



## PR like PProcess! Strategy from the Bottom-Up

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### abstract

In this piece I want to contribute to the broad debate on strategy for the overcoming of capitalism by drawing a connection between the struggles for democracy, inclusiveness and participation within the European Social Forum (ESF) process, and the struggles for overcoming capitalism as a mode of production, a mode of doing and consequent social relations. I first begin by describing and evaluate the controversies on process during the last ESF held in October 2004 in London. These broadly divided activists in two camps that came to be known as ‘horizontalists’ and ‘verticalists’. I will then move to a more general plane and problematise the meaning of ‘strategy’ and ‘victory’ – terms often used within the managerial and ‘vertical’ concept of politics to urge people to follow a particular line – from the perspective of political practices that aims at the overcoming of capitalist social relations.

### Evaluating the London ESF After the Horizontal Posse Came to Town

From the perspective of those who seek a politics of alternatives, one that is firmly rooted in a critique of the beast we are confronting, capitalism and war, the story of internal contrasts in the process that led to the recent ESF in London might seem a trivial story, away from the high theoretical plateau that characterize debates on strategy in our movements. However, often these plateaux turn into platitudes, banal assertions of the ‘right’ way forward that select out the motivations and aspirations emerging from the ground-up of real struggles and lived practices and instead follow templates rooted in timeless ideological models. In this piece I want to contribute to the broad debate on strategy for the overcoming of capitalism by drawing a connection between the struggles for democracy, inclusiveness and participation within the ESF process, and the struggles for overcoming capitalism as a mode of production, a mode of doing and consequent social relations.

The story of the battle inside the ESF process during last year is the story of the contrast between those coming from many networks and organizations to make the ESF a temporary space-time common that would prefigure alternative practices and multiple non-exploitative doings in a ‘global city’ like London with the efforts of those following the various shades of bureaucratic socialist lines to monopolize and centralize the

event.<sup>1</sup> This became to be known as the struggle between ‘horizontalists’ and ‘verticalists’.<sup>2</sup> I must make clear to the reader that I have actively participated in this struggle, and took side with the ‘horizontalists’.

Perhaps this distinction caused some confusion, since the definition of ‘horizontality’ or ‘verticality’ did not identify a specific group, organization or network, but a *mode of doing* predicated on opposite *organizing* principles, modes of doing and relating that was common to many belonging to a variety of networks and organizations. One, based on participatory, open and inclusive democracy, in which participants through their *iterative* relational practises seek to reach consensus on both means to be employed and ends to be achieved and were willing to engage in the *continuous* learning process necessary for these practices. The other in which democracy was identified with a rigid vertical structure within which ends are defined by the few, and the means are seen purely as *instrumental* to those ends. For ‘horizontalists’ the means embody values as much as the ends (whether we use free software or patented one, whether information is posted freely or under coordinating committee control, whether working group emerge from the ground up or ‘allowed’ by a coordinating committee), and indeed because of this, the shape of ends *emerge* from negotiations of means. For the ‘verticalists’ it was just about ‘getting the job done’, that is, their concept of ‘job’ and final outcome.<sup>3</sup>

A brief history here is perhaps useful. The first reference to the word ‘horizontalists’ in the context of the ESF process, was in an email that Stuart Hodgkinson sent to the ‘democratize\_the\_esf’ list on 30 January 2004.<sup>4</sup> This was already after few months in which activists from loose networks and movements were growing frustrated of what they saw to be traditional devious and manipulative tactics to monopolize and push through pre-established agendas by the usual suspects of UK left-wing politics. In this e-mail, Stuart tells of a little anecdote:

Last year, I went to the Argentina Puppetera show as toured around the UK. It was a beautiful event for many reasons, but I remember one thing more than any other. The piquetera sister from Argentina was explaining the political divisions within the piquetera movement (roadblockers movement). She was an autonomist and explained how in her part of the movement, they worked in a non-hierarchical way: with assemblies meeting, deciding by consensus and then selecting

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- 1 In this context these included the Social Worker Party and Socialist Action lines, union bureaucracies mentalities and the directives of Ken Livingston’s office.
  - 2 For a broad account of this story, see Levidow (2004).
  - 3 Horizontalists self-define themselves as those “who believe that the most important thing in the politics for a New World is how we relate to each other in making it happen” (Horizontalists, 2004d). This means to “recognise and respect our differences and always strive to find common ways to articulate them in order to meet the challenges of the day”. Furthermore, the horizontalists believe that “our organizing and getting things done must be founded on the non-hierarchical contribution of all, including decision making powers.”
  - 4 The Democratize\_the\_esf list was one of the two lists in Britain in which participants discussed, coordinated and, often, ranted on themes surrounding the ESF in London. The other list was the ESF\_UK list, which attracted a core of more conventional ‘vertical’ political activists plus. There was of course a lot of overlapping between the two, as debates occurring in one list spilled over to the other. There were two other lists that were European based. The ‘official’ FSE\_ESF list that pulled together activists of a broad range of social movements, trade unions and NGOs across Europe. There was also the esfdemocracy\_eurodebate list which was set up to inform and coordinate actions among European activists and social movements who were sympathetic to the ‘horizontal’ case.

delegates to go meet with delegates from other assemblies, relaying information and finding a common agreement. However, they were constantly undermined by Trotskyist parties who tried to hijack protests, reneged on agreements and would not work by consensus. She said they had all tried to work together, to find a common way of working, but in the end, she had found it impossible. Her explanation was simple but perfect: "Horizontal people cannot work with vertical people".

He continues with a comparison between the way this meeting and the ESF meetings were conducted.

That meeting was organized in a circle, there was a facilitator who simply facilitated the discussion, ensuring that everyone who wanted to speak could speak, was respectful of everyone's views and created an atmosphere of common humanity. Because we all agreed with the process of the discussion, what the discussion would be on, what time we would finish, who would provide translation etc. etc. and because we all wanted to work together to be able to hear about what was happening in Argentina, the meeting worked beautifully. The ESF process in the UK, from the moment it began in the minds of the SWP central committee last year, right through to now has never, ever been conducted in such a way, nor have those people pushing the process forward ever wanted us to work in such a way. They are not interested in the process of consensus-based decision-making. They do not respect it, do not agree with it, and will never, ever work in that way. Neither will trade union officials, nor most representatives from NGOs and mainstream campaign groups. They are vertical people.

In this original intervention, verticality and horizontality do not define states of being, but *modes of doing*, that is modes of *relating* within *processes* of social production. Also, as it will become clear in the months that followed, these modes of doing are not static set of procedural rules to be agreed upon once and for all and then to be applied in various contexts. Instead, they were modes that develop and emerge from the interacting agents themselves. The anecdote captured very well the feeling and experience of the people involved. Soon after this email was sent around, people whose attempts to democratize the ESF process in the previous months were frustrated immediately recognised themselves in the experience of the *piquetera sister* and started to refer to themselves as 'horizontals' and their opponents as 'verticals'. Few days later, beginning on 7 February, a 'log of evidence' was circulated through lists and posted on the ESF.net web site providing a case against the organizations which begun to monopolize the process of the ESF production. The concerns ranged from the opaque way to candidate London to the next ESF, to the abolition of the working groups that were spontaneously emerging to deal with a variety of organizational aspects, from the 'blackmails' of the type "either this way or without trade unions money", to what was seen as an opportunistic management of general assemblies, little respectful of democratic principles of inclusion and participation, principles that many sought to be at the very basis of World Social Forum.<sup>5</sup> On the basis of this document, a *Call for democracy* was then circulated (Horizontals, 2004b), signed by 128 people belonging to a wide range of groups, loose networks and organizations, from the European parliament, trade unions and NGOs, to a 'Northern anarchist network', Indymedia and local social forums (Horizontals, 2004c). The signature methodology was revealing: it lists all individuals and affiliations in two different places making clear that individuals were not representing organizations and, at the same time, that "horizontals are everywhere, even in the organizations of the verticals" (Horizontals, 2004e). Hence,

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5 See Horizontals (2004a).

from the beginning, the political identity and positionality of horizontality was not defined in terms of a label, or belonging to a particular group, but a mode of doing that was *transversal* to a variety of groups and networks, to a variety of identities and positionalities.<sup>6</sup>

The conflict among what clearly appear as two divergent political cultures (Ruggiero 2004), will then explode publicly and openly during the European assembly for the preparation of the ESF, held in London on 6 and 7 March 2004. The European delegates could bear witness of the accusations made by ‘horizontals’ in the way the meeting was chaired, in blatant tactics to force through a pre-established controversial agenda.

The ‘verticals’ were forced to the negotiating table in the midst of the assembly in order to renegotiate the terms within which the ESF process would proceed. The outcome of what several horizontals saw as a major victory, will however in the following months be frustrated by the continuation of the same practices, in an endless war of attrition between the two political cultures. By June, only few months away from the event, most of the people involved in horizontal networks opted to put their organizational energies and skills in the organization of seminars, workshops, accommodations, and logistics of autonomous spaces ([www.altspaces.net](http://www.altspaces.net)), which, as we will briefly discuss below, become the most diverse, vibrant and most attended of the brief history of the ESF.

Indeed, the latter spaces showed that the two camps held quite different meanings of democracy; they *valued* different aspects of it. On one hand, a hierarchal concept of democracy, rooted in apparatus, in which the powers of the social body (in this case the people involved in the production of the Forum) are articulated through a vertical scale of representations and mediations that constructs and rigidify roles, bureaucratically define the boundaries of the subjects’ inputs, of *what* they can or cannot contribute to, of *how* they can and cannot contribute, and confine the free expression of their *powers* within a wall well guarded by bureaucratic socialist principles. In this country, this vertical line is the *mainstream* of politics. On the other hand, a horizontal plateau of encounters, relations, and doing through which the exercise of the subjects’ powers, and their reciprocal feedbacks, construct norm, rules, spaces and temporarily defined roles.

Keeping in mind this contrast, what can we say ex-post about the ‘event’ ESF held in London in October 2004? Ambiguous result. On the one hand, it has represented a clear step forward for our movement. This, not only because 25,000 people have attended, and all large events like these encourage people encounters across networks. Also and especially because a section of the movement has overcome its insularity at events like these and, working with organizing principles based on horizontality, inclusiveness and participation, has *broadened* substantially the program of and participation in self-managed and autonomous zones. About 5000 people, many of whom were wearing the bracelet of the ‘official’ event, have been estimated to have participated in the broad range of activities of the autonomous zones, and defined future action programs on crucial themes such as precarity, refugees and communication rights.

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6 Indeed, this is also demonstrated by the resistance I have witnessed by several *practicing* ‘horizontals’ against defining themselves as such, perhaps fearing that labels could rigidify identities in such a way as to contradict the necessary fluidity of ‘horizontal’ practices.

On the other hand, there is also a sense in which the process of the ‘official’ ESF in London has not been a way forward for our movement, but a serious step back: The degree of subcontracting of the various processes of the ‘official’ events, culminating with the hiring of an ‘event management’ company; the environmental unawareness of its practices; the vertical control freakery that has dominated all moments of its production, suspicious of all productive networks from the movement that did not match the habitual practices of union bureaucracies and socialist parties; the contractual ‘terms and conditions’ email sent to anyone purchasing tickets; the petty self-promotional splashing of UK union names on the walls of meeting rooms, instead of reaching out to symbols that belong to all movements across the globe; not to mention the bullying, the trade unions’ and Greater London Authority’s financial blackmails and the monopolization of platforms such as the final rally are just an indication that in terms of these practices, another world is still far away. In the effort to ‘build’ the movement, to ‘outreach’ to people who have not yet heard about the horrors of the world, the organizers have forgotten that a process of radical social transformation takes much more than an increasing number of people laid down as ‘building bricks’. This relational incompetence is a heavy political liability in our movement, and cannot be justified by the ends of ‘educating’ more people or outreaching into the mainstream union organizations as Callinicos (2004) has recently argued.

## From the London ESF to the World

We need to ‘zoom out’, because the ‘verticals’ strategy of excluding subjectivities, themes and organizational processes that are not compatible with its ideological templates is not a prerogative of the production of one specific ESF event. The struggle that has emerged in the case of London, also happened in Mumbai (Sen, 2004) and, more generally, is reproduced within the movement in many occasions: inside the anti-war movement in London, in the street and assembly in Argentina, and so on. There are always ‘template strategists’ ready to fly in circles over concrete problems encountered by the movement and processes such as the Social Forum, who read the problems in their own terms and offer solutions that go in the direction of the goals hidden and predefined in their particular political cook-book. ‘Verticality’ in this sense is not simply the ‘management’ of an event such as the ESF, but *a culture of politics that is managerial* with respects to movements and struggles. Let us zoom out once again and reach those plateaux of generalizations that characterize debates on strategy in our movements, without however loosing our sanity.

A recent contribution by Susan George (2004) offers a good and intelligent entry point to tackle this managerial conception of politics, a culture that by and large informs many of the ‘reformists’ and ‘revolutionary’ tendencies in our movement, to use an old classification not much meaningful today.<sup>7</sup> In *Taking the Movement Forward*, she raises

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7 I want to make clear that in what follows I will only engage with one of George’s many short contributions to the debate in our movement because it is a straightforward piece that poses some very relevant questions and that enabled me to clarify my own thinking while critically confronting them. My engagement does not pretend to pass judgment on her overall valuable work as intellectual and activist, which extends far beyond the short contribution cited.

some serious strategic reflections and confronts us with the problem of how can our movement win its battles, and push “‘our adversaries backward’ until they fall over the edge of the cliff.” She raises four main points that in her view are “vital for the continuing success of the movement.” For mnemonic reasons, they all begin with PR and are “PRogrammes, PRiorities and PRagmatism, ending with a warning about Precautions”. PRogramme has to do with the activities at our social forum, which she sees quite correctly as dispersive and repetitive, lacking of focus on strategic reflections, of understanding of powers of our enemy, etc. ‘Priorities’ is where the problems start. They indicate the needs of “defining a minimum, common programme every activist in the world (or, when relevant, in Europe or another region) can agree on and in whose service political campaigning can be undertaken and pressure applied, right now”. This is a common programme that not only identifies the most urgent and strategically important battles, but that also state the kind of globalization we want, “otherwise, why should anyone bother listening to us, much less joining us?” Pragmatism is a sober reminder that our priorities cannot be a laundry list, that they have to be selected with intelligence, and that intelligence is to step out of one’s partial world view and preferred ‘pet issues’ and embrace the perspective of the whole, if what is do-able here and now, what issue would bring us more allies, what type of victory will weaken our opponents most, etc. Finally, PRecaution is a reminder that “in order to take the movement forward, let’s not get side-tracked or bogged down with huge, unwieldy abstractions like ‘defeating the market’ or ‘overthrowing capitalism’”. Since there is no winter palace to seize, any victory we achieve will always be a partial victory.

## What Kinds of Victory Do We Need?

Let me engage with the type of argument that Susan George puts forward starting however from a different concept of precaution, one that recognizes the fact that there is no centre of power, no Winter Palace to storm and hence that ‘any victory’ is a ‘partial victory’, but that at the same time, does not want to root its strategic horizon and thinking in *anything else* but the *overcoming* of capitalism, that is the ‘overthrowing of capitalism’ through a process of social radical transformation and constitution.

Now the recognition that any victory is a partial victory implies that we need to be able to judge the value of such a victory. In the traditional socialist mythology, there are two ways to judge a victory. One is to consider a victory as something that goes in the direction of a new social deal with capital (‘reformism’). The other considers a victory as something that goes in the direction of the seizure of state power (‘revolution’). A third option is that a victory is something that goes in the direction of the abolition of exploitation and oppressions, as well as promoting our own empowerment, self-determination and autonomy over our lives and contexts of interaction. Some may say that these three are complementary, and others would disagree. I say, maybe so, but it depends on contexts – but I am not interested to debate this issue here. What interests me here is to reclaim a unit of measurement, a yardstick within which we can formulate and frame our broad strategic judgments. To do this, we must ask: which of these three is our ultimate end, our *goal*? What are we really fighting for? My stand is that if any generalization is possible regarding the goals of the people engaged in struggles, is

closer to the last of these three options, which, given the multiplicity of positionalities, desires and needs, it means a multiplicity of goals and new relational fields to articulate them.

Obviously, one can make the argument that institutional ‘victories’, whether through ‘reforms’ or ‘revolutions’, are means to empowerment, autonomy and end of exploitation. Fine, make this argument. In any case, they are means, not goals. The question then becomes whether these ‘victories’ also become means for our opponents; that is, if they are also means to goals that go against our own goals, then it is strategically shortsighted to embrace them as our means. For example, the goal of the ESF event through the means of its verticalization defines it uniquely as an event to be ‘consumed’. The goal of environmental sustainability through the means of the sustainability of business and capitalism metabolizes the original meaning of sustainability and turns it into a means of ‘competitive advantage’. The goal of ‘poverty reduction’ through extending the realm of markets and competition, turns discourse on poverty into an instrument to promote a social mechanism through which somebody’s else livelihood is threatened (this is what market competition is all about).

It is very dangerous these days to make people think that we are going to have ‘victories’, or that we even should hope to get them. I mean those types of victories that imply or even hint to a ‘progressive’ *institutional* shift of paradigm: something like the Tobin tax (Attac), a world parliament (Monbiot), a Keynesian inspired International Trade Organization (George), or broadly a system of governance of global markets predicated on a deal between capital and selected organizations of civil society. This is not a judgment on the merits of such regulatory reforms *in abstract*. It is a judgment on the processes that such victories would imply and a rejection of an approach that *aspires* to the institutionalization of social movements. *Within* the boundaries of capitalist systems, institutional shifts in paradigms never come without some forms of exclusion *and* militarization of our lives because they have to be contained *within the limits* which are acceptable to start a new round of accumulation.

The last big ‘progressive’ shift of paradigm was the welfare state and Keynesianism, and this would have not been acceptable by capital without the Second World War that turned trade unions into bureaucracies (Glaberman, 1980) coupled to the priorities of growth and global (under)development, that is capital accumulation (De Angelis, 2000). No welfare state would have been possible without the cold war, the constant fear of nuclear obliteration and networks of spies infiltrated in our movements that attempted to confine struggles within geo-politically compatible limits.<sup>8</sup>

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8 Indeed, the reading of the end of this era would involve a more grounded analysis of struggles and capital reactions than those provided by George (2004). She blames it to “self-gratifying hippies” who have abandoned the movement to get jobs in advertising thus opening a space for Maggie and Ronnie!

## Linear Thinking and The Marginalization of Struggles

The emphasis on empowerment and autonomy is not simply an 'ideological preference'. It is also a question of the constituent social powers we are capable to mobilize when we ground our politics on this. Thus, for example, we have to realize that none of us, including the most trained and up-to-date political campaigner on any particular issue has sufficient knowledge of what is at stake for any particular community in struggle, let alone the innumerable ones of our global movement. Nobody knows what priorities might emerge from the ground up on the day after some steering committee has decided the list of priorities as they see fit. Nobody has full knowledge of context, desires, needs, aspirations but the subjects themselves.

The swarm nature of our movements allows the best use of knowledge of priorities that is available because it relies on peoples and communities to ground them in their own contexts, to share that knowledge and articulate their priorities with those of others as they see fit to their own processes of empowerment, struggle and production of relational fabric. Knowledge, including the knowledge of priorities, can only be conceived in a networked form, as an ongoing relational field among the many worlds and aspirations we comprise. Hence, while it is tactically important, sensible and conceivable that in given times and circumstances and for short periods of time we reach consensus to focus our efforts on specific objectives, it would be a disaster for our broad movement to strategically prioritize campaigns and define a common programme for which in the article quoted Susan George hopes "every activist in the world (or, when relevant, in Europe or another region) can agree on and in whose service political campaigning can be undertaken and pressure applied". This way of putting it risks to reproduce the worst of the political parties, the hierarchy between a central committee (read 'secretariat') entitled to shape broad political ends and all the rest who 'service political campaigning' and serve as means to externally defined ends. We would lose the flexibility and replace the dynamic swarm nature of our movement with a new bureaucracy.

These types of arguments are predicated on a linear, cumulative understanding of social transformation, with no connection to the dynamics of the existing social struggles. In this George is not alone and she shares much with many classical 'revolutionary socialists' tendencies she seems to oppose. The metaphor she uses, for example the idea that by pushing and pushing we can send our opponents off a cliff, and the representation of this pushing in term of a series of 'victories', reminds us more of a football competition than the 'game' of social transformation. In the latter, there is no independent recording of the score, the rules of the game are *not* accepted by all, and, most importantly, our 'scoring' a victory today may well result (as it has resulted) in changing some aspects of the 'game' in such a way that the fundamental aspects we are opposed to remain unchanged! The victory of the Winter Palace, for example, implied some real material gains for the Russian people, but its institutionalization deep-froze hierarchical social relations (and consequent gulags) for seventy years into the process of 'socialist accumulation'. The working of the Keynesian state implied the institutionalization of wage rounds and the entrance of trade unions into the 'deal' room with government and bosses. Yet, women remained confined as unwaged workers in patriarchal homes, US black communities were confined in their poverty stricken

ghettoes, South East Asian peasants were bombed and napalmed in their villages and rice paddies, while the effects of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the 'golden age of capitalism' are chocking us all and are the basis of today's change in weather patterns.

There is a long and variegated tradition of autonomist thinking, rooted in the 1960s and 1970s Italian movements and *operaismo*, but then branching out into a broad range of contributions worldwide, for which one does not just come up with strategies. Instead, strategies must be 'read from the struggles' and their evaluation should begin with the present's complexity and urgency. Thus, for example, what is the status of the cancellation of the debt versus the Tobin Tax strategies now? Which of the two have been more effective in recomposing the movements in Africa, South America and Asia? How would popular movements be (dis)empowered by a Tax negotiated and administered from above? By a generalised refusal to pay the Debt imposed on States by the movements themselves? Which would cause capitalist institutions like the World Bank and IMF to retreat? How does the debate around the Iraqi debt cancellation open a contradiction in the capitalist structural adjustment strategy? It is only with a discussion of questions of such detail that the debate between the different strategies can be evaluated.

It is obvious that from the perspective of a concept of social transformation that wants to promote empowerment, we must abandon linear thinking, since social transformation emerges out of our actions, subjectivities, desires, organizational capability, ingenuity and struggles in unpredictable ways. Indeed, we must be very wary of thinking that the achievement of a victory, of *any* victory, is a move towards the promised land. And this is because what we call victories (or defeats for that matter) represent turning point for *both* us and our opponents. And by our opponents I do not mean a particular set of elites, specifically and contingently defined. From a broad *strategic* perspective of social transformation, our enemies are not Bush and Blair, not this or that corporate shark, this or that politician. These only serve the machine in particular contexts, and they are our enemies *within* those contexts. Strategically speaking, what we are confronting as enemy are not personalities, but social roles, and roles emerge out of social relations and processes of particular forms. When a pope dies, goes an Italian saying, another takes its place, and the death of a pope does not question the role of the pope, its position within a hierarchical scale, or the ongoing processes that reproduce that hierarchy. Our movement, like each and one of us, has a potential to transform those roles or to fall back onto the old ones.

Tactically speaking, we simply do not know who will take the place of our particular adversaries in the here and now after the 'victory' on this and that issue has been achieved; we do not know what strategic direction capital will take to perpetrate the social system most congenial to it. We can identify some general lines on current debates within the elite, we can learn from history. However, we do not know how, whether and to what extent our victory will bring about a re-alignment of social forces that helps to redefine a new era of capital accumulation, with its inevitable injustices, exclusions, stupidity, and madness.

Just to make a simple example: the Bolkestein Directive, upon which Susan George draws our attention, which "would introduce a new legal principle and allow firms to

apply the social and labour laws of the ‘country of origin’ to workers in all the European countries where the firms might happen to do business”, is not very much incompatible with the strategic aspirations of *some* tendencies in international trade unions. I am thinking, for example, about global business unionism, for which international unions should engage in alliances with global capital to compete against other global capitalist alliances (Hodkinson, 2004). Now, who is our adversary here, the proponents of the EU directive which set the legal framework within which corporate-union alliances on a global scale would also become possible, or those trade unionists who work for making such an alliance the policy of trade unions? They sound complementary to me, in that they are both ways to understand human social production as competitive and profit oriented, that is envisage a *process* of doing that is incompatible with our transformative goals. Such complementarities are discernable only if we measure the proposal strategically in the sense discussed before, whether it would help further capitalist disciplinary markets or set a *limit* to them and open spaces for empowerment and new modes of doing and social relations.

From the perspective of radical transformation and moving beyond capitalism, our true enemy, the beast we are confronting, is the way through which we articulate our social doing and (re)produce our livelihoods, our needs and desires, a way that is a social *process*, which is predicated on a certain distribution of property rights and access to resources. This is what we call capitalism. This is what our historical memory and diverse body of knowledge in the form of theoretical and empirical work as well as lived experience and biographical narratives tell us: however regulated and however fine tuned, capitalism reproduces the same patterns of injustices and delirium.

This form of human doing and mode of articulation of difference through disciplinary markets has always proved dynamic and flexible enough to absorb, contrast and co-opt any fixed ‘institutional progressive’ programme that we come up with. Instead, we need to beat it with the spread of alternative modes of doing, alternative *processes* of social cooperation and articulation of diversity, one that is a billion times more creative, flexible, diverse, innovative and at the same time communal and cohesive than capitalist disciplinary markets. But in order to be emancipatory and empowering, these processes can only be defined by the interacting agents themselves, not by a grand design or by a ‘general programme’.

A programme and the prioritization of action can only be helpful to concentrate our forces in specific contexts and situations, in order to build a critical mass *to set a limit* to capital. But even this limited understanding of programme must *emerge* from a process that is alternative to the mode of doing of capital. Even this programme must be *produced* by an alternative mode of production and social relations. It is for this reason that the struggles for the problematization of *process* within our movement, like the one that have emerged in the context of the London European Social Forum are so *strategically* important.

## Process!

How can we reconcile our broad strategic goal of radical transformation of global society beyond capitalism with the tasks of activism, the nitty-gritty of political campaigning, of defining priorities, mobilizing, agitate, educate, set contexts and goals which are workable? To me, the answer is centred around the 'PR' left out from the list provided by Susan George: PRocess. This in a twofold sense.

First, we have to see the whole of our diverse movements as setting up a limit, an insurmountable barrier to the *process* of social doing of capital. This is a process of social reproduction that is based on pitting one against the other, one's livelihoods against those of others. The barrier is a multitude of 'no!' to this type of process. We do this in the diverse struggles that emerge: against debt, against further trade liberalizations, against privatizations, for land, food sovereignty and different relations to nature. And we do this by pushing back the market agenda to pervade all dimensions of our lives.

Second, from the perspective of a radical transformation of society, these capital-limiting struggles *also* enable us to do two other things. They enable not only to quantitatively 'build' the movement, but more important, to thicken the networks and extend the relational fields of action of social cooperation *predicated on other values* than market values. Also, and consequently since thickening of the web implies the extension of relational fields of action, of social cooperation, we have opened new spaces within which we consolidate our relational practices. Our many powers have grown, and they have grown not arithmetically, but exponentially.

We can understand these two dimensions of our struggles in terms of 'one no, many yeses' vis-à-vis capital, a slogan emerged from the second Encuentro promoted in 1997 by the Zapatistas. One that keep in throwing a spanner in its wheel and seek to push it back and keep it at bay, the other that thickens the web of social cooperation grounded on different values; one that dents, challenges and destroy its drives to colonize life with monetary values, the other that push desires and aspirations away from being coupled to disciplinary market loops. One that cuts back enclosures and the other that creates new commons predicated on new communities and relational practices. In this framework, we can call victories all the moments, opportunities, events and spaces of empowerment, whether these are the establishment of a new connection among communities in struggle, or the winning of a major concessions from the state that effectively reduces the dependency of people from markets.

The dictatorship of capitalist markets is predicated on a social consensus that make us act upon reality in ways compatible with them, to follow our desires and meet needs within social forms that pit our livelihoods against each other. To the extent that consensus is manufactured, we have then to challenge *how* that manufacturing takes place and practices a different type of production *process* through which new consensus emerges. Again, it is a question of process, as for example our independent media people teach us again and again. To the extent the manufacturing is the result of our daily engagements within markets, an iteration that creates and normalizes norms of engagement with the other, we must find ways to disengage, construct a politics of

alternatives that focus on the reduction of degree of dependence from markets, and therefore struggles for different types of commons. In other words, to the extent we do not consent, but we must interact in these ways because this is what our livelihoods depends on, then our struggle must seek to push back our degree of dependence on capitalist markets, reclaim resources at whatever scale of social action, and on the basis of these invent and practice new forms of exchanges across the social body, new types of local and translocal communities. In all these cases, what is required is an emphasis on *relational and communicational processes*, as well as on the conditions within which we access resources. Competition is replaced by communication and enclosures by commons.

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