



Gramsci, Hegemony and Globalisation

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ABSTRACT. Antonio Gramsci's point that battles are won and lost on the terrain of ideology is a much earlier and more complex explanation of the mediations between objective economic and social conditions and politics. It accounts generally for the fact that the continuation of contradiction—as must ever be the case under capitalism—and the worsening conditions for the majority of the world's population do not mean the emergence of a political opposition to capitalism. Put simply, the great traditional workforces cannot strike at capitalism in its new heart. On the other hand, the two percent might be able to do so if it was not disaggregated because of its dispersal in new workforces that have no central workplaces or sufficient shared experience to overcome cultural differences, which divide rather than unite—if it did not live the new space-time relation. This labour mobility undoes class formation, even among those who do not share in the benefits of globalisation but dream of doing so. It remains to be seen whether the new nationalism and its closed borders, which keep such migrants at home with their contradictions, will foster conditions for the constitution of new collective working-class consciousness. Global capitalism fixes class relations in an impure state—a pure duality of capitalists and proletariat never develops anywhere. This means that any socialist transformation requires the building of a cross-class alliance of majorities on national-popular bases, rather than class. Therefore, that hegemony, which permits new ideas to become social forces, has to win out over the old hegemony in an organisational “war of position.”

KEYWORDS. Antonio Gramsci · hegemony · globalisation

INTRODUCTION

Implicit in the Leninist view from *What is to be Done?* (1902) to *The State and Revolution* (1917) is the realisation that the lived experience of the contradictions of capitalist society on all levels does not automatically result in a revolutionary socialist consciousness no matter what the level of contradiction is. Political action of some sort is required to develop that consciousness. This implies a struggle between two ideologies: that of the ruling class and that of the socialist movement which opposes it. However, as Antonio Gramsci points out, Vladimir

Lenin never fully developed this implicit recognition of “hegemony,” (Gramsci 1975, 866) although it was present in the strategy of the united front. In Lenin, the failure to theorise the notion led to ambiguities. Though less serious and discarded early, the first was the notion that all that was needed to break the hold of bourgeois ideas was a work of propaganda—new enlightenment. The second, which was always present in Leninism and its heirs, was the development of the first: that once the proletariat and its allies were enlightened, any process of breaking the hold of the ideas of the ruling class would give way to a clear recognition that all social institutions were instruments of the bourgeoisie (see *What is to be Done?* and *The State and Revolution*). The presumption in both was that there was a true scientific view of society, which some could see before others, and that the former would demystify the latter. The theoretical problems are great if, as Karl Marx claimed, it is only through the changing of circumstances that world views can be changed.

While similar problems were implicit in the cultural messianism of Lukács, only Gramsci managed to escape the “hidden God” of an author of social change; although by now, most theorists were intent on escaping them. Starting from the Leninist view that the state is coercion plus consensus (Gramsci 1975, 763-4), Gramsci moved away from the common ground. To do so, he had to proceed through three stages of understanding, which can be schematically separated as recognition of: the state as an organiser and not a coercer; its organizational agents (intellectuals) as unconscious creators of the very formal order of this world (e.g., the way the factory or any other social practices is ordered); and the location in time and space of the citizen so that he or she can only see matters from his or her point of view, as a citizen individual. It followed that any socialist revolution would be the product of the creation of a new order—a reorganisation (Gramsci 1975, 801-2 and 1518-19).

Gramsci’s historical progression was in reverse order from this analysis that was to be found only in his mature work, *The Prison Notebooks*. It is the combination that is important. It is informed precisely by the overall problematique he described in a letter to his sister as “the popular creative mind” (Gramsci 1965, 59); that is, how far the “people” could escape this “hegemony.” What then is hegemony?

HEGEMONY

Hegemony is the distinctive mode of rule in the modern state, which Gramsci describes as emerging in the second half of the nineteenth

century. He indicates that sometimes it is a state form which antedates France and England by as much as two centuries. He writes, "In the period after 1870, with the colonial expansion of Europe...the internal and international organizational relations of the State become more complex and intricate and the fortieightist formula of the 'permanent revolution' is elaborated and superseded in political science by the formula of 'civil hegemony'." For the first time, the state can be regarded as "integral" as "political society plus civil society, that is hegemony armoured with coercion" (Gramsci 1975, 1566-7). A period then begins when the state needs the consensus of the citizen and must create that consensus for it to function. For Gramsci, coercion is not the essence of state power. Hegemony is power. It may be protected by coercion.

Like many other Marxists, Gramsci began from the presupposition that a materialist starting point was always that of an already given complex structure. Except in thought, this structure could not be reduced into the categories of base and superstructure or state and civil society. For technical, rational, or irrational reasons, the structured capitalist mode of production was always in a specific order or form. It is from the economic structure that the theory of hegemony starts.

Every social group born on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates with itself, organically, one or more classes of intellectuals who give it homogeneity and awareness of its own function not only in the economic field, but also in the social and political: The capitalist entrepreneur creates with himself the technician of industry, the scientist of political economy, the organizer of a new culture, of a new law, etc., etc. We should note that an (capitalist) entrepreneur represents a higher social development, which is already characterised by a certain educative (*dirigente*) and technical (that is, intellectual) capacity: He must have a certain technical capacity, beyond that in the area which is circumscribed by his activity and initiative, in other areas, at least in those closest to economic production (he must be an organizer of masses of men, he must be an organizer of "trust" of those who save money in his enterprise, or the purchasers of his goods etc. If not all entrepreneurs, at least an elite among them must have a capacity to organize society in general, in all its complex organism of services, up to the State organism, because of the need to create the most favourable conditions for the expansion of his own class; or he must have at least the ability to select "agents" (*commessi*) {specialized employees} to whom he can entrust the organizational activity of general relations between his enterprise and the outside. (Gramsci 1975, 474-5 and 432-4)

Gramsci emphasised not only the organisational nature of these tasks. Because they are specialists, these intellectuals-organisers tend to know only partial and primitive aspects of the new type of society that the new class has put in place. They do not have knowledge of its outcomes as a combination of relations in the whole of society.

He further clarified that since all humans combine cerebral and muscular activity, all humans—even the factory worker turned into the “domesticated gorilla” by Taylorised factory production could be regarded as intellectuals. However, he is interested only in those who have the function of organisers (“at some time everyone fries an egg....but we do not say that everyone is a cook”). They are the “functionaries” of the “superstructures.”

For the moment we can fix two great superstructural “levels” what we can call “civil society,” that is the ensemble of organisms vulgarly called “private” and that of “political society” or “the State” to which correspond the function of “hegemony” that the dominant groups exercises throughout society and to that of “direct domination” or command which is expressed through the State and in the State as a rule of law (*Stato “giuridico”*). These functions are organizational and connective in the precise sense. The intellectuals are the “agents” of the dominant groups in the exercise of the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government, that is: 1) the “spontaneous consensus” accorded by the great mass of the population to the direction of society impressed on social life by the fundamental dominant group, a consensus which is born “historically” from the prestige (and thus the trust) which the dominant group derives from its position and function in the world of production; 2) of the apparatus of State coercion which ensures “legally” the discipline over those groups who do not “consent” either actively or passively, but which is constituted for all of society in anticipation of moments of crisis in command and leadership in which spontaneous consent is lacking. (Gramsci 1975, 476 and 1513)

Gramsci admitted that this greatly extends the definition of “intellectual.” Indeed, the replacement of the word “intellectual” by “organizer” would be better to avoid confusion with notions of a dispassionate or a didactic function “from above.” It should be noted that they are primarily organisers who organise both the structures of civil society and the state. Later he clarifies that the State and civil society overlap. They are not, strictly speaking, separate under capitalism.

A state that relies only on coercion when consent is collapsing—as Gramsci thought it was after 1917—is primarily an administrative state

with great intellectuals who provide it with an overview of what human beings should and aspire to be. Yet, he never denies that administration and law are coercive. All rules are, and life without rules is savagery or Rousseauian utopianism. He deliberately uses the Machiavellian image of the state as a centaur—half-beast, half-human.

The intellectuals' role is one of coercive discipline—in the sense of training people to fulfill their assigned role. Socialisation means discipline and the move from savage beast to civilised being comes through education, which involves “effort, boredom and suffering” (Gramsci 1975, 1549). The most mechanical of workers is a “domesticated gorilla;” that is, trained to his or her role. Thus, even as administration and rule of law, the state is coercive. Thus, unlike Lenin, Gramsci is concerned with uniting, theoretically, the notion of the state as coercion and what he calls “consensus,” and not merely noting the obvious—the instruments of state power from time to time and place to place—and using the carrot and the stick in different proportions (Pizzorno 1969). It is this theoretical unification of both notions which constitutes hegemony in its developed sense. In this, Gramsci stressed the opposite of Lenin's view by making crucial the quality of any state—not only in terms of the fact that it was an instrument of oppression and could be revealed as such, but also that it was the expression of popular consensus and exercised its coercive power in favour of the existing system of production with that consent, which it had inculcated in an “education.”

Gramsci understood education as organisation. Within it, the conscious ideas then proffered as either enlightenment or mystification are entrusted to those with the function of education, in its narrow sense of schooling. In a passage dealing with the coercive nature of all states, he insists that the educative function of state creates a new “civility,” but adds “...from the fact that it operates essentially on economic forces, that it reorganises and develops the apparatus of economic production, that it makes structural innovations, should not be drawn the consequential view that superstructural matters are left to themselves, to their spontaneous development, to a chance and sporadic germination.” He insists that the state rationalises even through the criminal law, which has a civilising function. Indeed, such law has been promoted by incentives as well as repression (Gramsci 1975, 978-9).

By organising society's multiple productive and reproductive practices into a specific combination, depending on time and place,

the hosts of different organisers—from foremen to the greatest philosophers in any society—materially place each person in a specific place which he lives as an “atom” (Marx) or as a “citizen-individual” (Gramsci). The practical effect of the specific combination of social relations of production is to separate those who “feel” from those who “know.” While a person may continually feel that matters are wrong because of the contradictions engendered by the capitalist mode of production, he or she is unable as an individual to translate these feelings into political action of a coherent sort, although they may revolt.

The relationship between “feeling” and “knowing” is relative. For Gramsci, all people are philosophers in that they have a world view and no “muscular-nervous” activity is mindless. “Every man outside his profession is engaged in some intellectual activity, that is, a ‘philosopher’, an artist, a man of taste: participates in a view of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and thus contributes to maintain or to change a view of the world, and thus to raise new ways of thinking” (Gramsci 1975, 1550-1). However, where the problem is to replace an existing hegemony with a new socialist hegemony, a new intellectual had to be elaborated, who was involved in practical life “as a constructor, an organizer, ‘a permanent persuader’ because he is not purely an orator...from work technique he reaches science technique and a historic-humanistic conception, without which he remains a ‘specialist’ and does not become a ‘leader’ (specialist-politician)” (Gramsci 1975, 1551). Again, there is the striking insistence on education as permanent organisation and not merely an oratorical or didactic function in the “vulgar” sense of intellectual activity.

The importance of the organised separation between “feeling” and “thinking” practices under capitalism lies in the ideological effect. Since the organiser by profession does not live the experience of the working class, the former becomes really committed to the idea of scientific knowledge, which is abstracted from “passion.” This makes his relationship with the mass merely formal and bureaucratic. Thus, the attributes of “priesthood” are attached to the function of the intellectual. Neither the organisers nor the organised learn from the lives of the other. Valid social knowledge does not appear to come in a process where practice is theorised and theory is subjected to rectification in practice. It seems to come from above (Gramsci 1975, 452). This detachment is most likely to exist when there is an insufficient number of organisers or intellectuals.

This detachment would last even in developed capitalism since Gramsci likened a social transformation at that stage to a long period of trench warfare, wherein huge masses of people would be involved in a struggle of hegemonies that would occupy the entire social terrain even as bourgeois hegemony broke down (Gramsci 1975, 865-6). Indeed, Gramsci dated the height of a successful bourgeois hegemony in Europe from about 1870, although he was careful to distinguish between its efficacy in different countries. Clearly, he believed it was weaker in Italy than in France or Britain. Thus, was long-standing—the product of a long history of organising social life in a particular way.

This absence of counter-hegemonic orders explains why the average member of the populace was deprived of the tools necessary to oppose bourgeois hegemony: in his or her schooling by the created order of social life, he or she could only attain access to knowledge of society and its historical development by and through learning the appropriate language; that is by leaving behind the “comprehension” which life brought (Gramsci 1975, 452). Until such people express their own intellectuals, who organise them and restructure society in that very reorganisation, they remain caught in the bind that the only way they can make sense of their own experience is with the tools with which the existing schooling in all senses supplies them. Since all learned languages are removed from the lived experience of the people which “feels,” the popular language—the lived experience—cannot be translated into a coherent ideology. When it does, it becomes functional to the existing system through its form. Gramsci thought that this process of developing two languages for those who knew and those who feel had been going on for centuries and had existed everywhere, even in China. In Europe, it started with the separation of Latin from the vulgar, and only the closed caste of rulers (usually Churchmen) knew the first (Gramsci 1975, 353-7 and 557-564): “...the populace sees the rites and feels the exhortatory prayers, but cannot follow the discussions and the ideological developments which are the monopolies of a caste” (Gramsci 1975, 354).

Such practice of the traditional intellectuals had continued in modern conditions of capitalist hegemony. For Gramsci, it was the most interesting aspect of such hegemony. It certainly created a tension between the rationality of modernity and its rationalisations of that system. He had long identified such legacies of an inescapable past class structure as typical of the backward semifeudal Italian South. When he had first become aware that the Turinese proletariat—the height of

modern production—could not make a socialist revolution without an alliance with the peasantry (and later he included other classes), he focused on how to overcome the hostility and diffidence of peasants towards the Northern proletariat. It was already by 1926 that he had examined the structural and didactic relations between local petit bourgeois organisers and what they taught or did not teach the peasantry, who lived the felt contradictions of agrarian exploitation but never succeeded in uniting into a mass opposition. Gramsci pointed out that the peasants were linked by the middle bourgeoisie of their towns to the “great intellectuals” of Italy. Disaggregated peasants turned to this network of organisers for leadership, which included local notables and clergy. It was democratic when facing the peasant but also reactionary when serving the great landowners. The village organisers turned all peasant politics into the petty administrative and political clique-warfare of the existing organs of local government and the state, which they monopolised and dominated throughout the Italian peninsula. If this was their organisational face, what they absorbed and purveyed as a rationalisation for such politics was influenced by the wisdom of great intellectuals, in particular Benedetto Croce and Giustino Fortunato. The latter preached a religion of national and European liberalism that was both antidemocratic and quietistic. Even the most progressive southern intellectuals could not be expected to entirely break away from such a starting point and had to be wooed over to support the Communist solution (Gramsci 1966).

The result was a conformity to a particular type of mass—man—who could not be autonomous. As Gramsci pointed out in a telling example, when a person only spoke a dialect and not the national language—let alone foreign languages—that person was condemned to a myopia of local communalism (Gramsci 1975, 1377). This is what happened to the average man. To break out of such limits required a hard training in grammar, clear thinking, and refusal of the facility of spoken words. Yet, to have such an education, which was what southern notables gave their sons and was required by a peasant to shift up the social scale, was to be caught in the limits of that discourse, organised ultimately by great intellectuals. Such schooling—again to be thought of first as organisation and discipline and only then as proffered ideas—was designed to be functional to the system by closing down critical thought and speculation about new values dangerous to capitalism.

The point, therefore, is capital as it illuminates that no simple attainment of enlightenment can lead to counter-hegemony. Nor indeed can an a priori notion of the future or a teleological understanding of action be developed except in that reorganisation, since reorganisation is essential for the world to be seen in a new way. Furthermore, as the constant criticism of the Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and Enlightenment embodied in Croce makes clear, revolutionary knowledge cannot have the qualities sought by the Enlightenment or traditional rationalism.

Only in the most banal of senses is their hegemony a plot of the ruling classes. The closed nature of their discourse in any realm is essential to the functional comprehension of the different orders in society. However, there is certainly a vicious cycle in the authorised system of reasoning that exists in capitalist society and this is expressed in its greatest thinkers. From the highest level of abstraction, it runs as follows, according to Gramsci:

1. An explanation for the way the world works is proposed, and consequent solutions to existing problems are found;
2. These propositions are refined in a series of mediations until they are far from the reality, which they describe and exist only as “philosophy;” and finally,
3. They are then verified by the “elect minds” which are already defined by their sites in this process (experts with certain training).

Taking French hegemony as exemplary, Gramsci points out that *senso comune* (popular wisdom) is treated in two ways: “it is made the basis for philosophy; and, it is criticized from the standpoint of another philosophy; but in both cases, the result is to overcome a particular ‘popular wisdom’ to create another, which is closer to the concept of the world of the leading group” (Gramsci 1975, 1045). Systematic thought, through placing limits on intellectuals politically, denies the incoherent views taught by practice to the average man (Gramsci 1975, 1383ff).

Yet it also remains in contact and brings up to date in a gradual way the good sense of the masses to agree with the ruling world view (Gramsci 1975, 1375ff). It is able to do so through high philosophy’s authority in systematic knowledge. The population esteems

philosophical analysis even if it prefers and believes “facts” rather than opinions. But what Gramsci calls the contradiction between what it learns from life and what it is schooled to make sense of life is only overcome when the mass is involved in a political struggle to free themselves from the limits of the hegemonic philosophy of capitalism.

Gramsci went on to say that the “man of the people” believes in what people like him believe, and seeks security in numbers. He believes that someone could argue for those beliefs rationally, even if he cannot do so himself. He remains convinced once and for all. As Gramsci asserted, this means that creating new convictions in the masses is extremely difficult if they contrast with the orthodox beliefs of those who conform with the ruling class hegemony.

However, the process by which hegemonic authority and education are usually (not always since there is a healthy skepticism as well) deemed to be the best guarantees of good judgment by the average man are proven by the impossibility of referring complicated propositions back to the average man, whose popular wisdom is so contradictory that any reference to common sense as a proof of truth is nonsense. This is a closed circle since the appeal to practice (to the “felt”), made by the philosophers whom Gramsci opposed, proves impossible because this appeal shows to popular wisdom its own impossibility as a mode of verification (Gramsci 1975, 1399-1400). Gramsci’s detestation of artificial languages, *idiotlalia*, and “elect minds” rests on this awareness that the system precludes the development of a political alternative.

Capitalist hegemony is always contested and never 100 percent (Gramsci 1975, 958) or ideal, and the degree of its success depends on the time and place of society in a differentiated imperialist world (Gramsci 1975, 1566-7). It only tends towards the formation of what one might regard today as uni-dimensionality because it is nearly always inserted into an already preceding or existing society (e.g., feudalism). However, some societies (the new world) were established in the relative absence of such antecedent history. There, hegemony would presumably be more complete. In most societies, the capitalist system—with its bureaucratic state resting on the rule of law, which citizens support as necessary in the world “that is”—must establish itself against an earlier equivalent social formation and struggle against it or compromise with its organisers. Such “traditional intellectuals,” as opposed to the “organic intellectuals” of capitalism, necessarily import into the new society a whole host of ideas which are not functional to the new mode of production (Gramsci 1975, 474ff). While international

forces of imperialism guarantee the continuance of the classes, which such traditional intellectuals organise as the case in Europe when Gramsci wrote, the ideas of these intellectuals will exist as real social forces and not merely as insubstantial notions doomed to be swept away in the inevitable development of capitalism and the polarisation of society into the two classes of proletariat and capitalists.

The “bizarre combination” of conditions that results in popular wisdom is present above all in folklore, which contains both good and bad sense (Gramsci 1975, 89). It is thus the starting point for any counter-hegemony.

The point of departure must always be “popular wisdom” (*senso comune*), which is spontaneously the philosophy of the multitude which it is a matter of making ideologically homogeneous;...it is necessary to move from what the pupil already knows, from his philosophical experience (after having shown that he has such an experience, that he is a ‘philosopher’ without knowing it). And since this presupposes a certain intellectual and cultural average among the pupils, who assumedly have had only fragmentary and occasional information, and lack any methodological and practical preparation, you cannot but start from popular wisdom in the first place, religion in the second...and only in the third place from the systems elaborated by the traditional intellectual groups. (Gramsci 1975, 1397 and 1401)

Both science and the state attempt to eliminate it through all the instruments of socialisation—from the family to the workplace. Yet, it is not static and it develops at all times in relation to the lived experience of members of society. It is not the content of popular beliefs which are of primary significance—though they may sometimes contradict authority in the service of ignorance—but their imperative nature when they function as norms of conduct (Gramsci 1965, 348). Gramsci noted that Marx approved of popular wisdom in such terms when he was also calling for a “...new popular wisdom and thus a new culture and philosophy which is rooted in popular consciousness in the same solid way and with the same imperative force as traditional beliefs” (Gramsci 1975, 1400). He insisted that success was met when ideas proposed by the organisers were tested, modified, and refined in a constant exchange—a work of “permanent persuasion” on both sides—with the masses who made clear what would galvanise or have an imperative force on them in a particular situation. He thus proposed a new practice of philosophy, not merely—as many others have done—a new philosophy of practice. This meant a change in the way he

associated all the traditional categories used in Marxism. No longer was there the reduction of difference to an essential progressive force in society—the world historical proletariat—against whose progressive and soon-to-be-official worldview could be read off as matters of folklore, popular culture, and common sense—all of which were viewed negatively. Here, we see a clear divergence from the Enlightenment position of Lenin in *What is to be Done?*, where “ten wise men are worth a hundred fools.” One might say that for Gramsci, all men are potentially wise. As an early theoretician of social movements, his fundamental problem had become how to articulate different movements that started from a differentiated society—which in conditions of worldwide uneven development could never be expected to tend toward the two-class model essential to theories that made the proletarian science official and progressive—in a national popular alliance (see Lukács). Thus, Gramsci was at the start of rethinking the status of the Enlightenment that was characteristic of postmodern thought.

What then is it to make such popular wisdom ideologically homogeneous when the process is not that of Enlightenment? Certainly, bad sense is left behind in popular wisdom, where past prejudices become imbricated with popularised science and new experience. There is also a departure from whatever makes human beings passive, in the sense that they do not choose to which norms or political movements they will adhere. But there is no rejection of the form or way in which they think or an obliteration of what makes human beings human by rationalisation or tailoring to the functional needs of society. Gramsci wrote that a distinction must be made between “...the fossilized reflections of the conditions of days gone by, and therefore conservative and reactionary, others consisting of a range of often creative and progressive innovations, spontaneously determined by the forms and conditions of life as it is developing, which go against, or merely differ from, the morality of the ruling strata” (Gramsci 1975, 2313). The distinction is between items of knowledge and a positive moral *weltanschauung* (world and life view). He encapsulated this as not being able to make history without “passion.” What is known and what is felt must be united—the object is not simply to have the first exclude the second (Gramsci 1975, 451-2).

Gramsci made this very clear in his discussion of the “domesticated gorilla,” into which Taylorised capitalism seeks to turn the modern factory worker. His comments must be seen in the context of his further observation of capitalist hegemony as normally complete that

any sign of autonomy is to be grasped, analysed, and built upon. He wrote,

American industrialists have understood very well that the “domesticated gorilla” is a phrase, that the worker remains “nevertheless” a man and that even he, while he works, thinks as well or at least has much greater opportunity to think, at least when he has got over the crisis of adaptation and has not been eliminated; and not only does he think, but the fact that he does not get immediate satisfaction from his work, and understands that they want to turn him into a “domesticated gorilla,” can lead him to a train of thought which is far from conformist. (Gramsci 1975, 2171)

He typified the attempt to create such a being as “rationalization,” which is something to be avoided or opposed (Gramsci 1975, 2146) as an unnatural discipline that seeks to regulate human beings in their personal and sexual worlds through their minds. Not only is this attained by “unheard-of brutality” (Gramsci 1975, 2161), but it also denies work as something that involves the workers’ “intelligence, fantasy and initiative,” in support of turning them into machines functional to a system. Not only was this totalitarian (Gramsci 1975, 2165), it was also a result of Enlightenment views, as Gramsci stated explicitly, which privileged mind over matter: “We must insist on the fact that in the sexual field the most depraving and ‘regressive’ ideological factor is the enlightenment and libertarian concept of the class not directly involved in production” (Gramsci 1975, 2163).

Clearly a human being is creative; as such, he or she is able to dream even within the constraints of the conditions to which he or she must adapt through rules. To free that creativity implies a real choice of which world—and the group or class within it—an individual chooses to belong to. That requires autonomy of thought. When Gramsci criticised the provincial attitudes developed in a bourgeois hegemony, it was because such values were undergone and unconscious rather than deliberately chosen.

...is it preferable to “think” without being critically aware of it, in a fragmentary and haphazard manner, that is to “participate” in a world view “imposed” mechanically by the external environment, that is, by one of the many social groups in which everyone is automatically involved from the moment they enter into the world of consciousness (which can be your own village or province, can have its origins in the parish and the “intellectual activity” of the local priest or the aging patriarch whose “wisdom” is law, in the little old woman who has inherited the wisdom of witches or in the petty intellectual soured by his own stupidity and inability

to act, or is it preferable to elaborate your own world view with awareness and critically and thus, in connection with such labour by your own brain, to choose your own sphere of activity, to participate actively in the production of the history of the world, to be your own guide and not accept passively and supinely from outside the imprinting of your own personality? (Gramsci 1975, 1375-6)

Again, we see the insistence on the way a person thinks, not the contents of his or her beliefs—typical of Enlightenment thought (compare Herbert Marcuse and the Frankfurt School generally). Scientific thought, then, could not be opposed positively to “vulgar” popular philosophy or even to ever-changing folklore which was the expression or vehicle of the latter.

To liberate humanity was more than to free a thinking head, as Immanuel Kant believed. It was to construct a social wisdom, which humans struggled to make coherent from its diverse parts and constantly rectified in their overall views. It did not preclude religious or magical thought or dreams, nor did it reduce love to sex and biology. It was against the resuscitation of any “hidden God,” which explained or drove all other aspects of society and whose imposition spelt tyranny, even when, as in Croce, it was “freedom.” A counter-hegemony built from below—from the multiple, diverse, and disaggregated views of the people that challenge the totalising visions of the ruling hegemony—certainly required a complete reorganisation of society. But it could only refuse essentialism and its totalitarian outcomes.

GLOBALISATION AND RETHINKING HEGEMONY

As the author of the *Varying Seasons of Gramscian Studies* (Davidson 1972), I am the first to recognise that our interpretations of categories in Gramsci’s thought have and will change (compare Liguori 1996). This is as true of his core notion, hegemony, as of the peripheral or subordinate dimensions in his thought.

What is involved in such a rethinking? Some preliminary remarks are in order. It is clear that any first reading must be presentist if his work is to be read in light of contemporary problems. Such unavoidable historicism alters the status—not the nature—that we accord to any scientific or universal knowledge we might subsequently derive from our interrogation of Gramsci’s thought. This scientific knowledge is certainly the goal that is required if Gramsci is to be used to understand how hegemony works even if the status of scientific knowledge is

subject to revision as time elapses and further problems arise. Moreover, the scientific knowledge is limited by the rules of its discourse. It is not an affectively-lived concern capable of galvanising political forces. The historicist reading is capable of doing so in accordance with the Marxist canon that politics takes place on the terrain of such ideology.

The present problem is that of globalisation. The presentist rereading of Gramsci will seek to discover in his work implicit and explicit ways in which he foresaw that problem and how he linked his notion of hegemony to that reality. This is to see how far he was “a thinker before his time,” who intimated the epochal change known as globalisation in its early structured manifestations. Such a subjectivist historicist reading may well lead to the discovery that there are hitherto missed theoretical connections in his work precisely because the question of whether they were there or not was not posed earlier. It may also lead to the realisation that there is nothing in his work that is of relevance to the problem of globalisation, at the same time as there is nothing in the subjective views of Aristotle. Globalisation, as we will describe it, was clearly unimaginable to the latter. We might well discover the same in Gramsci’s work.

Even if we were able to find in the Gramscian canon an awareness *ante litteram* of globalisation, to avoid the unacceptable utilitarian “what is alive and what is dead in Gramsci,” we must engage in the further exercise of how far that subjective view is coherent or valid by reference to the entirety of his thought and in its presuppositions adequate to our problem. This second interrogation requires—within the limits already indicated—a production of a scientific theory which is self-grounding, new, and different when compared to other thinkers (usually earlier in time) on whom he built. If we are interested in finding out whether the notion of hegemony is incorporated sufficiently into a theory of what we now call “globalisation,” it is necessary also to consider whether and how far the implicit basic philosophical notions within which all the categories were thought in Gramsci’s work can still be relevant today.

In our case, it is clear that Gramsci explicitly found the notion of hegemony already present in Lenin’s work. However, it also states that Lenin did not elaborate it scientifically as Gramsci intended to do. As such, he makes the double reading which we have described.

These rather lengthy preliminary remarks are necessary to explain why the extensive literature on the similarities between Gramsci’s hegemony and that of the ancients—Niccolo Machiavelli, Lenin, or

Gaetano Mosca—will not be considered here despite their merits (see Fontana 1993, 2000; Finocchiaro 1999, Gruppi 1976; compare the French version in *Dialectiques* [Perelman 1975, 5-54]).

On the other hand, the voluminous literature on hegemony, which updates Gramsci in terms of new problems posed by globalisation and its effect on all categories that depend on the nation-state (e.g., democracy and citizenship), is relevant even if its theses are not always acceptable (Vacca 1991, Montanari 1991, Losurdo 1997; for an overview of the debate about Gramsci's thought see Liguori 1996).

GRAMSCI AND HEGEMONY

In the extensive literature on this subject (see Cammett 1991, updated 2005), I share the views of Giuseppe Vacca and Marcello Montanari almost completely (Vacca 1991, Montanari 1991). Their theses correspond with my views on hegemony in almost every detail, although I elaborated independently (compare also Davidson 1982, introduction). It is therefore useful to recapitulate Vacca's statement on Gramsci's theory of hegemony.

Vacca asserts that hegemony—the core concept in Gramsci's work—is to be found in Lenin's work in insufficiently elaborated form, as Gramsci always stated. "The theory of hegemony is.... elaborated for the political constitution of 'new progressive groupings'...the whole programme of the *Quaderni* must be investigated in terms of those connections" (Vacca 1991, 19). It does not exist in Marx himself. Yet, Gramsci wished to elaborate a completely new notion of politics from that of Lenin. Hence, hegemony marks a rupture with all earlier Marxist political thought about power. It is not a Western tactic, but a new way of understanding the worldwide system of rule that emerged after 1917. Vacca writes:

We can never emphasise enough the fact that in the crucial paragraph 24 of *Quaderno 13* dedicated to the connection between hegemony and the 'war of position' Gramsci considers the October revolution the last episode of 'the war of manoeuvre' after which the problem of revolution is everywhere posed in terms of a 'war of position' 'The last example of this (that is, the last case of a 'frontal assault')—he affirms—political history were the events of 1917. They marked a decisive turn in the history of the science and art of politics.' Thus he ends up enunciating a doctrine of hegemony as a complement to the coercive State and the present form of

the 48ist doctrine of 'permanent revolution'. In the elaboration of these two concepts are found the innovations contained in the Gramscian concept of politics. (1991, 11-12)

Moreover, the notion of hegemony arises from the crisis of the nation-state and its replacement as the subject of politics by an international or world subject—the world capitalist economy. It is very important to note that Gramsci's theory is posited on a belief that an epochal change is taking place globally: "...the subordination of the coercive State to hegemonic politics is realised in the process of the formation and the advance of 'an economy on a world scale': a process which gives rise to an overcoming {of existing social relations}" (Vacca 1991, 22). When Gramsci wrote the famous words that Marxism and Leninism stated (the international situation "must be considered in its national aspects"), this is because the "'national' relation is the result of an original 'combination' which is unique (in a certain sense), that this originality and uniqueness must be understood and conceptualised if we wish to dominate and direct it. Certainly the development is towards internationalism, but the starting point is 'national' and it is from that starting point that we must make our moves. But the perspective is international and cannot but be that." The combination of national forces, which the international class brings together in a national hegemony, requires correct interpretation if those forces are to be led through various stages into an overall effective world economy. In turn, Vacca (1991, 46-48) tells us that this new subjectivity must be relational (not individualistic). Thus, it poses philosophical questions to the famous 1859 preface of Marx. The contents should be read not as a statement of fact but that of tendency. As such, they raise the issue of a passive revolution being a prerequisite for the transition or overcoming of existing capitalist contradictions. This is one reason why the "war of position" must be seen as morphological, not geographical, in status.

Hence, the categories in Gramsci are not absolute, but relational. Even seemingly absolute statements about a transition like "the starting point is national," which have led commentators to mistake Gramsci for a western Marxist, have to be read in relation to others. Vacca points out that the insistence on maintaining an international perspective follows this celebrated formulation. Where the categories are relational, only the global can have preeminence.

In an early work (Davidson 1982), I suggested that Gramsci regarded international (then we called it "imperialist") class relations in

interpreting each nation-state at a particular stage of development and thus combining many different modes of production and corresponding social relations in one space. For example, in Italy there was a large vestigial peasantry that was not going to disappear in some linear process towards two classes (according to the great mantra of *The Communist Manifesto*). As the peasants continued to live those relations, which was always in a particular organised form (hence the importance of the people who organised it [the intellectuals]), it kept a bizarre combination of its old worldviews with more modern ones. Those views could not be demystified in some process of enlightenment against what was taught everyday. Consequently, a proletariat—informed by the most advanced understanding—had to make compromises with the worldviews of other classes if it wishes to build a strong enough bloc of classes to displace the existing bourgeois hegemony.

This overcoming would require a democratic compromise that would allow the building of a bloc of classes in a particular situation. Bearing in mind that the State is no more than the complex of political practices through which the *classe dirigente* (leading class) obtains the active consensus of the governed, Gramsci insisted that it was in permanent crisis by the 1920s in many states much earlier. Parliamentary liberalism could no longer secure the necessary consensus. The existing representative bodies were insufficient when hegemony had shifted to a global arena. This shift had ended the preeminence of the liberal state and its presuppositions in contractualism and proceduralism. These had to be complemented by practices directed to attaining a universal human solidarity. Montanari (1991, 86-90) puts it as the need to attain an ethical being who is more than work or social-political reproduction itself. Going beyond existing parliamentarism requires the expansion of existing democratic practices to make them ever more inclusive.

When Gramsci considered what that global capitalism might be, he focused on Americanism and Fordism as universalising spaces within which a new anticapitalist must be forged. Counter-hegemony is to be found in this. Global capitalist hegemony takes the form of the reproduction of humanity as the “domesticated or tamed gorilla.” Such a being is not changed into another, who tends towards global human solidarity through the action of a party alone; although the latter is one starting point for the construction of a new collective will. Rather, the human being is formed on an industrial terrain (Gramsci 1975, 862), which is its site, in a manner of speaking. For reasons that will become clear later, we wish to emphasise this point. It certainly allows Gramsci to avoid the error of class expressivism and totalitarian

notions of the party, which is wrongly held by many theorists of hegemony as implied by a supposed commitment to the class struggle for which democracy and compromise with others are a sham. "In hegemony politics, which is inconceivable without asserting the relationality and reciprocity of subjects, no part can be conceived of as *pars totalis*" (Vacca 1991, 83).

Thus, while any political action had to start on a national terrain, this was because of the site accorded to that terrain in a global economy. In fact, the drive was towards a modern form of cosmopolitanism (Vacca 1991, 84-5; Gramsci 1975, 1988). Hegemony, as interdependence, meant that national-state politics could never be absolute, as well as any unity referred to the world system. As hegemony was concerned with relational interdependence in a global space, the hegemonic function of intellectuals was divorced from intentional party or political relations. They were ideologically unconscious organisers.

Vacca argues that Gramsci's starting point in the model of the factory councils should therefore be understood not as a commitment to a workerist factory or economic model of production democracy, but as his national solution to the bourgeois failure to reconstitute the world market. The American model was not regarded by Gramsci as universal in its validity as the United States was the child of Europe, whose culture remained "the only historical and civilisational universal." While the counter-hegemony might remain tendential at the greatest level of generality, it must, we infer, start from that universal (Vacca 1991, 106).

This revolution is inclusionary, not exclusionary. Politically, what remains all-important is how the dominant global hegemony is replaced by a counter-hegemony. It is notable that Vacca is weakest or most general on that point and he concludes on a fairly Eurocentric note, as he himself is aware. His thesis, in this regard, could almost be caricatured in contemporary jargon as Europe versus America, with the former as the highest attainment of theory (Marxism) and the latter as exemplar of the global trap.

GLOBALISATION

The morphological quality of hegemony, which Vacca so genially emphasises, rests on the recognition of the overriding importance of

the world economy and the way it determines national politics. The world economy or market sets rules that seek to turn human beings into tamed gorillas and consumers. It is important to note that Gramsci saw perspicaciously that the old world of nation-state capitalist politics was in crisis, because it could no longer manage the economy or market within its terms. As Vacca emphasises, even more important is the explicit recognition that class war has ended and a new epochal anticapitalist politics must be tried everywhere. It is equally notable that Gramsci wanted a national-popular revolution to replace class politics and argued that such required more than a Fascist corporatism with its national autarky and nascent stakeholderism. It required a new form of democratic politics. However, Vacca does not go sufficiently far to allow us to affirm that Gramsci addressed what is essential to globalisation.

It is true that globalisation marks a new supranational form of capitalism. On the other hand, the new global epoch is supposedly ruptural in a way historically never seen before. It is not simply the latest qualitatively unchanged form of capitalism. The best commentators are overwhelmingly of the opinion that its main novelty is how its novel production and reproduction technologies change earlier space-time relation. It calls into question all notions of space and time one-with-themselves that have hitherto dominated social thought. Usually, this is explained by the advent of the Internet in the last fifteen years. This does not simply allow capital, goods, and labour to be in many places at the same time. But it ensures that the affective experience of space and time is altered radically for human beings. The very nature of human beings is changed with the speed of communication and dwindling of space and, therefore, time scales. The sense of self and identity of individuals are fragmented in unheard-of ways for huge migrating workforces.

Let me unpack some of these assertions where they are relevant to how far Gramsci's theory of hegemony can account for them. Important for our purposes is the widely-acknowledged fact that instantaneous transfer of information and capital allows goods to be produced in a highly-decentralised fashion. No product needs be transformed from raw material to final polished item in one place anymore. Thus all significant production is decentralised. The most significant product is, of course, information itself. Winning the edge in that information is what permits comparative advantage and better capital accumulation.

More important for our purposes is what is claimed about labour and labour power under globalisation. Sami Nair (1997, 2) puts it this way:

We have entered a period of huge *displacement* of population. I use the word *displacement* deliberately, for when the populations of entire regions leave, this is not because they want to leave but because they are obliged to by the situation. In fact, what is called globalisation, the extending of the economy to the globe, goes together with the uprooting of entire peoples, abandoned by the flight of productive structures, left to the blind forces of the world market. Even the rich countries undergo these changes fully...

These huge migrating workforces follow the ever-changing information-driven markets for labour, going from country to country, site to site, and job to job; never before in history has there been such migration. These people continually go back home or move on with a rapidity that is unheard of in previous eras. They experience what Giddens (1990) has called disembedding and distanciation; that is, the feeling that they belong in many places or none at the same time (see also Castles and Davidson 2000). It is summed up in the heartfelt exclamation of a young second-generation Anglo-Bangladeshi woman: “They say that home is where the heart is, but I don’t know where my heart is” (quoted in Eade 1997, 157). We emphasise that this is more than a first generation experience.

These vast foreign populations end up in different places, not only—as some commentators would have it—in the great global cities. Their greatest movement is in Asia. But because of the constant phone and e-mail contact with home, plus the frequent and rapid transport by air, they never feel that break with their past which earlier migrants did. The feeling of the nineteenth century migrant to Australia was summed up in the plaintive lines of a folk song, *Farewell the Old England Forever*. Today, the past continues to live on in the present, not just as memory, for all of them. They are always living in two or more places and times at once, so to speak. Time and place (or space) overlap to the point that they cannot be distinguished when seeking to understand affect, or what Marxists used to call “social being.” This is not an entirely new phenomenon provided we make one caveat. For example, Luis Bunuel felt fortunate that he had been born in the eighteenth century (Basque country), grew up in the nineteenth (liberal Spain), and reached maturity in the twentieth (France of the cinema). Gramsci

intimated it when he discussed the bizarre combination of *senso comune*, which he related to two anachronistic modes of production or worlds being lived at the same time by peasants in parts of Italy. The caveat is that it now involves the entire global working class and more importantly, that the latter works in a world of decentralised and rapidly changing production as “plug-in” or service workforces and not in a repetitive time-immemorial way. The importance of this will be made clear later.

The greatest number end up in new service industries built around computer technology found in new growth centres. That does not mean that local proletariats do not exist or deny that poverty and misery are increasing under globalisation. It does mean that in advanced capitalist societies, the situation of an industrial productive space, where transformations would take place, can no longer automatically be made central for political analysis without further consideration. As I have often pointed out elsewhere (see Davidson 2000), the space of production (the factory), through whose times and rhythms, different histories and identities were translated into those of the class-in-itself and thence through political activity for-itself, does not exist as a politically significant force in a networked world any more, even in the “Third World.”

Thus, there are no necessarily shared spaces for workers who reproduce capitalist relations in a new global epoch. Nor does the experience there override the inherited different identities of the past, even where such spaces still exist. Through the telephone, Internet, and rapid and frequent plane trips home, a fragmentation—and not a constitution—of identities takes place. In an earlier piece, I argued,

With no intention to stay or settle, rapid and regular returns “home,” and the maintenance of contact through phone and Internet, [the new migratory global workforces] are never obliged to leave or to identify with a new place. They hold multiple passports and have multiple allegiances that override those acquired in the factory, even if they work in such a place. The maintenance of their multicultural associations means that even into the second generation there is no transfer of allegiance (Eade 1997, 159). They are denizens; with no aspirations to be citizens—if this means renouncing old identities and ties. As disembedded and distanced beings (Giddens 1990), they are, emotionally speaking, in many places at the same time. Class-consciousness has therefore collapsed or retreated into ultra-nationalism and racism among some of the old working class (of advanced capitalist states). Fearful of the newcomers’ apparent threat

to their economic and social conditions, they become ever more ready to exclude them from such benefits. (Davidson 2000, 116)

The decentralisation of production and various plug-in workforces and the growth in service occupations relative to those in industrial production have apparently led to the end of a large class-conscious proletariat in most advanced capitalist states. If those appearances are what count, they add up to the apparent success of a global capitalist hegemony without the possibility of creating a counter-hegemony. One marker of this is the widespread popular acceptance that life is about change and risk (or what in earlier times would have been called “alienation”) and that to be human is to learn to live with it rather than to seek to overcome it.

It is undeniable that Gramsci regarded the starting point for hegemony to be the factory—a particular space. His notes on Americanism and Fordism stated that explicitly and implicitly. The centrality of the factory in the Gramscian theoretical edifice is incontrovertible up to the *Quaderni*. Its strength in the analyses of the Lyons theses and the *Questione Meridionale* is striking. It is just as undeniable that he also added to the notions developed in the *Ordine Nuovo* period the need for an alliance with the peasantry and thereof the middle class and intellectuals. This necessitated compromises and a renunciation of the proposition that the key to social understanding lies exclusively in the place of industrial production. This was already thematic in the *Questione Meridionale*. But at the core of his distribution of spatial roles remained an irreducible notion that practices in particular spaces transformed historical identities and created a revolutionary will, even when the proletariat was no longer seen as an essential subject for social transformation. This followed from his belief that the capacity of theory to take hold and move masses of men and women required precisely the sort of experience of the Turin factories in and after World War I. No automatic development from the class-in-itself to the class-for-itself was possible. This is so even if we accept the thesis that the party is central in Gramsci’s theoretical edifice.

Marxism’s capacity to become a political force thus required organisation in the factory where human beings were brought together in a particular way for the first time. The transformation of the proletariat into a class that sought to become the State required a particular praxis of transforming the place where they worked. This capacity to realise the new organisation was then something that would be brought to other classes through compromises. The latter in their

practice and places would transform themselves out of the world in which they lived and which was the source for the bizarre views of the world they held. On such bizarre views rested the strength of bourgeois hegemony.

The issue is whether Gramsci still subscribed to it when discussing the global hegemony of the world market, which was tendentially Americanist and Fordist. It should be recalled that this is the crucial overriding hegemony which decides on the nature of the national or local formations from which any counter-hegemony must be created. The reply is explicit. In a pure situation where all the world became America (as most globalists argue it has) and the spread of an American style worldwide can also be observed on a cultural level (see Barber 1995). "Hegemony is born from the factory and needs for its exercise no more than a minimum quantity of intermediary political and ideological professionals" (Gramsci 1975, 2146). Moreover, the capacity to realise Marxist theory as a political force in Italy had depended on the degree to which the proletariat there conformed to the American model in many regards.

Indeed, Gramsci's basic position on this issue, which built on the notions in the early Marx and in Feuerbach quite unconsciously in many cases, never appeared to change. Gramsci made a similar humanism where his predecessors saw the drive to change as something which came from the shared suffering in the place of work; something which no hegemony could ever eliminate and which consequently ensured that no hegemony could ever exist 100 percent under capitalism. We need only the famous article on *Uomini di carne ed ossa* to realise how Gramsci thought the drive to solve misery through taking up new theories started. This perspective continued in the world of the gorilla *ammaestrato* (tamed gorilla), who was produced in as well as produced the global economy's heartlands. He wrote,

American industrialists have understood very well that "tamed gorilla" is a phrase, that the worker remains "nevertheless" a man and that even he, while he works, thinks as well {as going through the motions} or at least has much greater possibilities to think, at least when he has got over the crisis of adaptation and has not been eliminated: and not only does he think, but the fact that he does not get immediate satisfaction from his work, and understands that they want to turn him into a "tame gorilla," can lead him to a train of thought which is far from conformist. (Gramsci 1975, 2171)

As such, we can only agree with Vacca's version of Gramsci, in which the emphasis on Americanism and Fordism and the notion of the "gorilla *ammaestrato*" makes the place of production central to all notions of space (the place) where identities (time) are transformed.

While a careful philological investigation may show that Gramsci did not share Lenin's or Marx's notions of space and time completely, both my and Vacca's *grosso modo* (exposition) demonstrate that he does. It is important at the outset to state that except for one small entry on time, Gramsci addressed neither concept directly in the *Quaderni*. Nor did his references to Aristotle, the key to a study of the space-time relation, refer to that dimension of the *Physics*. This suggests that such matters were regarded as unproblematic and taken for granted by Gramsci (Gramsci 1975, 1902-3).

The problem of this notion of the relation of space and time where a shared praxis in a specific space changes identities inherited from the past (usually a peasantry which is transformed into a proletariat) is that globalisation theory claims that production has become decentralised. There are no longer shared spaces where suffering can lead to unity against an oppressor.

RETHINKING COUNTER-HEGEMONY

We are driven to the conclusion that under globalisation the space of production has very much changed that it makes global capitalist hegemony extraordinarily efficient. But there seems not much of an opening to build a counter-hegemony of a traditional sort. Indeed, while progressives like Sassen (1998) are still seeking such spaces of opposition in the global cities' migrant workforces, many commentators on the identity experience of globalised denizens claim that the space-time change has done much more than fragmented identity. As we saw, that notion was present in Bunuel and Gramsci. It can be found in many other authors and coped within their theory. The more radical position argues that the conscious level of identity (whole, alienated, fragmented and so on) is less important than what has taken place on a corporeal, felt level. Human beings are simply not finite corporeal sufferers (in the sense of undergoing the presence of their corporeality so that suffering precedes thought), but they experience themselves quite differently. They feel their transitoriness and live it rather than measure their lives in a finite way. At its most extreme, identity is not spatial as it is in the fragmentation metaphor that presumes frontiers.

Identity is a constant change and therefore, not a subject moving through time.

To accept such a conclusion is to assume that the space-time relation as used by Gramsci is no longer useful because the globalisation theorists are correct that a new space-time relation now exists everywhere; Or, if not, that the new space-time relation is crucially important in the contemporary epoch that marks the end of challenges to capitalism and liberal-democracy.

Fortunately for defenders of hegemony, both assertions are contested even among theorists of globalisation. They both deny that its space-time relation has displaced the older space-time relation in many countries which are not part of its system. They query assertions that even if this first proposition is correct, what is all-important is what happens within the globalised space and time. Concretely, this can be reduced to showing that many countries are not part of globalised production based on the changed speed of communication and on the old production base (factories). Alternatively, it could be that in the key cities of globalisation, the new migrant workforces share a new identity that can be organised in new ways.

Castells (1989), for example, makes clear the first point in this contestation: the world of the Internet leaves out Africa, Latin America, and some of Asia. It is not truly global. In such places, life and space-time relations go on as they have for centuries and movement does not mean the fragmentation of identity. It still means transformation in the shared experience of capitalism's exploitation and oppression. Sebastião Salgado's brilliant photographs show how much this world still exists. It is not inappropriate to include the new China as part of this capitalisation process, which means that a majority of the world's population is not part of globalisation as we have discussed it. Some areas have seen the worsening of conditions due to their exclusion from globalisation's benefits. Most striking is the return of Africa and certain areas of central Asia into chaotic, almost Hobbesian conditions of life. Certainly, world capitalism as a social disorder greater than the exclusionary unequal exchanges of the market still exists for the majority of the world's population (Arrighi and Silver 1999).

Yet many of this global majority feel today that the way to solve the problems is not to stay, unite, and fight for a new order at home, but rather to flee to where better conditions are to be found. The global powerhouses' need for foreign labour encourages this movement. Two

recent films, *El Norte* (The North) and *L'America* (The America), illustrate this. In both cases, the flight is to fulfil an idea of a place of "freedom," although, as was the case a hundred years ago, the immigrant often meets real conditions worse than in the country of origin. However, it was and is believed that those who dare succeed. The scale of illegal immigration and the fight for a passport of an advanced state are staples of contemporary newspapers. This labour mobility undoes class formation, even among those who do not share in the benefits of globalisation but dream of doing so. It remains to be seen whether the new nationalism and its closed borders, which keep such migrants at home with their contradictions, will foster conditions for the constitution of new collective working-class consciousness.

In reference to huge populations, the two percent of the world that makes up the new globally mobile workforce of supposedly fragmented identities is a risible minority. Its centrality for a revived counter-hegemony comes from its location in the great global cities where, according to Sassen and others, the driving motors of globalisation are able to utilise information most profitably. Put simply, the great traditional workforces cannot strike at capitalism in its new heart. On the other hand, the two percent might be able to do so if it was not disaggregated because of its dispersal in new workforces, which have no central workplaces or sufficient shared experience to overcome cultural differences that divide rather than unite—if it did not live the new space-time relation. As Castells has pointed out, the social relations of production have changed greatly and ended up excluding, even in the global cities, large numbers of people who are irrelevant from the logic of globalisation. He shows that there is today a fundamental differentiation of self-programmable and highly productive labour, as well as generic and expendable labour; that there has been an individualisation of labour undermining collective organisation (this has been, in part, our point about the end of the factory). This leaves the weakest sections of labour to their fate. And finally, the combination of these globalising phenomena has been the slow demise of the welfare state, which removes the safety net for people who are not individually well-off (Castells 1998, 344).

The next section of this paper is a tentative view of how a counter-hegemony might be constituted. It assumes that the important section of the workforce is the new multiethnic workforces who make up the periphery in the centre.

A NEW HEGEMONY

We must recall that global capitalism fixes class relations in an impure state—a pure duality of capitalists and proletariat never develops anywhere. This means that any socialist transformation requires the building of a cross-class alliance of majorities on national-popular bases, rather than class. Therefore, that hegemony, which permits new ideas to become social forces has to win out over the old hegemony in an organisational “war of position.”

But while globalisation divides the world into the “fast” and the “slow” and thus continues the contradiction on economic and social levels, it homogenises it ideologically as well. This is where political struggle takes place. It does so by encouraging labour migration to new labour markets. This we will call the “exit principle.” Local contradictions can be fled forever in a flight forward, or so it is believed. The effect is to make global capitalist hegemony almost 100 percent even if it can never reach that extent. Since hegemony is a matter of organisation or structure, we look for what and where it does not cover the field of contradictions.

It is significant that in a world where objective contradictions are increasing, even in the global cities, global hegemony is almost complete. There are no oppositions on a global scale which are easily identifiable. Castells can only point to the Zapatistas—a tiny and ever-menaced movement—as an illustration of a globalised left opposition to the system. The Zapatistas certainly remain at home to fight on their terrain and they use the Internet to keep their presence globally alive. To the extent that they succeed, they can expect the Mexican government not to slaughter them out of hand. The recent loss of visibility must be alarming to them.

In stating that this is the only globalised left opposition, we are also drawing attention to the trap of localism. The protagonists of the latter would reply that there is much local opposition in lesser spaces than those of the nation-state. This is the position of the new republicans (Viroli 1999, Pettit 1999) who build programmes around winning control of local government in semifederal subsidiarity systems like that of the European Union. Whatever the merits of such movements—and I have the same reservations about them that I have always had about social movements—they do not address the problem of global power which is supranational, not infranational, and whose expression is not even through supranational organisational institutions. It relies

on the absence of government and governance in its global spaces and on the uncontrollability of its lightning-fast transactions.

We do not need Castells to remind us that in this Information Age, the main battles are what he calls “cultural.” Gramsci’s point that battles are won and lost on the terrain of ideology is a much earlier and more complex explanation of the mediations between objective economic and social conditions and politics. It can also account generally for the fact that the continuation of contradiction—as must ever be the case under capitalism—and the worsening conditions for the majority of the world’s population do not mean the emergence of a political opposition to capitalism. To do that political organisation has always been essential and certainly will take a long time in the present epoch. Moreover, Gramsci, as we have already suggested, argued that the attitudes in the key areas are what matters, whence political lessons are extrapolated and exported elsewhere. Where are those places and what are their specific problems under globalisation—the contradictions on which an organisational programme that learns from those workers themselves in a maieutic fashion might be built—reminiscent of *Ordine Nuovo*?

We hypothesise that they exist where the structural ability to flee local contradiction is blocked (compare Hirschmann 1970). It is where workers, understood as migrants, are excluded from the possibility of attaining their dream that this contradiction appears and becomes common to all migrants, including and especially those in the global cities (compare Sassen 1998, 177-219).

We cannot do more than sketch in here what seem to be the motivations of people to run away from contradictions in the local terrain. Where conditions are bad for workers and relative labour mobility is present, they move to those labour markets where capitalism is hiring. The most significant movements have been within huge countries like China where about 100 million are moving into the new factories. These have left centres to relocate in areas of cheap labour. This internal movement does not threaten national sovereignty directly. That threat starts when we consider the huge transnational movement of labour which has transformed practically the entire world (with the exception of North Asia) into multiethnic societies of a new type in 20 years. As we have remarked, the majority move in Asia and from Asia and Africa. The recent Asian crisis meant the repatriation of two million Indonesians from Malaysia (Castles and Davidson 2000). The real dream is, of course, to move to Europe or the USA and a few other

countries and obtain that visa which allows you to return as often as you like. The ideology of many migrants is that of attaining *far da se* (freedom).

It is a constant surprise that this dream is so strong when those who have made it—say, to New York City—must be expected, given the overall conditions of exploitation and humiliation most experience, to write home warning that the “flight forward” is a chimera for most. There are two explanations for this. First, for some, like the astronauts from Asia, it is a great success except on the most intimate human side (Ong 1999). For the rest, it might be argued that even if exploitation is pervasive (Ph.D.-holders driving taxis or walking symbolic analysts dogs in Central Park), overall conditions are better than back home. There is some anecdotal evidence that many of those who suffer most on arrival lie about their success in their reports home. Whatever the explanation, it is clear that negative reports about conditions in the global centres are not strong enough to discourage a continuing desire to leave and get out of areas where poverty is increased by globalisation. This is much like earlier rural exoduses to the big city. What cannot be gainsaid is the lesson learnt that there is always another place to move on to and so the temporary setback in one place lead to the inference that one should move on again.

As a result, the development of class consciousness politics in factories of origin is defused by the failure of the two percent in the global workforce to clarify the presence of the periphery in the centre. I think of Filipinas who first move to work in free trade zones; learn in that experience to become militant, organised workers; and then, forced by human pressures like supporting their families, leave to become maids (or worse) in Korea, Japan, the Middle East, and Australia. That two percent and its attitudes thus become keys to the ruling hegemony and the spaces that it does not cover. It is there that contradictions are found and a counter-hegemony could be built.

Overall, the descriptions we have of their mores vis-à-vis their lives in their new places correspond with those touched on in Gramsci’s notion of the tamed gorilla, even though they do not work in factories. For them, life is work, sometimes very skilled; nonetheless, it is isolated and unorganised as a collective workforce. As workers, they accept the risk society and the dangerous privilege of *fare da se*. They have little sense of solidarity with their fellows as workers. What is concretely important to them is the attainment of citizenship and its rights in their new place(s) of work. What blocks that attainment are nationality

laws based on local nation-state priority and the privilege given to the old majority host communities. Everywhere, migrants make common cause against the new nationalism that fosters their exclusions from rights—whether in California, Australia or France. This is the exclusion which affects them all and on which, it appears, their peak bodies as ethnic minorities can often make common cause with both local indigenous peoples and with the progressives.

So the new “war of position,” always understood as having a local starting point, may be best built around human rights campaigns for minorities or migrant workers in global cities. The first of these is free or freer movement in the face of recent attempts to limit immigration—a worldwide trend often driven by reactionary and neofascist groups among older majorities. After the right to life, freedom of movement is the most basic human right. Interference with exit at nation-state frontiers is against international law. Unfortunately, that is not the case for entrance. Governments and business sometimes disagree on this matter. Often in history, the demands of capital for labour have meant the easing of immigration and nationality restrictions in the face of ideologically-driven state concerns. I think typically of the 1889 French law on nationality. In my own country, there is open disagreement between the conservative government and the Business Council on these matters. It is not germane that capital, following the views of Ohmae (1995), wants free labour movement to push down wages. They have a potential for an alliance with the immigrant working class on this issue. The danger of endorsing capitalist plans without building a bloc against the state could be obviated by further political programmes. A central plank of these would have to be the extension of their right to have a voice in political arrangements. This can only be attained by the extension of democratic rights, especially those to a vote, regardless of ethnic belonging or nationality. While one way forward might be the principles adopted in the European Union, especially that of devolved power to local communities, it requires more than a revival of the local republicanism so dear to some heirs to the Gramsci (and Piero Gobetti) of 1919-1920. Since the counter-hegemony has to have a global reach to oppose global forces, it will also require the fostering of norms for more than that of consumer-citizens, which is the goal of global capital. I note as an aside that a quick dismissal of the consumer-citizen is not wise: its logics can lead to the development of a cross-cultural, cross-class solidarity.

The “war of position” around what migrant workers want—empowering citizenship rights—puts such continuers of Gramsci into the camp of the supporters of the proposals of the United Nation’s Global Commission and against defenders of national sovereignty, rights, and working classes. In their place, or as an addition, it would add the need for a global citizenship that makes international laws and conventions override any local, cultural references. In turn, this means a new notion of the multicultural and universal citizen which eschews a strongly affirmative action based on cultural deprivation, if it is limited to that potentially divisive policy. These are all matters I have discussed elsewhere and would be happy to provide further information about.

This combination of local and global may even then be too “thin” a notion to sustain a social transformation from a passive to an active revolution. It is possible to envisage a counter-hegemony built around migrants’ demands for equal democratic and human rights with majorities in host communities. It is possible to believe that only a strong democracy could achieve that objective. But radical democracy with participation at multiple levels of the state does not necessarily mean affective commitment. This is doubly so once the limits of such democracy in wide spaces are addressed and interlocutors become passwords on a computer. The people will never meet in an agora again. Nor indeed will control of a national space be sufficient. Why should we expect a global attachment to have more force no matter how effectively it starts?❁

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