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Globalization and Social Policy

From Global Neoliberal Hegemony to Global Political Pluralism

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ABSTRACT Many accounts of globalization and social policy accept the 'strong' globalization thesis in emphasizing the naturalistic, inevitable nature of globalization, the external constraints imposed on governments by international markets and international governmental organizations and the limitations placed on international and domestic politics and social policies. This article argues that a less 'defeatist' and more fruitful way of analysing the relationship between globalization and social policy is to consider, first, how globalization has thrown up structures for contestation, resistance and opposition and, second, how states and other interests act domestically and outwardly through their own 'multi-tiered', 'multi-sphered' strategies to determine the pace, course, timing and effects of globalization. Accordingly, the article highlights the range of actions taken by states as well as by the voting, consuming and productive populations at a number of levels (local, national, regional, international) and in a number of spheres (national/transnational, political, economic) to regulate or oppose globalizing strategies. The outcomes of these struggles for social and economic welfare are never certain in advance but depend, crucially, on the context in which they are negotiated.

KEYWORDS *globalization, governance, social conflict, social policy, welfare*

Introduction

'Globalization' has become an established term in social science, most recently in social policy. For some, the prevailing image of globalization as flows of capital, people and information is a welcome, even exciting, development which presents new opportunities; for others it casts a 'sinister

shadow', an unfolding tyrannical rule of peoples by a totalitarian global economic regime (Hay and Watson, 1999; Teeple, 1995). Whatever one's position on globalization – enthusiastic, revisionist or sceptical – the reality of what may now be called 'globalization studies' is undeniable. But it is important to recognize the contested nature of globalization. The frequent usage of the term has obscured a lack of consensus with regard to what it entails, whether it can be said even to exist, and if it does, explanations of how it operates and the direction(s) in which it is heading (Gordon, 1987; Mittelman, 1996). As one observer has noted, 'the more we read about globalization from the mounting volume of literature on the topic, the less clear we seem to be about what it means and what it implies' (Amin, 1997: 123). It could be argued that even to ask whether 'globalization' corresponds with a social reality, let alone analyse its implications for social policy, is to participate in sustaining a myth.

This article does not debate whether globalization is an appropriate term to capture the kinds of changes in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres that are said to have occurred (see Yeates, 2001 for a review of this debate). Rather, it interrogates dominant accounts of globalization which frame a body of scholarship on globalization and welfare state change. I label these 'strong' globalization theses because they emphasize the naturalistic, inevitable nature of globalization, the external constraints imposed on governments by international markets and international governmental organizations (IGOs), the erosion of state sovereignty and autonomy, and the limitations placed on international and domestic social politics and policies. Because these accounts deemed to herald the end of social conflict, political autonomy and political struggle and the victory of neoliberal economic principles I term them 'defeatist'. An alternative perspective on globalization and social policy is then outlined. This approach starts from the recognition that globalization has thrown up structures for contestation, resistance and opposition and that states and other interests act both domestically and outwardly through their own 'multi-tiered', 'multi-sphered' strategies to determine the pace, course, timing and effects of globalization. Accordingly, the article highlights the range of actions taken by states as well as by the voting, consuming and productive populations at a number of levels (local, national, regional, international) and in a number of spheres (national/transnational, political, economic) to regulate or oppose globalizing strategies. The outcomes of these struggles are never certain in advance but depend, crucially, on the context in which they are negotiated.

'Strong' Globalization: The End of Politics?

At its crudest, the 'strong' globalization thesis presents the global economy as dominated by uncontrollable global forces in which the principal actors are transnational corporations (TNCs). These have unlimited freedom in

choosing the most conducive, or profitable, terms and conditions for their investment and production operations. Since TNCs owe no allegiance to any state, they (re)locate wherever market advantage exists. It is important to note that 'strong' globalization theorists come from both the right and left, politically; the former celebrate what the latter condemn.

'Strong' globalization theses are highly economicist. The major advantages and disadvantages of globalization are expressed in economic terms, and global economic forces are assigned a determinant role in social change. Liberal theory presents globalization as the welcome loosening of political constraints upon economic production and exchange and as a force leading to greater political and economic integration worldwide. Critical theory also stresses economic globalization, but as a polarizing force with undesirable social, economic and political consequences globally. As Hout (1996) argues, it involves 'an increasingly sharp division between "core" states who share in the values and benefits of a global world economy and polity, and "marginalised" states, some of which are already branded "failed" states' (p. 168).

A major claim of the 'strong' globalization thesis is that globalization amounts not merely to the extension of capitalism on a global scale but to the emergence of an integrated, or unified world economy which has a separate dynamic to that of national economies and which is not fully under the control of political institutions. Sklair (1998) depicts globalization as 'the emergence of truly global processes and a global system of social relations not founded on national characteristics or nation-states' (p. 1); Meiksins Wood (1997) characterizes globalization as 'another step in the geographical extension of economic rationality and its emancipation from political jurisdiction' (p. 553); while Petrella (1996) argues that:

The history of capitalism has ceased to be defined by and limited to national boundaries. It would be wrong to draw the conclusion that the world has entered a post-capitalist era. The ownership of capital still matters and it still remains the dominant factor of economic and socio-political power in the world. The great change that is occurring is not between a capitalist and post-capitalist society, nor between a 'good' capitalism (the social market economy) and a 'bad capitalism' (the jungle, or 'casino' market economy). Rather, it is between a weakening of all aspects of a society founded on national capitalism and the growing power and dynamic of global capitalism. (p. 68)

Although it is generally accepted that capitalism has always been a global system and that states' policies have historically been bound by parameters acceptable to it, 'strong' globalization narratives hold that there has been a dramatic shift in structural power and authority away from national political systems towards global economic systems (Strange, 1996). Whether this is characterized in terms of the loss of state autonomy or in terms of class conflict, the primacy of global, 'external' forces over national or 'internal' ones are emphasized, as are the primacy of economic forces over political

ones. 'Strong' globalization theses also stress the existence of a unified, 'borderless' economy in which deterritorialized capital freely flows between countries. This qualitative erosion in states' political power and autonomy by the growing power of 'external', economic forces is said to severely restrict public policy options and steer the course of national social and economic development. Thus, the corollary of capital's enhanced bargaining power is that states are locked in competition with one another to offer incentives to the next corporate factory or call/service centre looking to locate or relocate its operations. Buffeted by the winds of global competition, states are expected to pursue social and economic policies which are most attractive to transnational capital and foreign investment. Governments will increasingly stay clear of programmes of redistribution, renationalization or other forms of intervention of which capital and markets do not 'approve'. Those which stray too far outside these parameters will be punished electorally and economically, rendering themselves vulnerable to lower credit ratings, higher interest rates and currency speculation (Andrews, 1994; Goodman and Pauly, 1993; Mishra, 1999; Stewart, 1994). This, it is argued, essentially heralds the decline of the social democratic politics and projects upon which the welfare state was built (Beck, 2000; Mishra, 1999; Teeple, 1995) and the convergence of social policy 'on a right-of-centre position with global capitalism driving policy rightwards' (Mishra, 1999: 55; Ratinoff, 1999; Taylor-Gooby, 1997). Globalization, by this account, heralds a new welfare settlement:

The premises of the welfare state and pension system, of income support, local government and infrastructural policies, the power of organized labour, industry-wide free collective bargaining, state expenditure, the fiscal system and 'fair' taxation – all this melts under the withering sun of globalization and becomes susceptible to (demands for) political moulding. (Beck, 2000: 1)

This anticipated 'welfare meltdown' entails the replacement of universal welfare systems and comprehensive public provision by selectivist welfare states in which the state plays a greatly reduced role in welfare provision and the private sector (particularly the market sector but also the voluntary and informal sectors) a much bigger one. The boundaries of public responsibility are reined in and 'social policy interventions are justified only under exceptional conditions, especially when human capital stock is inadequate to sustain economic growth or when the depth of inequities and discrimination prevent good governance' (Ratinoff, 1999: 45).

The influence of the 'strong' globalization thesis' precepts and predictions are clearly evident in the way that social policy is regarded as being determined by 'external' – mainly economic – constraints and pressures beyond the control of governments which are 'press-ganged' into embracing deregulation, privatization and residualization. This presentation of globalization as pretty much single-handedly driving welfare state change is deeply problematic and a range of counter-arguments cast serious doubt on

'strong' globalization-inspired claims about the inevitability of the overwhelming power of capital, the diminished capacities of the state, the irrelevance of politics, and the retrenchment of social policy (see Yeates, 2001 for a full account).

From Defeat to Social Conflict and Political Struggle

Perhaps the most glaring defect of the 'strong' globalization thesis is its presentation of globalization as a reality which cannot be resisted and which must be accommodated; as De Angelis (1997) argues, it 'naturalises the market and the economy, to such an extent that it presents the latter as [an] autonomous force to which we must bow' (p. 43). However, this defeatism does not accord with the continued relevance of the state. First, the presentation of the state-capital relationship as one in which capital is essentially in conflict with the state, or hegemonic after defeating the state, posits capital always in opposition to the state, whereas it is more useful to see capital and state often allied together, as well as often in conflict (Hall, 1986, cited in Gordon, 1987: 61). Capital is bound in various webs of regulations and governance, which it accepts grudgingly, attempts to circumvent and which it very occasionally invites. It wishes to secure the support of the state, not to replace it. Capital needs the state to facilitate its operations because this is the dominant institution which upholds the social relations on which economic globalization is dependent:

despite the internationalisation of wage relations, class relations are largely reproduced in geographically separated fragments in specific national sites. Nation states and national state policies remain crucial for the legitimation of capitalist relations of production on national sites. (Yaghmaian, 1998: 255)

Thus, capital has an interest in strong public bureaucracies and a very basic need for the state to provide and enforce the law, under which contract and other disputes between individual capitals can be resolved and sanctions enacted. Capital is also dependent on states and political associates to perform a range of other functions, such as providing basic infrastructure and an educated, trained labour force and maintaining social stability and civil order (Evans, 1997; Petrella, 1996; Pooley, 1991). Stability, above all, is to be prized, and this stability is normally provided by the state's monopoly over coercive violence. It is, after all, hard to make profits in a country in which a civil war or widespread civil unrest is going on. If the state is too fragile to guarantee social peace, then the basic law and order required for the operation of markets is missing.

Second, when both critics and supporters claim that globalization (in both its economic and political manifestations) interferes with state autonomy they are to a certain extent correct but they are not specific enough. Not all countries are equally vulnerable to policy leverage; indeed the autonomy of some states is interfered with far more than others. Thus, it is, in the main,

developing countries which are forced to accept, as part of debt servicing arrangements, structural adjustment programmes proscribing the deregulation of trade, privatization of state enterprises, the reorientation of production towards exports and the reduction of external and internal budget deficits, including cuts in social security, pensions and food subsidies (Huber, 1996). Moreover, acceptance of the fact that the actions of IGOs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses may have some impact on states does not constitute evidence that states' autonomy has been diminished to the point that they no longer possess regulatory powers or are able to make use of them. Indeed, the vocal presence and actions of civil society groups may in certain instances strengthen the hand of the state. Thus, NGOs have been encouraged to challenge state-dominated development policy, voice criticisms of existing welfare arrangements and generate demands for policy and institutional reform, often in opposition to corporate, trade union and producer interests nationally (Riker, 1995).

It is important to recognize that governments may not be able to fully rely on some 'traditional' methods of regulation, such as trade, exchange and investment controls, and that the control of privatized services in the interests of social protection is more difficult. But it is equally important to appreciate that governments are able to secure for themselves a range of concessions, restrictions and exemptions for important sectors and industries in international treaties. As Dunkley (2000) points out, even if OECD countries fully implement the liberalization programme agreed with the WTO which commits them to completely liberalizing market access in one-third of sectors, and partially in one-half of them, they will still retain considerable control over remaining sectors. Moreover, even from a position of strong support for the consolidation of international welfare markets, the WTO (1998) recognizes that trade agreements are not without their problems: 'the [European] Union experience has not been unequivocally encouraging to date: Cross-border investment is hampered by diverging institutional structures, limiting the scope for private market participation, while labour mobility may suffer from cultural and language barriers' (p. 14).

Thus, while globalizing tendencies are indeed occurring these are neither inevitable nor do they constitute a bulldozer with the power of history behind it, levelling all in its path; any changes in the regulation of the domestic operations of capital and labour still need to be explained by reference to the national balance of political power. Although domestic public policy has to take account of international trade and investment law, it also has to take account of other national and international *social* laws and agreements as well as the domestic balance of power between the legislature, politicians, civil and public servants, NGOs, labour representatives, electorates, military and domestic business interests, all of whom may oppose the reforms and their implementation. Indeed, the successful implementation of agreements, policies and programmes depends on the

issue or policy area involved and country characteristics such as government ideology, political and social institutional regimes, interest group organization and mobilization and state capacity, as well as a country's strategic location, be it in economic, political or military terms (Stallings, 1992). When national economic, demographic and social trends are also taken into account, even broadly similar pressures facing governments will provoke quite different national responses. Thus, there is neither any need nor is there any likelihood that all states will adopt the same reform strategy, starting as they do from different historical, cultural, political and economic traditions and positions.

Far from being victims of the forces unleashed by a social movement for global capitalism, states have supported, driven, steered and stabilized capitalist accumulation on a global scale. Thus, for some states (primarily the East Asian newly-industrializing countries (NICs)), integration into the global economy through industrialization has been decidedly a state strategy. This emphasis on state activism and the continued importance of the domestic sphere as a meaningful site of social politics highlights that just as external factors bear on the state, so the state also acts outwardly through its own strategies. As Keil (1998) argues, if globalization makes states, then it is equally clear that states make globalization – albeit in various ways and to different extents, depending on the configuration of factors noted above. Approached from this perspective, the questions are no longer how globalization erodes state autonomy, unleashes a welfare 'race to the bottom' or leads to welfare convergence, and instead become 'what is the welfare state's contribution to the most recent wave of globalization', and 'what role does the internal transformation of developed welfare states play in the internationalization of trade, production, and investment' (Reiger and Leibfried, 1998: 365). For Reiger and Leibfried, social policy is a key factor affecting the degree of closure or openness of the national economy: it influences the circumstances under which open markets are perceived as opportunities to be broadly welcomed rather than unacceptably high risks to be resisted. Social policy is a key site of political action, facilitating, steering or impeding the timing, course, pace and effects of globalization:

The movement toward and the trends in a globalized economy have been triggered, contained, differentiated or modified, weakened or strengthened, and slowed down or speeded up through *national structures of social policy and their developments*, to the degree that these could replace protectionism. (Reiger and Leibfried, 1998: 366, emphasis in original)

Although Reiger and Leibfried's (1998) concerns were with the relationship between globalization and the welfare states of the north, their argument that states use their political autonomy to 'deploy' social policy in the management of economic and industrial restructuring and its social consequences is applicable to developing countries too, and would be accepted in more sophisticated accounts of globalization (see for example

Herod, 1997; Moran, 1998). As regards welfare states' prospects under globalization, this perspective emphasizes the diversity of strategies that are likely to be adopted worldwide and draws attention to the enduring importance of the national social, cultural, political and economic environment in shaping how far globalizing strategies are adopted and implemented.

The Institutional Bias of Global Governance and Political Globalization

If 'strong' globalization theory has assumed a heavily economic flavour, then many analyses of political globalization and global governance have assumed a strongly institutionalist flavour. Global governance predominantly refers to the range of 'efforts to bring more orderly and reliable responses to social and political issues that go beyond capacities of states to address individually' (Gordenker and Weiss, 1996: 17). The focus of attention is on IGOs, regional formations and states. Bretherton (1996), for example, defines political globalization as 'a growing tendency for issues to be perceived as global in scope, and hence requiring global solutions; and to the development of international organizations and global institutions which attempt to address such issues' (p. 8). Important though IGOs are, global governance and political globalization embrace a much broader range of agencies, actors and actions. Governance has been defined as 'the sum of many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs' (Commission on Global Governance, 1995: 2) and as 'the control of activity by some means such that a range of desired outcomes is attained' (Hirst and Thompson, 1996: 184). Thus, governance need not be associated with statist institutions, nationally or internationally, at all and can be performed by a range of public and private, state and non-state, national and international institutions and practices (Hirst and Thompson, 1996: 184). In addition to 'formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance' governance also includes 'informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest' (Commission on Global Governance, 1995: 2). Indeed, in its broadest sense, global governance refers to *all* non-state sources of authority which have the power to allocate values and influence the distribution of resources: business organizations and networks, both legal (transnational corporations) and illegal (transnational crime organizations); professional associations; transnational authorities in sports, art, music; the global mass media; transnational social, political and religious movements, NGOs and other citizens' movements (Commission on Global Governance, 1995; Strange, 1996).

Global governance and global politics therefore involve a multitude of actors operating at a number of levels and in a range of spheres. The realm of politics is understood here as actions which aim to influence collective economic, social and political practices, and it extends far beyond the

practice of governments or IGOs. Thus, social movements and NGOs certainly act in the *institutional* realm of governance, where they seek to influence and participate in policy-making and implementation, but they also act in the *economic* realm, engaging in strategies of protest and orchestrating public outcry to oppose corporate (re)location or persuade corporations to adopt socially- and environmentally-acceptable practices (Wapner, 1995; Williams and Ford, 1999).

Snyder's (1999) concept of 'global legal pluralism' is consistent with this broader notion of governance as formal and informal, institutional and non-institutional structures and processes of power and authority:

Global legal pluralism involves a variety of institutions, norms and dispute resolution processes located, and produced, at different structured sites around the world. . . . These relations of structure and process constitute the global legal playing field. (Snyder, 1999: 342–3)

Snyder argues that scholarship on global governance has tended to stress legal contracts between parties, either in bilateral/multilateral form or in 'vertical', hierarchical form ('multi-level governance'), and that it has accordingly paid less attention to the ways in which transnational economic networks are regulated as much by socio-cultural norms and 'soft law' as by contract law. He highlights multiple sites of global economic governance: some sites are market-based, others are polity-based, but each has distinctive institutional and normative characteristics which shape the production, implementation and enforcement of rules (Snyder, 1999: 372). This notion of 'global legal pluralism' contains two key advantages for our purposes. First, it brings political agency to the foreground by emphasizing the norms, values, interests and positions of strategic actors, such as governments, businesses, NGOs and international institutions. Second, it widens global governance and global social politics to include actions in the economic sphere as well as in the institutional-political sphere and so captures actions in the economic realm which are otherwise neglected by an institutionalist definition of global social policy (see for example Deacon with Hulse and Stubbs, 1997). Although the international-legal sphere is where the most obvious attempts are being made to formulate global social policy, the primacy accorded to it by social policy analysts is also a result of the institutionalist tendencies within academic social policy itself, which privileges state institutions and the more institutionalized sectors of opposition movements. The emphasis on the forces and initiatives to modify 'globalization from above' neglects those against 'globalization from below' (Falk, 1997). It confines our view to the social dialogue that takes place at the level of international summits and meetings and excludes other 'social dialogues' which take place at different levels and in various locations and sites outside the boardrooms and bureaux of international institutions, and which also 'influence the outcomes of international relations . . . by

interacting in and shaping the *political processes* that generate global policy' (Smith, Pagnucco and Chatfield 1997: 74, emphasis in original).

Global Political Action and Social Policy Dialogues

Globalization is increasingly perceived by a range of groups as presenting an obstacle to their movement goals – whether these be the preservation of ecosystems, respect for human rights or demilitarization – and it has 'taken hold as a common integrating force and foe for contemporary social movements' (Lynch, 1998: 155). Around the world, advocates of globalization have had to engage in a 'social dialogue' with a variety of groups unconvinced of the merits of globalization. These dialogues have taken a variety of forms, ranging from popular social protest (urban uprisings, mass demonstrations, strikes and boycotts) to direct participation in the policy-making process for the more institutionalized sections of the opposition. Social dialogues are conducted with governmental institutions and with local branches of TNCs, using market as well as political-institutional mechanisms, and though they may not have the capacity in every instance to act as a counterweight to capital's or governments' globalization strategies, they can succeed in shaping or blocking parts of the strategy's progress, changing the economics of political reform. Different local and national balances of power determine which of the many possible outcomes of the encounter come to pass. The remainder of this section illustrates the range of social dialogues in the market, international, institutional and state spheres.

MARKETS

There has been a reported rise in labour internationalism, with issues relating to health and safety, women and child workers the subjects of international campaigns, and trade unions have 'successfully challenged *at the global scale* the actions of transnational corporations' (Herod, 1997: 192, emphasis in original). A major impetus to transnational labour activism was NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) (Carr, 1999), while US unions have been prepared to undertake innovative actions, such as 'corporate campaigns', and participate in new alliances and coalitions with consumer and environmental groups, among others. Some (Moody, 1997; Scipes, 1992; Waterman, 1998) have reported the emergence of new labour movements in peripheral countries which they call 'social movement unionism', so-named because of the active lead taken by unions and their members both on issues of direct concern to them and on issues affecting those less able to sustain self-mobilization. Of note here are attempts by trade unions to establish international connections at the shop-floor level rather than through union secretariats. One example of this is the emergence of labour-led, grassroots anti-apartheid groups in the mid-1980s

which forged links with black trade unions in South Africa; apartheid was an issue in several strikes in the US against TNCs that operated in South Africa (Herod, 1997).

Market-based strategies include international campaigns by consumer groups and NGOs to bring about improved standards for groups of workers in particular industries. One successful campaign targeting working conditions in textile factories in Guatemala subcontracting to The Gap (a North American retail chain) involved the National Labour Committee, the textile union UNITE (Union of Needle Traders, Industrial and Textile Employees), religious and women's groups, along with allies in Central America. Citing the importance of transnational links in several victorious campaigns, Cavanagh and Broad (1996) see countervailing power to that of global corporations emerging in these new coalitions of movements which are coordinating across labour, environmental, consumer and other social sectors, on one axis, and across geographical boundaries on the other axis.

Market-based strategies work by persuading consumers to redirect their spending power away from the products of companies or countries perceived to be abusing the environment, workers' rights or human rights. These campaigns have the best chance of success against companies that depend on consumer brand loyalty (e.g. Nike) though consumer, trade and labour boycotts, social- and eco-labelling of products, and investor initiatives have all brought about corporate codes of conduct in global industries such as baby foods, drugs, textiles, garments and footwear (Shaw, 1996; Vander Stichele and Pennartz, 1996). Insofar as consumer boycotts have 'helped people to make connections between global problems and their own mundane shopping trip' (*Ethical Consumer*, 1996: 21), they generate social concern among both businesses and consumers (Diller, 1999). A review in *Ethical Consumer* (1996) listed five fully-successful UK boycotts, seven partially-successful UK boycotts and four successful US boycotts which were supported by UK consumers.

Investor initiatives are investment-related decisions that seek to encourage socially-responsible corporate behaviour (e.g. the adoption of codes and labels) while maintaining the level of economic return. They grew from 'socially responsible investment' movements in some developed countries, and many initiatives now serve as catalysts to advance law and policy by raising the threshold for best practice (Diller, 1999: 111). Snyder (1999) suggests that codes of conduct drawn up by TNCs or sectoral trade associations, often in response to NGO pressure, 'may be much more important in practice than formal national or local legislation' (p. 361). In his study of global commodity chains in the toy industry, he argues that codes of conduct can be considered 'analogous to multilaterally negotiated treaties which are then applied as standard-form contracts laid down by the leading firms in a particular market' (Snyder, 1999: 363). Dominant buyers are susceptible to political pressure to adopt codes and are in a powerful

position to impose codes of conduct on their suppliers because of their control of brands and marketing.

The limitations of these forms of action also need to be pointed out. Friedman (1995: 214) argues that 'in practice, the boycott tactic may have limited usefulness'; often it is not the economic leverage of consumers that determines the success of boycott campaigns but media coverage of the practices of offending firms. Moreover, in a review of action on child labour, McClintock concluded that:

Corporate codes of conduct and product labelling efforts, while having the advantage of being market-based, suffer from the risk of capitalist shirking. Better governance mechanisms to eliminate child labour are likely to require not only enhanced codes of conduct but also the upgrading and more effective enforcement of national labour laws plus the use of supranational institutions to implement international labour standards tied to trade policy. (McClintock, 1999: 516)

These drawbacks are symptomatic of those that arise from all forms of industrial self-regulation. Voluntary introduction of codes of conduct by TNCs may be intended as public relations exercises to delay state regulation and redefine political issues as technical ones (CornerHouse, 1998; Diller, 1999; Vander Stichele and Pennartz, 1996). In addition, the content and operation of codes of conduct vary enormously. In a review of 215 codes of conduct, Diller (1999: 112–13) notes that occupational health and safety was the most frequently-addressed issue (75%), while refusing to contract with companies that used forced labour (25%) and freedom of association and collective bargaining (15%) were the least addressed issues. National law was the most frequently-cited reference source for code standards, followed by international standards (general human rights or labour-specific standards) and industry standards (Diller, 1999: 115). Indeed, she notes that 'most self-definitions [of standards] differ from, and even contradict, international labour principles' (Diller, 1999: 116). Moreover, codes of conduct pose significant implementation, enforcement and monitoring problems, and corporate code implementation systems tend to lack adequate human resources, participation by workers and transparency in application. Overall, Diller (1999: 100) concludes that voluntary initiatives may represent the 'pursuit of a private form of social justice for private gain' and actually undercut public efforts to improve labour regulations.

Market-based regulatory strategies also include outright opposition and disruptive action at the local level. Numerous examples of such action, many of which are actions against local branches of TNCs, can be cited. Various tribal and indigenous groups and NGOs have taken their concerns to the AGMs of transnational companies such as RTZ (Rio Tinto Zinc), Shell, BP and Monsanto, while international institutions may be called on to back up local opposition – for instance, a US labour union (OCAW [Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers]) recently lodged a complaint against a German

chemical company (BASF) operating in Louisiana (USA) with the Paris-based OECD. Plans for new production methods, factories and other corporate facilities are increasingly facing organized local opposition and may constitute an important constraint on capital's 'footloose' inclinations. Indeed, while many states increasingly offer themselves as locations for capital's projects, some have had the occasion to complain that their efforts have been hindered or betrayed by 'unrepresentative' environmental or community groups who oppose the facilities the state has worked so hard to attract. Whether the problem is conceived as one relating to the community (summarized as NIMBY, Not In My Back Yard), or one relating to the proposed activity itself (summarized as LULU, Locally-Unwanted Land Use), it is an increasing problem, not only in the core countries, but also in the peripheral countries. In many instances the 'global logic' of capital finds itself in conflict with local forces, and while in general it may seem that capital is the victor in these struggles, it is fair to say that there have been numerous inspiring examples of victory for local forces over transnational capital.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

IGOs perceived to be actively implicated in promoting globalization have been targeted by protest movements, and a number of 'global social dialogues' have been going on between social movements in the shadow congresses that now regularly accompany meetings of the G7 and G8, most recently at Genoa, as well as those of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO). Delegates have faced opposition by a coalition of various groups aiming to block meetings and suspend negotiations. Citizen groups have used creative and flexible forms of global organization and political action, involving public campaigns, street demonstrations and protests, and they work on more than a national scale.

One of the clearest expressions of the social movement against globalization are the anti-MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) and anti-WTO campaigns. The anti-MAI campaigns set the stage for a battle that saw 'for the first time active public participation in the shaping of international relations' (Grimshaw, 1997: 38), a battle which continues to be fought at the doors of most of the IGOs and G8 meetings. One of the clearest expressions of global social politics can be seen in the international mobilization that led to the Battle of Seattle in 2000, organized under the following motto: 'May our resistance be as transnational as capital.' Here, the same tools of international communication that facilitate globalization were used in opposition to it. The multitude of issues and agendas – strictly national as well as global – that came together in opposition to the WTO in Seattle illustrate the diversity of sources of opposition to globalizing strategies of capital and

states, particularly those strategies which ignore health, social and environmental protection. The 'N30' events succeeded in disrupting the talks, and by the end of the week governments left without an agreement.

The variety of causes of the failure of the Seattle talks needs to be stressed, as must their political nature. The most obvious cause was the failure of the national delegations to agree on the need for a new Round, while the arrival of delegates in Seattle without an agreed agenda was an early indication of the likelihood of failure. To this can be added the continuing articulation of concern over trade-related intellectual property rights and trade-related investment measures by many national social movements since the Uruguay Round, disquiet over the 'cultural imperialism' and disguised protectionism some claimed to see in the demand for labour and environmental clauses (Shiva, 1997), and NGOs' disgust at being excluded from some of the closed-room negotiating sessions. The positions of national governments were also relevant here. Attending peripheral nations were dissatisfied with the meagre benefits they had gained from previous trade rounds, as well as with 'the high-handed way some negotiations seemed to ignore their voice'; thus African, Caribbean and Pacific states were still smarting from 'the condition of good governance imposed on them by the EU in recent preferential tariff reduction talks' (Deacon, 2000: 25). On the US side, the forthcoming US elections along with a resurgent labour movement which Gore/Clinton needed to keep on side determined the strong American line on labour clauses which alienated the peripheral nations even further. The regional fractions within global capitalism were also apparent. The French Education Minister accused the US of using the trade negotiations to brainwash the world by trying to open US universities around the globe. The EU delegation was split over the proposed liberalization of agriculture: the UK favoured dropping all agricultural tariffs, and not just some as proposed by the EU, disadvantaging the poorest countries (Deacon, 2000). Meanwhile, other national delegations were under strong pressure from their own social movements, trade unions, environmental groups and development lobbies (Bayne, 2000). These causes of failure, combined with the well-organized blocking of the opening day and the demonstration of mass opposition (involving an estimated 30,000 people), showed that the push to open markets is not inevitably successful. Political, not economic, reasons impeded progress.

These campaigns have been organized against some of the most basic elements of the international economic order. One transnational campaign, Jubilee 2000, aimed at a major effect of globalization, that of developing countries' indebtedness, involved massive national and transnational organizing for the cancellation of the unpayable debts of the world's poorest countries. It united religious and development lobbies, trade unions, consumer and environmental activists and political and cultural celebrities. The campaign successfully placed the issue of this debt on the agenda of the

1999 Cologne G8 meeting, resulting in a further US\$70bn reduction in the debt. While realists pointed out that the full figure of Jubilee 2000's 52 countries' debts amounted to US\$370bn, and cynics pointed out that most of that debt was not being serviced anyway and so cancelling it cost nothing, the campaign did succeed in making a massive transnational issue of a basic issue in development economics which would not normally attract such interest. More generally, Ritchie (1996) notes 'the organised and increasingly massive presence of NGOs throughout all phases of world conferences' (p. 183). An international conference necessitates months of intensive lobbying by thousands of groups attempting to influence national and international agendas. At the 1995 UN Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, 'nearly one thousand NGOs and people's movements organized around a broad range of issues, calling for fairer distribution of resources and restructuring of the world order so that the poor and disadvantaged might have stronger say in decisions that determine their well-being' (Owoh, 1996: 217).

THE STATE

Events around the world demonstrate that strong campaigns can still be mounted against the state to defend social rights. For both 'developed' and 'developing' countries the fate of globalization is often decided 'locally' rather than globally and is dependent on the national balance of power.

In France, where although one in every 12 workers was unemployed and one in every five workers was in a part-time or temporary job, a major strike protest by public sector workers and popular mobilization more generally in 1995–6 prevented proposed pension reforms from being fully realized (Bensaïd, 1996; Bonoli, 1998; Jefferys, 1996). The reasons for this defeat of a globalizing policy can be found in national factors. In the 1995 French election, the only candidate who called for rolling back the welfare state received just 5 percent of the vote. Chirac emphasized his commitment to the welfare state during the election campaign, though shortly after his victory he abandoned his election promises to prioritize the fight against unemployment. Juppé had declared he would impose a public sector wage freeze in 1996 and growing pressure from the international exchange markets for the French government to comply with the 3 percent Maastricht budgetary deficit target prompted him to propose, on 15 November, cuts to social security benefits, the reform of social security management and increases in taxation (Jeffreys, 1996).

In response to these proposals there were three waves of mobilization involving a wave of one-day public sector strikes and demonstrations combined with indefinite or renewed strikes against the means of circulation (transport and communication sectors were those most affected). The strike wave did not reach into the private service or manufacturing sectors where trade unionism had effectively disappeared though it was supported by

'extraordinarily high levels of participation in street demonstrations, especially in provincial cities' (Jeffreys, 1996: 16). On 12 December, the day of greatest mobilization, 270 cities and towns in France were hosts to demonstrations involving around 2.3m people; Grenoble, a city with a population of 250,000, saw 70,000 people demonstrate. These demonstrations were led by striking workers, supported by striking students and those on one-day strikes, as well as by large numbers of non-strikers from the private sector, and by organizations of the unemployed and the homeless. The strikes soon took on the character of a popular uprising: 'from the issue of defending social security, the mobilization grew within a month into a movement of general opposition to commercial globalization and the neo-liberal offensive, and their effects' (Bensaïd, 1996). The proposed public sector pension reforms involving the railways, the post office, city transport, France-Telecom and the EDF and GDF (the electricity and gas boards) were withdrawn and talks were promised on social security reform. After nearly a month of strikes, the government backed down on parts of its proposal (for example, the extension of contribution periods for public service workers) though it retained other parts (for example, the freeze in family allowances and increases in health insurance payments for unemployed and elderly).

Events in France show how the impact of globalization at national level is crucially dependent on the national balance of power and the existing institutional orientation, and that reports of the death of the labour movement are greatly exaggerated. Indeed, the problem for reforming governments, even those which are neither dependent on political coalitions to enact legislation nor embedded in corporatist political systems, is that they are mostly not able to fully realize their desired reforms. The fate of social security pension reforms in Latin America provides a useful reminder of the enduring importance of domestic political factors in determining policy outcomes. Here, IGO influence over government policy was greatest in countries where there was a severe economic crisis (high debt, rapid economic decline, high inflation) and an urgent need for financial assistance, but it was also clearly contingent on the domestic institutional and political context (Huber and Stephens, 2000; Kay, 2000). In countries where parliamentary scrutiny of reform proposals was exercised, domestic political forces (e.g. business, pensioners, labour unions) with an immediate stake in the reforms ensured that the process of reform took much longer and that the reforms enacted differed quite significantly from the original plans (Barrientos, 1998; Huber and Stephens, 2000; Kay, 2000). The nature of political institutions and practices were also determinant factors:

Where political institutions afforded interest groups greater opportunities to veto policy, reforms were limited, while political institutions which prevented interest groups from acting as veto players provided governments with greater opportunities to implement fundamental reforms. (Kay, 2000: 196)

Relevant factors here include electoral laws, the referendum and its use, interest-group influence within the social security bureaucracy and the powers of the executive relative to the legislature (Kay, 2000). The concentration of political power in the hands of the executive was a factor in pushing through pension reforms in Chile and Peru. In Chile, reforms were passed in a matter of months due to the absence of political opposition, although even here the military gained exemptions from them. In Mexico, where the president's party held a majority in congress and party discipline was strong, pension reforms were pushed through largely unopposed (Huber and Stephens, 2000). In Argentina, where Menem's party controlled the senate but not the chamber of deputies, the presidential decree was liberally used to bypass the legislature and override concessions gained by labour representatives (Huber and Stephens, 2000; Kay, 2000: 199).

In fact, notwithstanding the alleged dominance of the Washington consensus in Latin America, only Chile's pension system comes closest to the World Bank paradigm. Bolivia, El Salvador and Mexico fit the World Bank paradigm partially, while other countries forged their own paths, enacting reforms that more closely approximated the ILO paradigm than the World Bank one (Amparo Cruz-Saco Oyague, 1998; Barrientos, 1998). Overall, such is the diversity of reforms in the region that Kay (2000) has argued 'while there is a trend towards privatisation in the region, there is no uniform Latin American route to pension reform' (p. 200). Indeed, he argues that the reforms are most notable for the way that 'privileged groups have managed to use their political influence to retain their benefits' (Kay, 2000: 201).

The importance of national political factors in mediating the impact of globalization on welfare states is also visible in corporate taxation, an area where the (downward) converging effects of globalization are expected to be seen. On the surface, the evidence would appear convincing:

Beginning with the Tax Reform Act of 1986 in the US, every OECD country except Switzerland and Turkey lowered its top marginal rate on personal income tax between 1986 and 1991. Many states reduced their corporate tax rates during this time as well, and they often accompanied these moves with efforts to expand their tax bases and to end many common tax loopholes. (Hallerberg and Basinger, 1998: 321–2)

Although these changes in tax policy are generally ascribed to globalization, closer inspection reveals that none of the expected convergence was there to be found. While the spread of corporate income taxes narrowed, a wide gap remained between the highest marginal rate (50% in Germany) and the lowest marginal rate (25% in Canada). Hallerberg and Basinger (1998) draw attention to the omission of political explanations from the standard globalization explanation of these changes. Relevant political factors here include the partisan orientation of the

government and the internal structure of the state, but particularly the institutional and political structure of a country:

Countries that had only one veto player, or only one institution or party whose approval was necessary for a bill to become law, enacted more sweeping reform than states that had more than one veto player. These results suggest that even when international or domestic economic factors might 'dictate' a change in policy, reform will not be as sweeping in countries in which agreement among several institutions and/or parties is necessary. (Hallerberg and Basinger, 1998: 324)

In his empirical study of statutory business income taxation (social security, payroll taxes and corporate tax) in 17 advanced democratic nations between 1966 and 1993, Swank (1998) notes a change in tax policy orientation from market-regulating to market-conforming policy rules. This shift in emphasis on 'the creation of a level playing field where the market will allocate investment appropriately' (Swank, 1998: 679) – a shift which is often read as being in favour of business interests – did not, however, lead to a reduction in the overall business tax burden. Corporate profits taxation, as a percentage of operating income, was on average only marginally higher in the early 1990s than in the late 1970s, though social security and payroll taxes had increased from 13 percent in the mid-1960s to 34 percent in the early 1990s. Swank (1998) offers two explanations for this non-reduction in business income tax rates. First, tax policy emphasized cuts in tax rates on corporate profits, but it also insisted that overall changes should be revenue-neutral to the treasury. Thus, the tax base was broadened at the same time as a range of investment reliefs, allowances, credits and exemptions for businesses were eliminated. Second, reductions in social security tax burdens were not fully realized due to a combination of economic and demographic pressures, opposition to cuts in social insurance schemes, and governments' emphasis on fiscal balance (Swank, 1998: 680).

Conclusions

This article started by noting the influence of the 'strong' globalization discourse in the social sciences generally and in social policy analysis more particularly. It proceeded to argue that the 'strong' globalization thesis is deeply problematic in positing globalization and national autonomy as mutually exclusive, presenting globalization as being 'done' to states and ignoring oppositional forces or counter-changes. It is precisely because the totalizing elements in 'strong' globalization theory allow for no resistance, and because the matter is not foreclosed, that there is a need to see globalization as a political strategy open to contestation or even failure and as uneven in scope, depth, intensity and impact. This review pointed to the continuing importance of the domestic sphere in any explanation of the relationship between globalization and social policy change and emphasized

the continuing importance of 'closure', state regulation and 'territorialization'. This is not to suggest that there are no common responses or trends occurring, or that the balance between local, national, supranational or global influences remains unchanged, but simply to indicate that social movements *for* globalization cannot simply steamroll over states and populations, or bulldoze national institutions and remould them in their preferred fashion. In stark contrast with 'strong' globalization narratives that social reform has been depoliticized and social politics rendered irrelevant, I have argued that political struggle has actually been extended to other levels and spheres. This emphasis on multiplicity rather than uniformity, on divergence rather than convergence, rescues globalization from the dangers of a crude economic determinism where all Chinese walls are destroyed by the untrammelled power of global capital. Rather we discover various stages at which a multiplicity of actors – economic agents such as TNCs, national states and various national and local interests – interact in various ways, at various levels, and with various outcomes, none of which are predetermined.

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RÉSUMÉ

La Mondialisation et la Politique Sociale: d'une Hégémonie Néo-libérale Globale vers un Pluralisme Politique Global

De nombreux travaux sur la mondialisation et la politique sociale adhèrent à la thèse d'une mondialisation dite forte en soulignant (i) le caractère naturaliste et inévitable de la mondialisation, (ii) les contraintes externes imposées aux gouvernements par les marchés internationaux et les organisations gouvernementales internationales ainsi que (iii) les limitations qui frappent les politiques nationales et internationales et notamment le domaine social. Cet article se veut partisan d'une approche moins 'défaitiste' et plus fructueuse qui consiste à examiner les liens entre mondialisation et politique sociale en considérant, premièrement, comment la mondialisation a contribué à l'émergence de structures de contestation, de résistance et d'opposition et, deuxièmement, comment les États et autres parties prenantes agissent au plan interne et externe à travers leurs propres stratégies 'multi-étages' et 'transversales' pour déterminer la cadence, la direction, l'échéancier et les effets de la mondialisation. Logiquement, l'article met en évidence toute la panoplie d'actions mises en oeuvre par les États tout comme par les populations à titre d'électeurs, de consommateurs et de producteurs, à plusieurs niveaux (local, national, régional, international) et dans plusieurs domaines (national/transnational, politique, économique), afin de réglementer, voire de rejeter les stratégies de mondialisation. Les résultats de ces luttes pour le bien-être économique et social ne sont jamais certains à l'avance, car ils dépendent avant tout du contexte dans lequel ils sont négociés.

RESUMEN

Globalización y Política Social: de la Hegemonía Global Neoliberal al Pluralismo Político Global

En muchos estudios sobre la globalización y las políticas sociales se acepta la tesis 'fuerte' de la globalización dadas (i) la naturaleza lógica e inevitable de la globalización, (ii) las limitaciones externas que imponen a los gobiernos los mercados internacionales y las organizaciones internacionales que los agrupan y (iii) las limitaciones que pesan sobre las medidas de política social y sobre la política internacional y doméstica. En este estudio se sostiene que una manera menos 'derrotista' y útil de analizar la relación entre la globalización y la política social consiste en considerar en primer lugar cómo la globalización ha creado la competencia, resistencia y oposición entre las estructuras y, en segundo lugar, de qué manera los estados y otros grupos de interés actúan tanto interiormente como hacia el exterior recurriendo a sus propias estrategias de capas y esferas múltiples para determinar el ritmo, curso, oportunidad y efectos de la globalización. En consecuencia, el documento destaca la gama de iniciativas gubernamentales, así como la composición de los grupos de votantes, consumidores y agentes productivos en varios niveles (local, nacional, regional e internacional) y esferas (nacional/transnacional, política y económica) en el marco de los esfuerzos por reglamentar u oponerse a las estrategias de globalización. No está asegurado que tales luchas por el bienestar social y económico tengan un resultado asegurado ya que éste dependerá en gran medida del contexto en que la confrontación se lleva a cabo.

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