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Expose, Oppose, Propose:
Cognitive Praxis in the Struggle for
Global Justice

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1970s, economic globalization has fueled concerns that democracy is being hollowed out. Transnational social movements have developed as advocates of "democratic globalization". Alongside and in support of these movements, transnational alternative policy groups (TAPGs) have emerged: think tanks that provide evidence-based critiques of neoliberal capitalism while promoting democratic alternatives to the corporate agenda of top-down globalization. In this lecture, I explore the networks, discourses and practices through which transnational alternative policy groups exert political and cultural influence, and I assess the challenges they face as transnational change agents in an era of economic and ecological crisis.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Carroll's research interests are in the areas of the political economy of corporate capitalism, social movements and social change, and critical social theory and method. A member of the Sociology Department at the University of Victoria since 1981, he established the Interdisciplinary Program in Social Justice Studies at the University of Victoria in 2008 and served as its director from 2008 to 2012. His books include *The Making of a Transnational Capitalist Class, Corporate Power in a Globalizing World, Corporate Power and Canadian Capitalism, Remaking Media* (with Bob Hackett), *Critical Strategies for Social Research, Challenges and Perils: Social Democracy in Neoliberal Times* (with R.S. Ratner), and *Organizing Dissent*. His project, "Alternative policy groups and global civil society: Networks, discourses, and practices of counter-hegemony," (2011-2015) was a community-engaged initiative in knowledge co-creation through participatory field research, among other research methods. Currently he is co-directing "Mapping the power of the carbon-extractive corporate resource sector" in an interdisciplinary SSHRC Partnership of several universities and civil-society organizations which traces various modalities of corporate power and resistance within the global political economy, focusing particularly on carboniferous capitalism in Western Canada.

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In this lecture, I want to convey some insights gained from four years of intensive research into the production and mobilization of alternative knowledge. By alternative knowledge, I mean knowledge that challenges the hegemonic discourses and practices that legitimate neoliberal capitalism and related forms of social domination. My research in this area began from an understanding of alternative knowledge production and mobilization (alt KPM) as *cognitive praxis*: 'creation, articulation, dissemination of new knowledge that is integral to social movement and social change' (Eyerman and Jamison 1991). In year 1 (2011-2012), I identified key centres for such work: transnational alternative policy groups (TAPGs) active in global civil society. TAPGs are centres for cognitive praxis that take up transnational issues within transnational political fields. I completed a case study of each of 16 TAPGs using available sources and a network analysis of how the groups link up with each other, and are embedded in a field of transnational social relations.

In the second year, I immersed myself in field work, visiting 10 groups and conducting in-depth interviews with key protagonists (see Table 1 for a list of the participating groups). The work has had a *participatory* dimension: insights gained from the field work were shared in dialogue with participants, to help them clarify their own work by seeing it in a broader, comparative context, and to clarify for me the significance of my findings for them.

From summer 2013 into the spring of 2015, I grappled first with the daunting problem of how to do a qualitative analysis of a vast quantity of nuanced, information-rich text, and then with writing a book, published by Zed Books/Fernwood in the summer of 2016 (Carroll 2016). This lecture presents an overview of some of the analysis in the book.

Table 1 Groups Participating in this Study* (indicating year established)	1974	Transnational Institute (Amsterdam) *
	1975	Third World Forum (Dakar)
	1976	Tricontinental Centre (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium)
	1976	Centre de recherche et d'information pour le développement (Paris)*
	1982	Participatory Research in Asia (New Delhi) *
	1984	Third World Network (Penang)
	1984	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (Manila) *
	1989	Third World Institute/Social Watch (Montevideo) *
	1990	Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (Berlin) *
	1994	International Forum on Globalization (San Francisco) *
	1995	Focus on the Global South (Bangkok) *
* Site visits and 5+ interviews conducted	1997	Network Institute for Global Democratization (Helsinki)
	1997	People's Plan Study Group (Tokyo) *
	2001	Centre for Civil Society (Durban) *
	2005	Alternatives International (Montreal)
	2005	India Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement (New Delhi)

First, let me offer some context. Why is the cognitive praxis of alt policy groups important?

In the second decade of the 21st century, humanity is living a paradox of truly epochal scope. The reigning way of life is incapable of serving as a framework for resolving the deep ecological and economic crises which it has conjured into existence. Fueled by anger and desperation, protests and occupations rise up in resistance to a regime that relies increasingly on a preponderance of coercion over persuasion. Yet such outbreaks stall. The problem lies only partly in the sophisticated machinery of state repression. The opposition lacks the organizational and communicative infrastructure, and the social vision, that might sustain cumulative movement toward a real alternative to "business as usual".

Thus, the dangerous paradox, expressed most concisely eight decades ago by Antonio Gramsci: an organic crisis in which "the old is dying and the new cannot be born" (1971: 276). Among the challenges we face is that of producing and promulgating *counter-hegemonic*

strategies, policies and visions capable of winning broad popular support, and of serving as cognitive and cultural resources for a political shift: from episodic, defensive resistance to responsible, radical proactivity. In an era when crisis opens space for a renewed radical imaginary, where are the sites for such collective imagining, and how might their activities be integrated with the agency of democratic movements?

My research explores how transnational alternative policy groups are creating such sites within global civil society. TAPGs are groups that, in dialogue with transnational publics and movements, produce evidence-based knowledge that critiques hegemonic practices and perspectives and promotes alternatives. They function as "think tanks of the left", generating knowledge, both visionary and strategic, for a "globalization from below" in which transnational social movements have been leading protagonists. Unlike social movement organizations, much of whose knowledge is produced tactically as they engage in collective action (Swift 2014: 136), TAPGs' efforts are focused primarily and strategically on producing and mobilizing critical-reflexive knowledge.

TAPGs and Justice Globalism

A key feature of TAPGs is their commitment to what Steger et al (2013) call *justice globalism*. These researchers found a convergence among groups affiliated with the World Social Forum upon a framework that guides collective action. Justice globalism is organized around these five central claims:

Claim # 1: Neoliberalism produces global crises.

Claim #2: Market-driven globalization has increased worldwide disparities in wealth and wellbeing.

Claim #3: Democratic participation is essential for solving global problems.

Claim #4: Another world is possible and urgently needed.

Claim #5: People power, not corporate power! (Steger et al 2013:46).

A commitment to justice globalism formed one criterion in identifying the groups for my research.[1] This commitment entails a responsibility to go beyond capitalism, to develop democratic, socially just and ecologically sound *alternatives that can in principle be generalized to all of humanity*.

A Master Frame

There are other overarching similarities across the TAPGs. Most obviously, they engage in the basic activities of the alternative policy group: to "expose, oppose, propose" (Carroll and Huxtable 2014b):

- they conduct critical analysis, *exposing* problems;

- they build alliances through dialogue with grassroots movements and subaltern groups, creating common ground and capacity for progressive collective action that *opposes* domination;

- they develop *proposals and strategies* for alternative practices, policies and ways of life, and mobilize these through lectures and seminars, online content, videos, publications, policy papers.

- Beyond all that, certain points of normative convergence can be discerned, suggesting a "master frame" (Snow and Benford 1992) that bridges across single issues and informs the practice of TAPGs. Master frames enable heterogeneous groups to be allied in common political struggles, lending coherence to the movement politics of an historical

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conjuncture, or even an era (Tarrow 1992). For TAPGs the frame includes six key

analytical and value elements:

1. the *critique of hegemonic political-economic structure*, typically understood as a

   combination of neoliberal capitalism and (neo)colonialism;

2. the importance of *social justice and ecological sustainability as paramount values*;

3. the belief that such an alternative future can be achieved only through *grassroots*

   democratic movements;

4. the ethical and strategic importance of *North-South solidarity*;

5. the *value of critical analysis* that can inform effective and appropriate strategies for

   creating change;

6. the need to ground such analysis in practice, through *dialogue with activist and subaltern*

   communities.

These elements of a master frame help specify the content of counter-hegemonic knowledge,

as produced and mobilized by TAPGs. However, formation of a counter-hegemonic bloc

requires more than ideological convergence. Its constituent actors need to be socially organized

in ways that enable them to move together, as a movement of movements.

Networks of Cognitive Praxis: Embedding Post-capitalist Alternatives?

The distinct projects that TAPGs pursue and the constituencies they serve position them in

specific locations within the field of global justice politics. TAPGs are *embedded* within global

civil society in positions that enable them to foster transnational counter-hegemony.

Embeddedness always has a spatial dimension (see Figure 1). If we map the entire network of 16

TAPGs and their 247 direct neighbors, according to the location of each organization's

headquarters, we can observe extensive traffic across the North Atlantic. In this respect the network bears some resemblance to the elite network associated with the transnational capitalist class (Carroll 2010b). Yet there are also extensive ties running between south and north, and across the south. Conspicuously absent are organizations based in Russia and China.

Figure 1: Global network of 16 TAPGs and their 247 direct neighbours
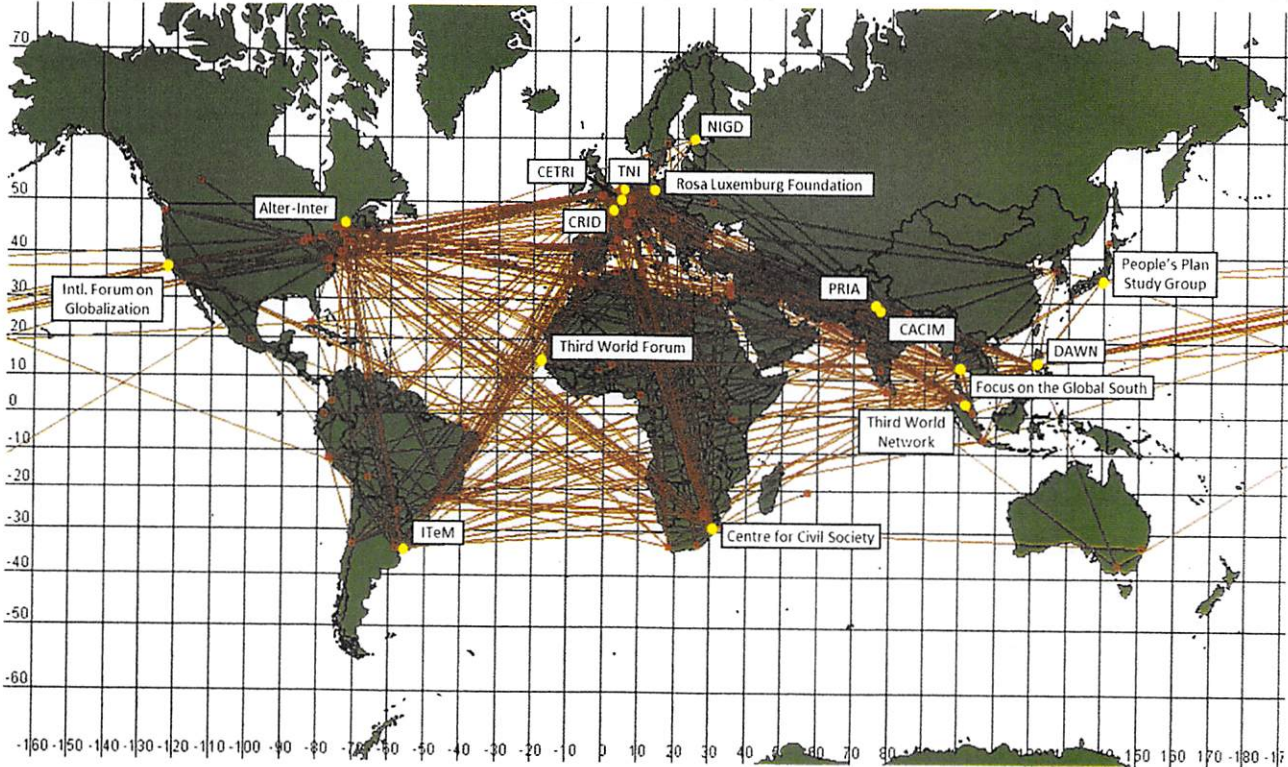
The formation of a global counter-hegemonic bloc requires reaching out across different regions of the world, but also across different locations within the *conceptual space of alternative and oppositional politics*. JP Sapinski and I therefore explored how extensively TAPGs connect with INGOs in ways that bridge across movement domains, creating articulated ensembles of communication and practice (Carroll and Sapinski 2013). We found that TAPGs occupy strategic positions *between* movement domains, suggesting that their cognitive praxis

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positions them to speak to multiple counter-publics, with the possibility of fostering a convergence across difference. The ideological frameworks with which TAPGs engage extend from liberal-humanitarian to radical anti-capitalist (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: TAPGs Mediating Between Movement Domains
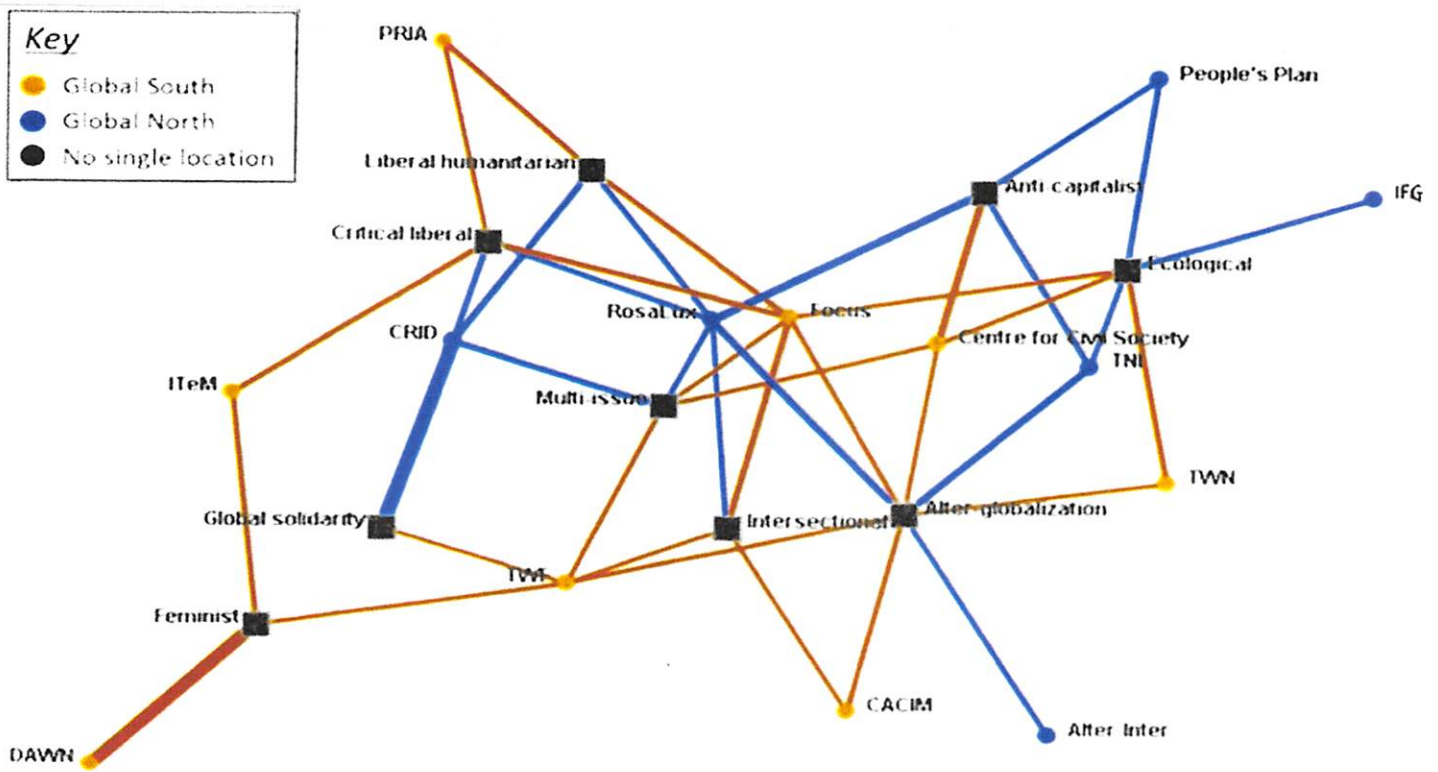
As an additional piece of the network analysis, we examine how TAPGs respond to the challenge of NGOization (Carroll and Sapinski 2015). According to the NGOization thesis, with the retreat of neoliberal states from direct social programming and through processes of increasing professionalization and institutionalization, NGOs come to be seen by governments and IGOs as "surrogates for civil society" and are subcontracted to advise on or deliver government programs (Alvarez, 1999: 181). This "neoliberalization of civil society" (Goldman, 2005: 270-1) places NGOs into the role of gatekeepers for national and global governance, and

"as brakes on more radical and exceptional ideas emanating from the developing world" (Bob, 2005: 194). Within this account, the intermediary role TAPGs play may have more to do with maintaining the hegemonic bloc, than with creating a counter-hegemonic alternative (Choudry, 2010). To the extent that relations of financial dependence and processes of NGOization coopt and constrain TAPGs, their capacity to help organize and inform an emergent global left would be grievously compromised. We examine network data highlighting links to foundations and IGOs/state bodies, showing how TAPGs are positioned in a political-economic field that includes not only INGOs but hegemonic institutions. We also consider reflections of TAPG protagonists on NGOization, showing how they construe the challenges posed, and the kinds of defenses or responses their organizations have mounted.

The network analysis gives evidence consistent with the NGOization narrative. We find that *TAPGs are not only embedded within an incipient global left; they are also extensively connected to dominant institutions* such as the Ford Foundation and UN agencies. But when we explore the content of these relationships, as reflected upon by TAPG protagonists, NGOization as grand narrative seems unconvincing. TAPG protagonists generally displayed a critical awareness of NGOization as a problematic phenomenon and positioned themselves in opposition to it. In part this is because the political projects TAPGs set themselves make them quite unlike the stereotypical service-oriented NGO. TAPG protagonists consciously and critically think about NGOization. They struggle with its debilitating impact but they also find ways around it. In the process, they deconstruct NGOization as an obdurate political reality. Their nuanced accounts begin to specify the *contingencies* mediating between, on the one hand, the resort to formal organization, to engagement with IGOs and to external funding, and on the other hand the descent into hegemonic incorporation. Creative responses to funding challenges and the ongoing

construction of ethico-political relations with movement partners comprise two such contingencies. Each highlights the agentic role movement organizations may play in avoiding their own cooptation.

This is not to gainsay the accuracy of NGOization as a descriptor for processes of hegemonic incorporation, particularly among NGOs that embrace "apolitical", service-oriented mandates. The point is that such processes are not automatic. For critically reflexive groups such as TAPGs, NGOization captures what one participant called only "one side" of a reality in which they are active protagonists. In a neoliberal political-economic environment, the future of counter-hegemonic politics hinges partly on our identifying how "preventative measures" can be brought to bear *against* processes of NGOization.

The Repertoire of alt KPM: Modes of Cognitive Praxis

As organic intellectuals to global justice politics, TAPGs have created a *repertoire of cognitive praxis*: ways of supplying intellectual fuel to transnational activism and oxygen to both subaltern counterpublics and atrophied public spheres. Exploration and analysis of this repertoire has been a key concern of my research program. Based on interviews, I distinguish eight *modes of cognitive praxis* (see Table 2), which promote a dialectic of knowledge production and social transformation. Within this dialectic, TAPGs strive to produce *transformative knowledge concomitantly with knowledge-based transformation.*

Hegemonic knowledge is sedimented in a whole array of dominant institutions – the state, the economy, mainstream media to mention the three most obvious ones. It comprises an ensemble of discourses grounded in historical relations of power – colonialism and racism, class relations of capitalism as well as precapitalist survivals, patriarchy and heteronormativity, the

instrumental rationalities that prioritize profit and efficiency while marginalizing concerns for ecological sustainability and the quality of life. *Challenging and disrupting the common sense of hegemony* is perhaps the most basic element in the repertoire. Often, this is accomplished through *research and analysis* that exposes the injustices or irrationalities of dominant practices.

Table 2: Modes of Cognitive Praxis

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

A good deal of counter-hegemonic policy research involves "busting myths" whose veracity often appears self-evident, given the pervasiveness of neoliberalism's mantra of freedom=markets=efficiency=progress. As Dorothy Guerrero, activist-researcher at the Focus Bangkok office, told me, part of myth-busting involves setting neoliberal policy in a global context – connecting the dots to expose "the ugly face of neoliberalism: the face that shows people being squeezed out of society – people that are losing social welfare that they deserve, or

the fact that rights and entitlements are eroding." Sometimes the hegemony that TAPGs challenge is that which prevails within the global justice movement itself. To produce alternative knowledge for social change, TAPGs need to practice a "critical engagement" with movements, rather than playing a cheerleader role.

Mobilizing alt knowledge through *engaging with dominant institutions* comprises a second mode. Movements for global justice ignore the state at their peril. Retreating and opting out are really not viable options. As sites of cognitive praxis, many TAPGs engage with state power. I take a broad view of the state, as an ensemble of political and social institutions that reproduce a way of life, through varying measures of coercive and consensual practices. These dominant institutions – governmental, military, educational, mass media – make up what Gramsci called the "integral state" – "a dialectical unity of civil society and political society" (Thomas, 2009, p. 148; Gramsci, 1971). To be effective, counter-hegemonic cognitive praxis must engage with these institutions critically, and carefully. We can distinguish insider and outsider strategies of engagement, with some TAPGs favouring the former over the latter, or *vice versa*. The outsider engages as an oppositional player; the insider favours dialogue and negotiation with select state-based individuals and organizations, even consultation and collaboration under certain conditions. *Insider approaches* are predicated on the insight that dominant institutions are not monolithic; they are made up of many sites and agents with varying degrees of openness to alternatives. Most of the groups participating in this project use insider approaches to some extent and in various ways, mindful of the dangers of cooptation that may appear along the way.

Third, we can distinguish a range of approaches that produce alternative knowledge by *empowering the grassroots*: helping to foster activist communities, capabilities and organic intellectuals who produce their own knowledge, and whose collective agency can be a

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transformative force. This occurs through the venerable practice of *popular education*: a crucial way of nurturing counterpublics and of influencing the general public. Also through *participatory* approaches that consciously *build capacity* for the self-generation of alternative knowledge within counterpublics and general publics. A key empowerment practice for certain TAPGs is participatory action research (PAR), which combines participation with transformation through collective action. Ultimately, what makes PAR effective is the power of participation to effect the double transformation that Marx (1968[1845]:28) wrote of: "the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionising practice.*" In this, PAR overlaps with another mode of cognitive praxis: the integration of theory and practice.

A fourth mode is *building solidarities through dialogue*. What is crucial here is to bridge gaps that otherwise limit the transformative power of democratic movements. The gaps reproduce divisions, siloing knowledge, identities and organization within narrow limits. These limits may be defined by national borders, movement issues, social-identity markers or cultural discourses. The value added of cross-sectoral dialogue lies both in finding discursive intersections and in bridging discussions between people from different subcultures. The latter is critical in breaking down the status- and knowledge hierarchies that divide and disempower the constituencies for a global left. Often, dismantling hierarchies is a prerequisite to the formation of innovative, alternative knowledge. Efforts by TAPGs to build solidarities dialogically are integral to cognitive praxis: they weaken the hold of single-issue, single-identity, siloed politics; they put alt knowledge to work in finding common ground for global justice struggles. Building solidarities through dialogue goes against the hegemonic grain of commodified knowledge: it is a form of production that refuses enclosure, pointing toward a global knowledge commons. The

objective is to share, to enrich each other, and (hopefully) to converge toward collaborative action.

A fifth mode strives to integrate theory and practice. In a dialectic of theory and practice, the practical, experiential knowledge of activists trying to change the world must be unified with theoretical knowledge that comprehends how that world is structured and how it might be transformed. Theoretical comprehension of alternatives, and the theorists who produce it, must be rooted in the school of practice, just as the practices of activism and advocacy will be most effective if they proceed from a veridical comprehension of reality. Various participants offered helpful perspectives and accounts of how TAPGs have actualized this mode of cognitive praxis.

This brings us to a sixth mode of cognitive praxis, namely, creating *critical spaces* for reflection and invention. To produce efficacious practico-theoretical knowledge it is necessary to create *spaces* where new ideas can breathe and begin to live. Critical spaces, whether physical or virtual, are integral to vivifying the theory/practice dialectic. Such spaces, as they enable self-development and reflection, are crucial not only for activist-researchers, but for empowering subalterns, and thus for building grassroots capacity. Not surprisingly, PRIA's participatory-action initiatives in women's empowerment rely exactly on the creation of such spaces, to open possibilities for women and other subordinated people in Indian society. As PRIA's Nandita Bhatt explained, such initiatives produce an "enabling environment" for women to reflect, communicate, and begin to thrive collectively.

A seventh mode of cognitive praxis is also closely implicated in the theory/practice dialectic. To *systematize* alternative knowledge is to make it robust, rich in comparative nuance, applicable across contexts, and thus useful in practice. A classic venue for knowledge systematization is the book, and TAPGs have produced many books for various readers. Through alternative and social

media TAPGs systematize alternative knowledge and mobilize it among movements and publics. In doing so, they often function as sites of such media.

Finally, an eighth, *prefigurative* mode of cognitive praxis highlights alternative knowledge that prefigures a transformed future by attending to its potentialities *as evident in current practices*, verging upon what Wright (2010) calls "real utopias". That practice itself is the source of knowledge is a basic insight in the theory/practice dialectic. Here, the knowledge in question concerns not simply "what exists", but *what might be feasibly brought into existence* through practical interventions. To produce alternative knowledge, it is not enough to critique existing practices. The activist-researcher needs to identify, within existing realities, the real potentialities for living otherwise, to comprehend how such potentialities can be strengthened, and to mobilize knowledge of these openings within counterpublics and general publics. This mode of cognitive praxis is the most prefigurative. It points directly to a transformed future. Examples of alternative knowledge that prefigures a transformed future abound in the work of several TAPGs. The Transnational Institute's (TNI) programs and projects in remunicipalization, public services and democracy, and alternative regionalisms offer cognitive resources for transformative practice, grounded in well-established approaches. At The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RosaLux), the Institute for Critical Social Analysis has devoted considerable attention to prefigurative cognitive praxis, through "entry projects", defined as "socio-cultural learning processes of the transformation of relations and the self-transformation of the actors" (Brie, 2010).

These modes implicate each other as internally related facets of a whole. But TAPGs differ in the degrees to which they place each mode at the center of cognitive praxis. In this mapping (Figure 3), we see that nearly all TAPGs challenge hegemony, but only four of them engage extensively in prefigurative praxis. Three of those four – Focus on the Global South (Focus),

RosaLux and TNI – centre their KPM upon radical left counter-hegemonic visions. These groups also place a strong emphasis on the dialectic of theory and practice, while engaging critically and selectively with states and intergovernmental bodies.

Figure 3:Predominant Modes of Cognitive Praxis used by 16 TAPGs
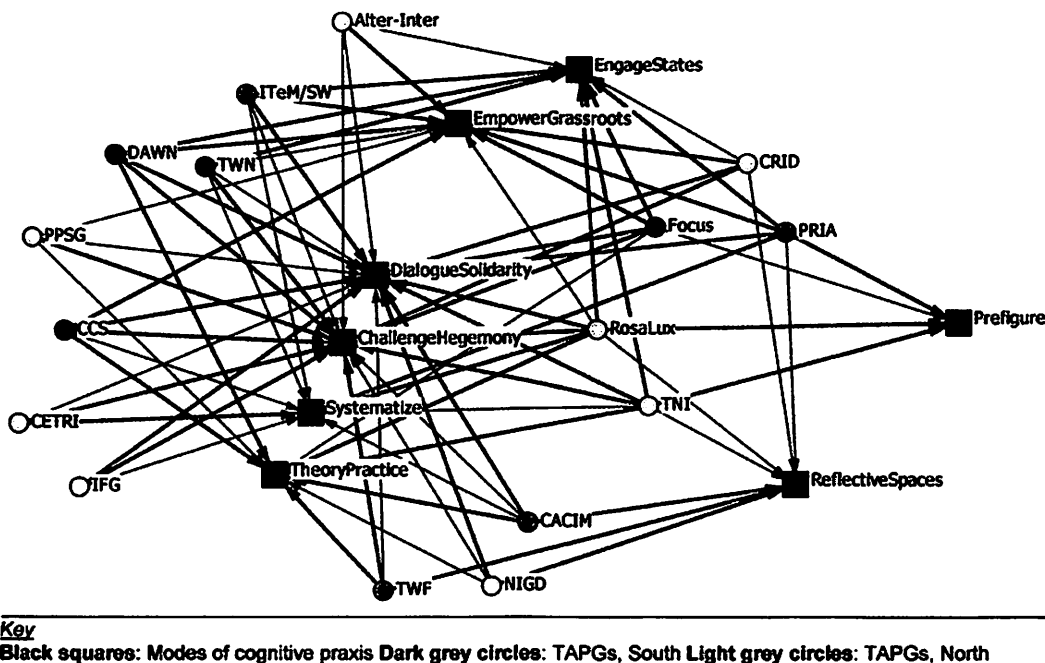
Effective alt KPM typically means that a group combines various modes in a coherent initiative. In this sense the eight-category schema might be read as a checklist of some "best practices" and could be useful in assessing ongoing projects and in designing new ones. In practical terms, one could reflect on how a given initiative enacts or articulates with each of the eight modes, and whether it might be redesigned so that its full transformative potential can be realized.

My analysis of modes of cognitive praxis also points to a double dialectic at work in to a knowledge and transformation. Most evidently, the dialectic of theory and practice, which implies creation of critical spaces, the systematization of knowledge in interaction with practice

and the transformations that occur with prefigurative cognitive praxis. It is this instance of the dialectic that carries forward the foundational analysis of Marx in his 11 Theses of 1845. But equally important is a second, ancient sense of dialectic, most evident in the building of solidarities through dialogue, which is closely imbricated in other modes of cognitive praxis such as grassroots empowerment and challenging hegemonic knowledge. This second instance is Socratic, epitomized in the notion that "truth resides in the dialogue." In this rendition, dialectic is "the art of engaging in dialogue, and this union of dialectic and dialogue, in turn, as knowledge" (Notomi, 2004, paragraph 22). Sound knowledge arises out of dialogue, but so do the solidarities that enable democratic movements to move effectively together. This sense of dialectic is integral to the formation of robust counterpublics, the recuperation of a democratic public sphere.

The practitioners of this double dialectic endeavor to engage with conjunctural political issues while producing cognitive supports for an alternative historical bloc. It is in a forward movement, combining *dialogue* among well-informed publics with the iterative *integration of theory and practice*, that alternative knowledge makes its contribution to counter-hegemony, as TAPGs act organically within the social forces that challenge hegemony.

Convergent Visions: The Ends of Alternative Knowledge

Alternative policy groups fashion their strategies and practices not only in response to what are seen as problematic features of extant reality, but according to concretize social visions – conceptions of a desirable and feasible future. In Table 3 I provide a summary of the ends that TAPG protagonists set themselves. Let me sketch these convergent visions.

Table 3: TAPG social visions

- Substantive Fulfillment of the Human Rights Agenda

- Plural Social Forms

- Diverse Voices in Dialogue

- Changing the Subject: Decolonizing the Human Spirit, and the Spirit of Ubuntu

- Participatory Democracy

- Open, Democratic Socialism

- Reclaiming the Commons

- Buen Vivir: A Sustainable Society

Substantive Fulfillment of the Human Rights Agenda

Since the late eighteenth century, a fundamental achievement of the left has been the establishment of human rights. Any vision of a better world beyond our deeply troubled one must place human rights at its foundation, which is not to countenance imperialist interventions carried out under the cover of the "responsibility to protect" human rights.

Beyond one size fits all. Plural Social Forms

There is a definite affinity between the valorization of diversity and the vision of a world in which all people enjoy real, substantive rights. In the early 21st century we can appreciate the value of diversity – of biodiversity, of cultural diversity – in part because of imminent threats to it and in part due to the manifest problems of modernist projects – whether the industrialization of agriculture or the construction of uniform and often colonialist, statist programs. Although

sometimes celebrated for its diversity, neoliberal capitalism imposes a strong form of abstract uniformity, reducing all of nature, including humanity, to a logic of commodification. Some project participants envisage a world liberated from this "golden straitjacket" (Friedman 1999). In opposing neoliberalism, TAPGs articulate a vision of plurality grounded not in 'subsidiarity: the predominance of local, democratic control over extra-local hierarchical administration.

Diverse Voices in Dialogue

In some project participants' social visions, diversity in social forms is complemented by an emphasis on diverse voices, knowledges and public discourses, and by a concern to create the enabling conditions whereby all can speak and be heard. This sensibility was also captured at RosaLux in the idea of a "mosaic left", a diverse formation that thrives within an expanding public sphere. A revitalized public sphere presumes that the subaltern can speak and indeed, that in gaining voice along with substantive rights, she sheds her subalternity.

Changing the Subject: Decolonizing the Human Spirit, and the Spirit of Ubuntu

Our world is the sedimented product of hundreds of years of colonization and imperialism. For alternative policy groups that work within a transnational field, this reality is paramount. Engaging politically with it inspires visions of a decolonized future, already discernible in present practices. At stake here is a transformation not only of social structures and ecologies, but of subjectivity, of human being. Ubuntu is a southern African ethic, vivified in post-apartheid South Africa, which views humans as radically interdependent in the sense of co-creating each other. The spirit of *Ubuntu*, a vision of solidarity, of mutual care, of community, is evident particularly in Durban-based CCS's cognitive praxis.

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Participatory Democracy

Some TAPG protagonists tie their cognitive praxis to a future in which human freedom is actualized in real self-governance. Democracy in this vision is participatory, and radical in the classic sense of getting to the root of the matter: the human condition of deep interdependence. That condition can be managed through hierarchies of class and other relations that severely constrict human freedom, or it can be coordinated through democratic decision-making. Participatory democracy is a procedural form within which the substance of human rights and the spirit of *Ubuntu* can thrive. It moves us well beyond formal institutions of representative democracy, including relations within and between states – whose democratic content has been incrementally hollowed out by neoliberal globalization. The freedom that inheres in participation is distinct from what passes for freedom in neoliberal democracy, namely, the "freedom to choose" – between one state manager or another, or between one brand of laundry detergent and another. In participatory democracy, freedom is not a series of private choices, although a basic commitment to human rights safeguards the space for individuals to make their own lifestyle choices.

Open, Democratic Socialism

Imbued with participatory democracy and a culture of pluralism, a vision of open, democratic socialism resonates in the discourses of some protagonists. This vision marks a considered distance from the statist forms of "command-economy" planning (and worse) that came to dominate 20th-century socialism,[2] and insists that the real alternative to bureaucratic domination is not the dominion of deregulated, footloose global capital, but a thoroughgoing, participatory

economic democracy. Democratic socialism offers the vision of a world in which the social power of capital has been transformed into people's power, exercised within social forms of economic ownership and through participatory-democratic practices of planning and self-management (Harnecker 2015:68-97).

Reclaiming the Commons

The modern era has witnessed an enclosure of the commons, first in Europe, as a premise of capitalism, but currently as "accumulation by dispossession" in all sorts of domains, as transnational corporations scramble to grab land, water, exclusive rights to life forms, control over electronic communications, etc. (Harvey 2003). In recent years, an extensive literature advocating the reversal of enclosure has developed in and around the global justice movement (e.g. Haiven 2014; Klein 2014). Many participants invoked this imagery, and for some, reclaiming the commons converges with democratic socialism. TNI's program in Public Services and Democracy, for instance, promotes "new understandings of welfare that stress the commons and democratization of public provision," as Hilary Wainwright told me.

Buen Vivir: A Sustainable Society

The Andean socialist vision of *buen vivir* – of 'the good life', lived in harmony with one's fellow humans and the rest of nature – fuels the prefigurative cognitive praxis of several groups. At Focus's Manila office, Joseph Purugganan, expressed this vision, within the concept of *buen vivir*, as one of balanced and egalitarian development. What TAPGs converge upon is a vision of social justice and ecological stewardship, with both terms bearing multiple meanings.

Back to Justice Globalism: Concluding Reflections

I began with a paradox: a world in crisis and yet a stalemate between forces entrenching the *status quo* and forces for fundamental change. In the convergent visions of transnational alternative policy groups, we find ethico-political resources for the latter. To break the stalemate these visions need to gain traction in the lives and aspirations of great numbers of people. An adequate response to the crisis requires *justice globalism*, taking us well beyond defensive politics of resistance and localism. An effective response to our ecological/economic crisis requires the concerted efforts of convergent movements, sustained by democratic political organizations capable of winning space, within national and transnational political fields, for socially just and ecological healthy ways of life.

To make these ideas more concrete I turn to the exemplary proposal of Mario Candeias (2013), Associate Director of the Institute for Critical Social Analysis at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, for a green socialist transformation that, along with most of the goals just discussed, incorporates democratic planning of global resource flows, in recognition of challenges posed by ecological crisis in the historical shadow of imperialism and uneven development. For a project as ambitious as green transformation the question is whether movements and counterpublics take it up and prove, in practice, its "this-worldliness", or whether it remains abstract and hypothetical. For his part, Candeias locates the agency for green transformation in the "mosaic left and transformative left", but he acknowledges that a radical project of this sort will meet with "strong resistance from capital and old elites" (2013: 15).

The capacity to produce proposals such as Candeias's, and to foster dialogue and organizing around them, is a great merit of transnational alternative policy groups. which share a *modus operandi* as think tanks of the global left. Among their common features, as we have seen, are:

- an engagement with the big issues facing humanity in the early 21st century, critiquing hegemonic frameworks and pointing toward globally just solutions;

- an embeddedness in global civil society that places them at key strategic and mediating locations vis-à-vis movements, alternative media, North and South, intergovernmental and other bodies;

- an insider/outsider approach to dominant institutions and a conscious resistance to NGOization and hegemonic integration;

- dialogical and movement-centred modes of cognitive praxis that build participatory capacity and solidarity, that create reflective spaces and prefigure alternative futures within a dialectic of theory and practice; and

- the combination, within cognitive praxis, of research and analysis, critical pedagogy, networking and outreach via a wide range of media.

Yet TAPGs are also differentiated by their distinct KPM projects, organizational forms, and spatial locations within the global system. This diversity points to a larger reality. Taken as a whole, transnational alternative policy groups exhibit an organizational ecology that includes "open spaces" for dialogical engagement (such as CACIM) as well as more formally organized groups (for instance, RosaLux) which may have greater capacity to articulate and advocate prefigurative alternatives such as "green transformation". Much as, for the right, a diverse organizational ecology of policy groups has created a rich discursive field that "offers possibilities for nuanced debate and diverse action repertoires" (within the perimeters of permissible neoliberal discourse; Carroll and Shaw 2001: 211), TAPGs comprise a diversity of sites, North and South, for constructing convergent counter-hegemonic alternatives. This creative

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process requires both open spaces and more strategically oriented organizations inclined toward fostering collective will formation.

Regardless of organizational form, the challenges are formidable, and as the dual crisis of neoliberal globalization continues to unfold, TAPGs and other sites of transnational counter-hegemony will face new ones, obliging them to innovate in speaking to concrete needs and ontological insecurities while helping to build intellectual and material capacity for a radically transformed world. These challenges can be expected to express themselves in different ways, according to how agencies of alt KPM are organized and positioned politically, culturally and geographically.

If good ideas are not enough, if theory needs to be integrated with practice, TAPGs' contributions to intellectual and moral reformation must also reach beyond replacing neoliberal ideas, to constructing the sociopolitical relations and the subjective human capacities through which justice globalism can thrive as a material reality. TAPG's *raison d'être* lies in the fact that movement groups generally lack capacity to do extensive research and related knowledge mobilization. However, a sharply delineated division of labour between TAPGs and movement groups would itself pose a barrier to counter-hegemony. What is needed is *a strengthening both of the dialogical relations between TAPGs and other global-left actors and of movement groups' own capacities for political education*. Within movements, fostering democratic leadership and agentic capacity requires more than technical skill sharing. "Political knowledge and analysis are just as important for cultivating confident and competent people", and "this generally involves building spaces in which people can learn about ideas, history and politics, and develop analytical frameworks for critically understanding the world around them" (Dixon 2014: 192). Indubitably, TAPGs have key roles to play in these pedagogical processes.

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The positionality of TAPGs within a world wracked by the legacy of colonialism also raises specific challenges. Northern-based groups need to avoid tendencies toward *abstract universalism* (as in the hegemonic version of human rights discourse, which in substance shores up Eurocentrism and imperialism). Conversely, Southern-based groups need to bring the energy of anti-imperialist and Indigenous perspectives, often exemplary of "militant particularism," into a global vision.[3] In both North and South, what is needed is a dialectical approach to the universal and the particular, eschewing neither since 'universality always exists *in relation to* particularity: neither can be separated from the other even though they are distinctive moments within our conceptual operations and practical engagements' (Harvey 2001: 194, emphasis in original).

For all groups, regardless of how they are positioned in the world system, the "work of translation" – of bridging across languages, identities, and visions – looms large. Inasmuch as "the global left is intercultural" (Santos 2008: 261), transnational alternative policy groups need to elaborate practices of intercultural translation that preserve autonomy while creating common ground (cf. Carroll 2010a: 185; Conway 2011). We can recognize TAPGs as "contact zones" (Santos 2006: 145) where the work of translation across movements and cultures thrives, contributing to the ongoing quest for global cognitive justice, which is a co-requisite of global social justice.

At stake in this is the reconstruction of knowledge "in ways that permit us to be non-Orientalist" (Wallerstein 2006: 48), without simply inverting the colonial epistemic hierarchy – as in knee-jerk valorization of non-Western ways of knowing over post-Enlightenment thought. As collective intellectuals, TAPGs can facilitate the formation of a "world knowledge," conscious of its historicity and "rooted in a politics of 'strategic diversity', which situates

alternative visions/knowledges in the context of shared, but differentiated, experience of the discourse and impact of global integration" (McMichael 2009: 29). The counter-hegemonic project of justice globalism requires just such a reflexive, critical knowledge.

If the global left is to be a movement of movements, the counter-hegemonic project around which its bloc takes shape must be a project of projects, constructed through relations of solidarity and mutual aid. The many projects contesting neoliberal globalization – anti-colonial, place-based projects inspired by the "grounded normativity" of Indigenous thought and practice,[4] ecological projects for climate justice, labour-based conversion projects to transform production toward worker-controlled sustainability, etc. – can find bases of unity through ethical practices of solidarity and collaboration.[5] In the process, each project becomes enriched beyond militant particularism and embedded within a counter-hegemonic globalization, without losing its specificity. It is, for instance, through practices of solidarity across projects that the interest of labour broadens beyond workers' defense of wages and working conditions to issues of economic democracy, that Indigenous resistance to colonization becomes re-visioned as an assertion of the rights of Mother Earth urging the human family toward *buen vivir*.

Such a project of projects requires the concerted efforts of convergent movements, sustained by democratic political organizations capable of prosecuting a war of position to win space within national and transnational political fields for socially just and ecological healthy ways of life. Alternative policy groups and related organizations can contribute to these complex processes by clarifying what is at stake in resistant *protest politics* and by advocating and nurturing a counter-hegemonic *generative politics* – "to establish new institutions and practices that extend the role of civil society over state and economy" (Williams 2008: 9). The prospects for meaningful responses to capitalism's dual crisis, and the future of justice globalism, depend

in part on the effectiveness of these groups in learning from, working with, informing and

inspiring critical movements, publics and progressive governments, in a multiform politics of

resistance and reconstruction.

Notes

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1 Three other selection criteria were: (1) the group's core function is production and mobilization of alternative knowledge (typically this includes initiatives that expose the injustices and irrationalities of existing political-economic arrangements, oppose with reasoned argument the hegemonic narratives that legitimate these arrangements and propose alternatives, new paradigms etc.); (2) a significant part of that cognitive praxis takes up *transnational issues* and speaks to *transnational counterpublics*; and (3) the group engages a wide range of issues, i.e., it is not specialized in one domain (such as water, trade or capital-labour relations).

2 For an arch but useful critique of statist socialism see Polan (1984). A more balanced and empirically rich account has been offered recently by Lebowitz (2012).

3 As Cox and Nilsen observe, "a fundamental aspect of militant particularism is the fact that the practices, skills, idioms and imaginaries of which they are made up can be generalised, and that through such generalisation they can transcend the particular locale in which they emerged and potentially be applied across a spectrum of specific situations and singular struggles" (2014:79).

4 Coulthard (2014: 13) considers grounded normativity – by which he means "the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time" – as the "place-based foundation of Indigenous thought and practice." He argues that Indigenous self-determination can only occur by constructing Indigenous alternatives to capitalism, and points to the Idle No More movement of 2013 as a hopeful indication of the possibility of developing relations of solidarity and mutual aid with other movements struggling against the imposed effects of global capitalism (2014:173).

5 See for an exemplary collection of essays, Black et al (2014).

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