

The Politics and Economics of Globalization and Social Change in Radical Adult Education: A Critical Review of Recent Literature

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Throughout most of the decade of the 1990s, it was widely held that radical politics were, if not outright dead, at least, in near fatal crisis. At the beginning of the decade, marking 10 years of Reaganism-Thatcherism, the European socialist camp was quickly disintegrating. Socialist movements in power or on the verge of power in Central America were in retreat. Neoliberal structural adjustment programs were the norm for the Third World as welfare states were dismantled in the First World. Postmodernism, that was more than anything else an attack on Marxism, was all the rage in academia. In 1992, Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* declared the world to be forever capitalist, as many leftists and Marxist were finishing their journey from neo-Marxism, to Post-Marxism and on to anti-Marxism. The field of adult education, with its progressive tradition, was not immune to this retreat from traditional left politics. Jane Thompson's (1993) ironic and sad "open letter to whoever's left" captured the sense of defeat among radical adult educators.

Nevertheless, all of the capitalist class euphoria over neoliberal globalization and postmodern-inspired smug cynicism did not last long. In 1992, Los Angeles erupted in one of the largest urban revolts in the history of the United States. On January 1, 1994, the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) greeted the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—a codification of transnational neoliberalism—with an armed seizure of major cities in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. The year 1995 was witness to, among other events, the Million Man March of African American men in the United States and the most massive strikes in France since 1968. The 'grand narrative' of postmodernism began to lose steam by the mid-1990s—helped along in no small part by Alan Sokal's parody that slipped by the postmodernist editors of *Social Text* in 1996—and today stands merely as a trend within many fields including adult education. The global justice movement, with antecedents at least as far back as the anti-IMF protests in

Venezuela of 1989 (Katsiaficas, 2004), reached a certain plateau and coalescence in the United States when the growing student movement, environmental movement, and reform trends within the labor movement converged for the dramatic World Trade Organization (WTO) protest in Seattle in 1999. Subsequent anti-globalization or global justice protests, including the first World Social Forum attended by over 12,000 in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January of 2001, have occurred in major cities across the world (Mojab, 2004). While the crisis of socialism is far from over, and the fascist backlash following the events of September 11, 2001, is a setback, we are now in a very different political conjuncture 15 years on from the end of history. From the perspective of radical politics, moreover, the current conjuncture can be characterized by a certain loose consensus on the need to understand and confront the devastating and broad impacts of all that has come to be placed under the concept of globalization.

The intent of this review is to assess currents of globalization analysis within recent radical adult education literature. Central to this review is an analysis of how perspectives of the economics of the globalization process affect people's understanding of the prospect for social change, how this change should take place, and who are most likely to be the agents of this change. Salt, Cervero, and Herod (2000), for example, in a study of worker education programs as responses to globalization argue that "their understanding of the term [globalization] fundamentally influences their programs' content and delivery" (p. 19). In other words, the claim being made in this review is that one's analysis of the economics of globalization sets limits on how one sees the process and profundity of social change. As Marjorie Mayo (2005) argues, "these are not simply semantic debates; different perspectives on globalization relate to differing and potentially competing political agendas" (p. 13). Similarly, as Robinson (2004) puts it, the meanings people attach to a concept such as globalization "are closely related to the problems they seek to discuss and to the kind of social action people will engage in" (p. 1).

Radical Adult Education

I am using the term "radical adult education" to encompass those within the field who are explicitly dedicated to investigating, promoting, and engaging in adult education for progressive, social democratic or socialist transformation. Using this frame of

reference, within radical adult education we find several currents. There is the long standing tradition of workers education that initially in the historiography of radical adult education was centered around the concept of “independent working-class education” (see for example, Altenbaugh, 1990; Armstrong, 1988; Johnson, 1979; Schied, 1993; Sharp, Hartwig, & O’Leary, 1989; Simon, 1965, 1990) and more recently has oriented toward the concept of informal learning (Livingstone & Sawchuk, 2003; Sawchuk, 2003), trade union-based nonformal education (Forrester, 1995; Spencer, 2002), transformative workplace learning (Groener, 2006) and a critique of Human Resource Development (HRD) (Cunningham, 1993; Fenwick, 2004; Howell, Carter, & Schied, 2002; Schied, 2001; Schied, Carter, Preston, & Howell, 1998). The related and other “original” current of radical adult education was community development and empowerment education (Lovett, 1982; Lovett, Clarke, & Kilmurray, 1983) which has more recently oriented toward the concept of building civil society (Curry & Cunningham, 2000; Jackson, 1995; Maruatona, 2006; Welton, 1995, 2001). These two currents, however, do not capture the rich and diverse history or contemporary manifestations of radical adult education. With the rise, or perhaps more accurately stated, realization of the existence, of the so-called new social movements, radical adult education literature has expanded to include current manifestations of and the history of the environmental movement (Gadotti, 2004; Hill, 2006b; Hill & Clover, 2003; Kell, 2004; McDonald, 2006), the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) or Queer movements (Grace, 2001; Grace & Wells, 2007; Hill, 1995, 1996, 2006a), racial, ethnic or national identity movements (Antone, 2004; Guy, 1999; Johnson-Bailey, 2006; Neufeldt & McGee, 1990; Montero-Sieburth, 1990; Nakanishi, 1990; Peterson, 2002; Rachal, 2000; Shilling, 2002; Tippeconnic III, 1990), the peace movement (Goodman, 2004; Mayo, 2005) and the women’s movement (Barr, 1999; Hart, 1992, 2002; Walters & Manicom, 1997; Merrill, 2005; Miles, 1996; Miller, 2004; Swindells, 1995; Thompson, 1995, 2000; Tisdell, 2001) as essential sites of radical adult education. Moreover, radical adult education under the name of popular education, while having a long history in Latin America (Pérez Cruz, 2001; Salazar, 1987), became known as a field of theory and practice in its own right along with and in great part due to the rise of Paulo Freire to prominence in the region and later globally. More recently, the historical roots of popular education in Europe have been taken up most prominently by the so-called

“Edinburgh group” (Crowther, Martin, & Shaw, 1999) the initiators of the Popular Education Network (Crowther, Galloway, & Martin, 2005).

While I argue that the above currents can all be considered part of what I am broadly identifying as radical adult education, not all of these currents have specifically addressed globalization equally. When we look specifically within the area of radical adult education as I have defined it above for work focusing on globalization, we can discern a certain predominance of two broad perspectives and in this review, following the work of William Tabb (1997), I will use a two-sided typology for an initial approximation of the radical adult education literature that directly addresses the issue of globalization. I believe this typology has heuristic value because it helps highlight important distinctions within radical adult education regarding globalization and the prospects for social change, what forms that change will take, and who will be the major agents of social change. In other words, similar to Torres’ (1990) typology, my analysis “can serve as an aid for the study of theoretical rationalities underlying programs” (p. 2).

While typologies rarely capture nuances in and between perspectives, they are useful for mapping broad orientations prevalent within a field or discipline. Typologies have been used in adult education since at least 1960 (Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 2000) and there have been a number of subsequent attempts at typologies since then (Boshier, 1994; Fenwick, Butterwick, & Mojab, 2001; Grace, 1999; Rubenson, 1982, 2000). Radical adult education has also seen attempts at mapping out the major theoretical orientations underpinning praxis (Foley, 2000; Holst, 2002; Kim et al., 1994; LaBelle, 1982, 1984, 1986; Law, 1996; Paulston & Altenbaugh, 1988; Paulston & Liebman, 1994, 1996; Torres, 1990).

After critically reviewing the literature in radical adult education on globalization using this typology, I will address areas within radical adult education that I believe do not necessarily fit easily within the typology and that more importantly are pointing toward new emerging social agents and the possibilities for social change beyond what I will argue are limitations of both civil societarian and prevailing Marxist-oriented perspectives in the field. Anticipating this discussion, specifically, I will argue that feminist perspectives of an integrative (see Miles, 1996) or structural and transformative (Shiva, 2005) nature and emerging struggles in the Americas are

providing pathways beyond the limitations inherent in the two dominant perspectives on globalization within radical adult education.

Perspectives on Globalization and Social Change

Several authors (see for example, Dicken, 2007; Held & McGrew, 2002; Tabb, 1997; Sklair, 2002; Weiss, 1998; Went, 2000) have provided useful typologies of the various political economic interpretations of globalization. The variations among these interpretations centre around four interrelated areas: (a) the current nature of the working class; (b) the extent to which capital is internationalized; (c) the relative strength of the three forms of capital (financial, productive, commercial); and (d) the role and strength of the contemporary nation-state. For the purposes of this article, I will draw on Tabb's characterization of the debate between what he calls the *strong version* of globalization and the *longer version* globalization.

Since civil societarian perspectives in adult education (Welton, 1997) are largely based on a strong version of globalization, let us begin by looking at the general argument put forth by this interpretation of globalization. First, strong versions of globalization argue that we have witnessed a qualitative transformation of capitalism beginning in the post-World War II era and accelerating in the last three decades. This transformation is the result of an explosion in information-based technology and automation that have pushed manufacturing and productive capital to the margins of capitalist relations. Today's economy is technology- and information-based, characterized most typically by the billions of dollars of financial capital that effortlessly and continuously circulate across the planet conflating space and time, creating a truly globalized economy. In this new economy, the nation-state is nearly powerless. As Jarvis (2002) argues, "governments are now not only incapable of regulating the global companies, they are becoming a part of a superstructure controlled to a considerable extent by those who control capital" (p. 8). Since productive capital is now marginal in this globalized, financial economy, the producing or working classes are equally marginal as significant actors for social change. In short, then, strong versions of globalization posit that we have a globalized and ever-expanding information economy where productive capital, the nation-state, and the working class are becoming increasingly irrelevant. The political implications of this argument are clear: with virtually no working class and no nation-state, the

traditional socialist paradigm is obsolete. As Carl Boggs (1986) says, “the socialist tradition...appears to have exhausted its potential” (p. 248).

With the agent of the working class and its traditional socialist goals now seen as no longer viable or even desirable, a significant sector of radical adult education has turned to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and new social movements operating in what these adult educators call civil society (a social sphere generally seen, to varying degrees, as relatively autonomous from the state and the market) as the agents best situated to protect and perhaps expand this social realm of civil society in the face of increasing “colonization” from new economy forces (see, for example, Amutabi et al., 1997; Ceballos, 2006; Cunningham 1996, 1998; Folkman, 2006; Hall, 1993, 1996, 2000; Maruatona, 2006; Schmitt-Boshnick, 1995; Oduaran, 2000). This political strategy, at times feeding off of and facilitating the privatization of former state-run services in housing, education, and community development, is a turn to the local, often couched in a global/local dialectic where low-income people, along with professional adult and community educators, seek private or public funds for local social service projects as a response to globalization forces.

While strong globalization perspectives are the dominant view in radical adult education, it is important to look at how a longer version of globalization provides the basis for a different radical adult education politics. Longer versions of globalization, drawing explicitly from Marxist political economy, begin with the premise that capitalism from its beginning over 500 years ago has been based on international or global economic relations (Sweezy, 1997, p. 1). Therefore, one must be immediately skeptical of talk of a qualitative transformation to a “new” global economy. In other words we have not seen a qualitative rupture or transformation of capitalism from the beginnings of the twentieth century. Long versions of globalization are also skeptical of claims of a post-industrial era. This argument is largely based on the idea that the North, through capital flight to the low-wage South, has been reindustrialized. This deindustrialization and job loss seen in the North, however, are largely due to “a combination of neoliberal policies and cost-cutting efforts within the North itself” (Moody, 1997, p. 53). In addition, putting this in a broader world economic context, a look at the data on foreign direct investment (FDI) reveals that it is almost exclusively controlled by the economies of the North. Eighty percent of it is invested within the

nations of the North (Moody, 1997, p. 56). The fact that Northern economies still dominate FDI and invest it largely among themselves sheds light on the fact that the nation-states attached to these economies are still strong and in fact vital to the continuation of the historical expansion of capitalist relations. Contrary to the claims of the end of the nation-state made by advocates of strong globalization theories, the nation-state “is not being reduced; it is being given different tasks, but by no means necessarily fewer. While globalization has limited the state’s power in some respects [social services], the state’s role in other fields [aiding capital expansion] has become even bigger” (Went, 2000, p. 48).

The most important aspect of the longer version of globalization is the political implications to be drawn from the theory. Ironically, at the very height of the “end of the nation-state” and “farewell to the working-class” rhetoric couched in post-modernist jargon, the working class and peasants have, according to advocates of a longer version of globalization, put themselves in the forefront of current anti-neoliberal struggles. These struggles highlight the continued existence and importance of the working class and popular sectors as agents of social change, as well as the fact that neo-liberalism is not an inevitability but rather a policy choice brutally implemented by nation-states and their international institutions.

Longer versions of globalization are the minority view within radical adult education. There are, however, sectors within the field that are taking up the call of Griff Foley (1999, p. 6) to study our practice from a political economic perspective (see, for example, Allman, 1999, 2001; Brown, 1999; Mojab, 2004; Murphy, 2000; Youngman, 2000). These adult educators are challenging strong globalization perspectives and arguing for a revitalization of Marxist political economy and longer versions of globalization.

Assessing Radical Adult Education Perspectives on Globalization and Social Change

I would like to point out weaknesses I see in both the civil societarian (strong versions of globalization) and the Marxist perspectives (longer versions of globalization) that have general implications for advancing our understanding of globalization, social change and radical adult education.

While the critique of civil societarian perspectives of globalization implicit in the Marxist perspective is compelling for its sophisticated use and advocacy of political economy, it is generally lacking in three areas. First, the local/global dialect is often insufficiently problematized in Marxist critiques of civil societarian perspectives. This dialectic supposedly helps explain theoretically the postmodernistic fragmentation and plurality of reality today. In addition, from the standpoint of practice, this dialectic informs us that we should challenge globalization by focusing on its local manifestations. Terms such as glocalization (Jarvis, 2006) or glocal (Hill 2006b) are employed to name this new reality and its accompany strategy for social change. The problem with this global/local conceptualization is that it misses the mark in understanding the dialectical process of change within capitalism. The fundamental contradictions within capitalism are not external relations (global/local), but contradictory relations internal to the process of capitalism itself that manifest themselves through the long history of the vertical (creating market relations where none existed previously) and horizontal (territorial) expansions of capitalism that today are commonly placed under the label of globalization. As Allman (2001) argues, the most fundamental of these internal relations or contradictions are: a) capital/labor; b) production/circulation; and c) social forces/social relations of production. We need to understand that the contradiction of the global and the local is the result of the continuous development of the internal contradictions of capitalism, and in order to overcome the global/local contradiction, we must critically understand and struggle against the internal relations of capitalism from which it emerges. This is what Allman (1999) calls moving from a limited/reproductive praxis where one merely tries to better one's position within a dialectical relation to a critical/revolutionary praxis where one understands the internal relations and struggles to overcome them. Moreover, the global/local or glocal is not new in terms of the objective manifestations of larger forces at a local level nor in terms of strategies for social change—the slogan “Think globally, act locally” has been with us for years.

Second, while some have challenged the notion—often present in some form in civil societarian perspectives—that globalization is an inevitable and uncontrollable force by pointing to the continued role of the nation-state in making the specific policy changes that allow for globalization processes, analysis of the role of the nation-state remains undeveloped. As Jarvis (1993) argues, “with few exceptions ... the state has

not been the focus of attention, even when the study has been about the politics of adult education” (p. 17). There has been some important work in adult education on localized struggles around the state in terms of education policy and practice such as Freire’s education work as Secretary of Education in São Paulo, Brazil (O’Cádiz, Lindquist Wong, & Torres, 1998) and citizenship learning through participatory budgeting in Latin America (Schugurensky, 2004). In fact, the struggles documented in this work can be considered examples of more localized struggles that move beyond limited/reproductive praxis to a critical/revolutionary praxis precisely because they consider the important role of the state for social transformation, they link the local struggle to national struggles, and they operate with the understanding that fundamental transformation will not take place without a political party or instrument rooted in mass struggles but willing and able to directly engage the state. As Harnecker (2007) states

The history of the many popular uprisings in the twentieth century has demonstrated overwhelmingly that the creative initiative of the masses is no longer enough to overthrow the ruling regime ... The history of triumphant revolutions, on the other hand, demonstrates over and over again what can be achieved when there is a political body [party or instrument] which is capable, first, of advancing a national alternative program which acts as a glue for the most disparate popular sectors and, second is capable of concentrating their strength on the decisive link, in other words, the weakest link in the enemy’s chain. (pp. 78-79)

These local initiatives have in common the combination of mass movements working with and through left political parties. Harnecker characterizes these initiatives as “*highly positive and highly revolutionary*” (p. 128) because of the practical experience gained by both the mass movements and the left parties and because they create educational situations in which “people begin to understand that their problems are related to the overall situation of the economy, the national situation, and even to the international situation” (p. 128). To the extent that they remain at the local level, however, their revolutionary potential weakens. It is only when these experiences are expanded to the national level that their full potential can be realized and it is at that point that the character of the state itself—in whose interests it acts—becomes a central question.

Analysis of the state and radical social transformation at this macro-level has gone particularly under-theorized among adult educators in spite of some highly visible Third World examples where the state in the hands of popular classes or at least in the hands of those acting in their interests have been able to control or at least manage the forces of globalization and to chart paths beyond neoliberalism. Cuba, for example, even given the tremendous pressure imposed by the universally-condemned US blockade, continues to maintain and expand an economy outside the parameters of the neoliberal model. This expansion is due in part to the growing alliance with Venezuela through the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas (ALBA), which now also includes Bolivia, Nicaragua, Antigua and Barbuda, and Dominica. ALBA is the “fair trade” agreement that Cuba and Venezuela have put forth for Latin America in opposition to the neoliberal Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) proposed by the US. Elsewhere in Latin America, the presidential electoral victories of Lula in Brazil, Kirchner in Argentina, Tabare Vázquez in Uruguay, and Correa in Ecuador, on platforms of varying degrees of rejection of the neoliberal model, point to the fact that it is only by social movements working through and with the nation-state that the peoples of the Third World can fight the annexation process implicit in neoliberal globalization policies dominated by the United States. While regional integration initiatives such as ALBA may be necessary to fully overcome capitalist neoliberalism in this new era, nevertheless, the nation-state is still a key player. Ricardo Alarcón (2006), President of the Cuban Parliament, makes this point in reference to the recent defeat of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) at the 2006 Summit of the Americas in Argentina.

[I]t is very common for social movements to complain about the FTAA, but let’s not underestimate the fact that they stopped it right there at the conference. And it was stopped by five Latin American governments. Not by the piqueteros, the Cuban communists or the trade unionists, but five Latin American governmentsLet’s ask Bush what troubled him the most: what happened inside the conference or outside behind the fences.

The fundamental questions center on what social forces control the state and the nature or character of the state itself. While Jarvis’s (1993) study of the state seems unable to conceive of a state in which the popular classes or representatives of the

popular classes govern in largely positive ways—in other words beyond his idea of the state being at best a “necessary evil” (p. 20)—he clearly sees the question of control of the state as central when he argues that “it is necessary to examine the political ideology of those who control the mechanisms of state to understand the process more thoroughly” (pp. 38-39). This perspective can also be found in Youngman’s (1996) political economic analysis of adult education as well as in Torres’ (1990) comparative analysis of nonformal adult education in Latin America. In the recent Latin American context, this has been most obvious in Venezuela and Bolivia where both governments have clearly begun processes outside the parameters of neoliberalism through programs and policy choices that favor popular democracy and popular control. Moreover, in Venezuela, the question of the nature of the bourgeois state is increasingly on the agenda. The call for the creation of worker and community councils is in direct response to the realization of the limits of a bourgeois state for conducting socialist transformation. This same question gained increasing importance in Chile during the transformations toward socialism under the presidency of Salvador Allende (Smirnow, 1979). Cuba, for its part, resolved this question over 45 years ago; the Cuban state is not a bourgeois state and, therefore, the transformations have been of a much more sustained and revolutionary character. The fact that these initiatives have been under appreciated within radical adult education can be seen at least in the cases of Venezuela and Bolivia as a result of their relatively recent appearance, but also, I would argue, due to the fact that they do not fit neatly into the arguably, anti-state tendencies of the dominant civil societarian paradigm.

Third, while the longer, Marxist perspectives are largely successful in exposing many of the shortcomings in the civil societarian theories of globalization, they are sorely lacking in examples of alternative organizational forms or political practices of an explicitly Marxist or revolutionary perspective to match the plethora of case studies on civil societarian NGO initiatives. Despite the heavy reliance upon the theories of Antonio Gramsci—one of the principal founders of the Italian Communist Party—within radical adult education, there is almost no documented research on communist or socialist parties or revolutionary organizations. While Marxists can rightly argue that the civil societarian perspective with its call for localized grassroots initiatives is a form of left-wing neoliberalism (Holst, 2002), they have generally not provided the

organizational or practical alternatives to civil societarian perspectives (for exceptions, see Boughton, 1997; Holst, 2004; Lovett, 1988).

Fourth, there are serious shortcomings in the Marxist-inspired perspectives in terms of political practice. Beyond, few examples of revolutionary practice, the general notion is that since we have not seen any qualitative changes at the level of the economic, we do not need to reassess our political practices. Basically, we just need to do more of what we have always done. There are two major problems here as I see it. The first problem is the real crisis in most of the institutions (trade unions and political parties) of the left that were built during the twentieth century (Harnecker, 2007; Peery, 1993). Calls to build the labor movement at a time when, at least in the U.S. as well as in many other areas, it is in what can only be described as a fatal decline seem unproductive. Marxists have nobly challenged and not give into the abandonment of the goal of profound social transformation and the call for “small utopias” (Field, 1995, p. 31) by civil societarians. Yet, by not realizing that we are facing qualitative changes at the level of the economic, the practical calls by the Marxists to keep doing what we have been doing are as untenable as the civil societarians insistence on a return to what Marjorie Mayo (1995) calls the “(broken) wheel of community-based strategies” (p. 14). Perhaps, the innovative and bold words of Antonio Gramsci (1977) writing at another period of profound transformation will help clarify this point.

The period of history we are passing through is a revolutionary period because the traditional institutions for the government of human masses, institutions which were linked to old modes of production and exchange, have lost any significance and useful function they might have hadBut it is not only bourgeois class institutions which have collapsed and fallen apart: working-class institutions too, which emerged while capitalism was developing and were formed as the response of the working class to this development, have entered a period of crisis and can no longer successfully control the masses. (p. 175)

Gramsci understand that qualitative changes at the level of the economic are dialectically related to transformations at the level of the political. Moreover, Gramsci also realized that a sure sign of these changes were the changing nature of the spontaneous movement of the masses themselves.

The masses of workers and peasants are the only genuine and authentic expression of the historical development of capital. By the spontaneous and uncontrollable movements which spread throughout their ranks and by relative shifts in the position of strata ... , the masses indicate the precise direction of historical development, reveal changes in attitudes and forms, and proclaim the decomposition ... of the capitalist organization of societyIf one becomes estranged from the inner life of the working class, then one becomes estranged from the historical process that is unfolding implacably, in defiance of any individual will or traditional institution. (pp. 173-174)

Conclusion

When we do as Gramsci suggests, and we look to the actual movement of the masses, we see that much of the most dynamic radical motion, is outside the established institutions of the left. As Wainwright (2003) notes, “When old institutions fail, people invent” (p. xx). In the United States, for example, most of the cutting-edge worker activity is based outside the labor movement in workers’ centers (Fine, 2006), non-union worker organizations such as the Coalition of Immakolee Workers, rank-and-file action of union members outside of the union structures such as the recent Soldiers for Solidarity movement in the auto industry, and welfare rights and poor people’s movements. The recent immigration marches of historic size and scope that swept the US in the spring of 2006 are probably the most powerful examples of the working class organizing outside the traditional organizations of the left. When we look more broadly in the Americas, we also see clear evidence of innovative and powerful radical motion outside of the traditional left institutions with the Zapatistas (a guerrilla of a new type) and indigenous movements (Blaser, Feit, & McRae, 2004), anti-privatization struggles (Olivera, 2004), factory occupations and Piqueteros in Argentina (Adamovsky, 2002) the Landless movement in Brazil (Baron Cohen, 2005; Harnecker, 2002; Kane, 2001), primary and secondary students in Chile (“Estudiantes,” 2006; Vogler, 2007), the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela (Chávez & Harnecker, 2005), etc. Moreover, much of this movement is based in some of the most marginalized sectors of societies (Zibechi, 2005) and, seemingly paradoxically, the demands of these movements are rather basic: water, jobs, plots of land, education, and yet, given the nature of globalization today, basic demands by the most marginalized are increasingly striking at the very heart of capitalism. For the changes

at the level of the economic that civil societarians have aptly recognized are of a qualitative nature, and are creating a growing and widely recognized polarization between the capitalist class and a growing sector of the world's population increasingly on the fringes of the basic capitalist relation of working for a wage in order to buy what you need (Peery, 2002). More and more people are finding themselves without any employment, with less and less stable employment, or with employment that no longer pays liveable wages. Therefore, the basic demands, increasingly raised by growing sectors of the world's population for shelter, water, food, healthcare, without necessarily the wages with which to pay for these necessities, exposes the growing crisis of capitalism and calls forth a solution based not on fiery revolutionary rhetoric that tries to convince people of the merits of socialism, but more humbly—and ultimately more revolutionary—on cooperative, sustainable socio-political economic relations that resolve the basic needs of a growing sector of humanity. As Vandana Shiva (2005) puts it, “The epic contest of our times is about staying alive” (p. 133).

Analyses that seem to most clearly recognize the major features of globalization today as I am outlining them here can be found in feminist literature of integrative (Miles, 1996) or structural and transformative (Shiva, 2005) perspectives. This may be because, as many have argued, globalization disproportionately impacts women. The result of this, as Miles argues is that

women are more able not only to conceive of their concerns as general community concerns but to pursue them as such ... The articulation of general community concerns by women from women's points of view is not the abandonment of feminist vision but potentially its full realization. (p. 135)

Moreover, centering praxis around the most negatively impacted allows for an organic integration of many struggles.

The global understanding of women's oppression as the product of a long historical process of colonization and control of women, workers, nature, and indigenous and colonized peoples links all oppressions organically, not as add-ons or a litany of separate dominations ... and reinforces the conviction that what is needed is a paradigm shift of enormous proportions. (Miles, 1996, p. 133)

Ironically, the revolutionary paradigm is not necessarily all that new, as it is rooted in the basic survival demands of the growing sectors of humanity most marginalized by globalization.

Therefore, we need a new conceptualization of the politics of radical adult education that goes beyond the two broad perspectives of civil societarian and Marxist orientations that I have outlined in this review. While the civil societarian perspective has rightly identified qualitative changes at the level of the economic and the social, it has done so at the expense of the political. Generally speaking, from this perspective analyses of the qualitative changes at the economic level that have wrought devastation at the level of the social are coupled with political goals of small utopias that abandon what is considered the “dead dream” of socialism; in other words, the enormity of globalization makes fundamental social change untenable and for some even undesirable. Ironically, a robust Marxist position should provide the tools to understand that the subjective experience of the enormity of the task of fundamental social change today that pushes the civil societarians to call for its abandonment is dialectically related to the growing objective conditions for precisely such transformation. Sadly, however, those in the field who operate from a Marxist perspective have generally missed this fact. Having been put on the defensive by both postmodernism and by civil societarian calls for a supposedly more realistic scaling back of our politics, the Marxists have generally replied by trying to deny the qualitative changes of globalization coupled with a form of “stay-the-course” politics of merely trying to rebuild our traditional left institutions. We need a ‘new times’ politics, not of the stripe so thoughtfully critiqued by Allman and Wallis (1995), but one that realizes that the polarization we are witnessing today is creating for the first time in history, what Peery (2002) calls an “objective communist movement”. In other words, there is no solution to the day-to-day survival issues of a growing sector of humanity within the capitalist relation of working for a wage to buy what you need. This basic relation is breaking down and there is no resolution outside of cooperative socio-political economic relationships: the ‘big utopia’ of socialism. This is, therefore, precisely not the time for small utopias, but objectively for big utopias. The dialectic of the objective and the subjective realization of big utopias resides quite mundanely in the day-to-day needs of the growing sector of the world’s population increasingly on the margins of capitalism. Here is where a new radical adult education needs to

and must reside. Here we will find that the traditional institutions of the left have little to say and few answers to provide because they were generally formed in and in response to a different epoch. Here we will find forms of organization that do not necessarily look like left institutions and people that do not necessarily speak the language of the left. Yet, we will find here masses of people who have been pushed out of and have no place in capitalism. In other words, people who have nothing to lose and a world to win.

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