origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York 1974); *The Modern World System II. Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750* (New York 1980); *The Modern World System III. The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730–1840* (San Diego 1989).

⁸ In the first section of the Communist Manifesto, in which they characterise the bourgeoisie as the modern capitalist class and contrast it with the class of modern waged labourers, it says: "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country." Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York 1964) pp 7–8.

⁹ *ibid.*, p 9.

¹⁰ Jürgen Friedrichs, 'Globalisierung – Begriff und grundlegende Annahmen', in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (8th August 1997) B 33–34/97, p 3.

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- Cf. For example the exemplary debate conducted between economists and economic historians in Ulrich Beck (ed.), *Politik der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main 1998).
- 12 Gerard Greenfield in Robert A. Senser (ed.), *Human Rights for Workers: Bulletin no. 5* (15th December 2000).
- 13 Jim O'Connor, 'Die Konferenz von Seattle und die Anti-WTO Bewegung' in *Prokla* (March 2000) vol. 30, no. 118, p 158.
- 14 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation. Politische und Ökonomische Ursprünge von Gesellschaften und Wirtschaftssystemen* (Vienna 1977) p 17.
- 15 The political scientist Peter Cornelius Mayer-Tasch warned that, "The consequence of such an agreement coming into force would be a profound loss of legitimacy of our political system, with incalculable side-effects." In Fritz R. Glunk (ed.), *Das MAI und die Herrschaft der Konzerne. Die Veränderung der Welt durch das Multilaterale Abkommen über Investitionen* (Munich 1998) p 11; cf also Maria Mies/Claudia von Werlhof, *Lizenz zum Plündern* (Hamburg 1998).
- 16 It would be worthwhile investigating the precursors of the anti-globalisation movement more thoroughly. As long ago as September 1988 there a major protest in West Berlin against an annual meeting of the IMF. More than 80,000 people joined a demonstration whose principal demands were an immediate cancellation of debts and a more just world economic order.
- 17 Cf. the compilation by Carolin Emcke et al., 'Auf nach Genua!', in *Der Spiegel* (25th June 2001) vol. 56, no. 26, pp 126-131.
- 18 One can hardly imagine a "more motley bunch", says, for example, a German sociologist of the composition of the demonstration in Seattle. Claus Leggewie, 'David gegen Goliath: Seattle und die Folgen', in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (24th November 2000) B 48 (2000) p 3.
- 19 Jim O'Connor, op. cit. p 170
- 20 It is usually critics or opponents of the anti-globalisation movement who point to the pre-eminent role of the Internet in organising its activities. This reference, which is evidently supposed to undermine the credibility of the motives of participants because of their use of the most up-to-date information technologies, is, however, superficial. Why should protest movements, which do not per se have an anti-technological bias, not also use the world-wide-web in order to make good at least some of their most serious disadvantages compared with the multinationals?
- 21 The Tobin Tax, named after the late James Tobin, a US economist, would impose a duty of 0.1% on all foreign currency dealings on stock exchanges. As to the question whether this tax would be an effective instrument in controlling the exploding foreign currency markets, cf Angelika Köster-Lossack/Karl-Heinz Stecher, 'Die Globalisierung hat zu viele Verlierer', in *Frankfurter Rundschau* (18th September 2001).
- 22 On the discussion within the anti-globalisation movement on the various strategies of resistance, cf Barry K. Gills (ed.), *Globalization and the Politics of Resistance* (London 2000).
- 23 Thus Ulrich Beck, for example, observes a fundamental "democracy dilemma": "Whereas within the framework of democratically legitimated nation state politics it is increasingly non-decisions that are given political legitimation, in the trans-national framework of 'non-politics' decisions of transnational scope and effect are being taken without democratic legitimation." Ulrich Beck, 'Das Demokratie Dilemma im Zeitalter der Globalisierung', in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (11th September 1998) B 38/98, p 4.
- 24 Cf. Hans-Peter Martin/Harald Schumann, *Die Globalisierungsfalle. Der Angriff auf Demokratie und Wohlstand* (Reinbek 1996); Wolfgang Streeck (ed.), *Internationale Wirtschaft, nationale Demokratie. Herausforderungen für die Demokratietheorie* (Frankfurt am Main 1998); Petra C. Gruber/Klaus Zapotoczky (ed.), *Globalisierung versus Demokratie? Plädoyer für eine umwelt- und sozialverträgliche Weltordnung* (Frankfurt am Main 1999); Dirk Berg-Schlosser/Hans-Joachim Giegel (eds.), *Perspektiven der Demokratie. Probleme und Chancen im Zeitalter der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main 1999); Ottfried Höffe, *Demokratie im Zeitalter der Globalisierung* (Munich 1999); Hauke Brunkhorst/Matthias Kettner (eds.), *Globalisierung und Demokratie. Wirtschaft, Recht, Medien* (Frankfurt am Main 2000); Ulrich Beck, 'We wird Demokratie im Zeitalter der Globalisierung möglich? – Eine Einleitung', in *ibid.* (ed.), *Politik der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main 1998); Alessandro Pinzani, 'Demokratie als Aufgabe. Lässt sich Globalisierung demokratisch gestalten?', in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (18th August 2000) B 33-34/2000, pp 32-38.
- 25 Cf. April Carter, *Peace Movements. International Protest and World Politics since 1945* (London/New York 1992).

- Heinrich Böll Stiftung (ed.), *Prag–Berlin–Paris–1968*. Internationale Konferenz am 21./22. Mai 1993 in Prag (Prague 1993) p 17.
- 27 An American movement researcher concentrates on this point of view in a comparative study: George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left. A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston 1987).
- 28 The clearest statement of this is by the social psychologist Beate Fietze: "The movement of 68 can be described as a global movement, which displays a remarkable coincidence of shared and distinct features in the various national contexts and for which, above all, no organised global actor could be named; instead the movement is carried by a multitude of largely unco-ordinated spontaneous actors." Beate Fietze, "'A spirit of unrest' – Die Achtundsechziger–Generation als globales Schwellenphänomen', in Rainer Rosenberg/Inge Münz–Koenen/Petra Boden (eds.), *Der Geist der Unruhe – 1968 im Vergleich* Wissenschaft–Literatur–Medien (Berlin 2000) p 6.
- 29 Immanuel Wallerstein, 'The 1968 Revolution in the World System', in *Theory and Society*, vol. 18 (1989) pp 431–449.
- 30 Olle M. (Stockholm), 'Drei Tage, die Europa schaden', in www.motkraft.net.
- 31 "'Ich nehme die Globalisierungsgegner sehr ernst.'" Der luxemburgische Premierminister Jean–Claude Juncker über Gipfel und die Verantwortung der EU', in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (27th August 2001); 'Wer dreht das riesengrosse Rad? Der Bundeskanzler rät dazu, den Protest der Globalisierungsgegner erst zu nehmen. Die Grundsatzrede Gerhard Schröders zur Wirtschaftspolitik', in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (6th September 2001).
- 32 For example the tone of a newspaper article by the deputy chairman of the SPD parliamentary group in the Federal Parliament: Michael Müller, 'Lehre aus Genua, Der Wind dreht sich,' in the *Berliner Zeitung* (3rd August 2001).
- 33 Dieter Rucht, 'Die Gipfelprotestierer haben ihre Unschuld verloren', in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (13th August 2001).
- 34 On the discussion of globalisation as the context of the constitution of social movements cf. Paul Ekins, *A New World Order. Grassroots movements for global change* (London/New York 1992); Donatella della Porta/Hanspeter Kriesi/Dieter Rucht (eds.), *Social Movements in a Globalising World* (London/New York 1999); John A. Guidry/Michael D. Kennedy/Mayer N. Zald (eds.), *Globalizations and Social Movements. Culture, Power and the Transnational Public Sphere* (Ann Arbor 2000); Ansgar Klein/Ruud Koopmans/Heiko Geiling (eds.), *Globalisierung–Partizipation–Protest* (Opladen 2001).
- 35 Naomi Klein, 'Zeichen und Wunden – Hat der Terror auch die Antiglobalisierer erledigt?', in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* (14th October 2001).
- 36 "After 11th September every tactic, no matter how peaceful it may be, that is based on attacking the visible symbols of capitalism, finds itself in a completely altered semiotic landscape. Admittedly the attacks were very real and frightening terrorist acts; but they were also acts in a war of symbols and were indeed immediately understood as such." Naomi Klein, *ibid.*
- 37 "With a single blow against the ventricles of the sole superpower, an NGO, not previously recognised as such, has shaken the headquarters of capital and armed forces and the state's monopoly of force. Globally active as an NGO, just like Greenpeace, unelected, committed to its own goals, but quite unlike Greenpeace ready to use violence to destroy an order, which according to its own fundamentalist convictions must be destroyed." Egon Bahr, 'Die Chance des 11. Septembers 2001', in www.vdw-ew.de

Published 2002–04–30

Original in German

Translation by Martin Chalmers

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