

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT?¹

Introduction.

The 2008 edition of the European Social Forum (ESF) closed in Malmo, Sweden on Sunday with diverse and insightful presentations at the Social Movements Assembly. Whereas many viewpoints, coordinated campaigns, new networks and action plans were formulated, reformulated, concretized and new ones born, the Malmo ESF in my opinion offered a critical juncture in analyzing the World Social Forum process and the attendant varied perspectives of the Global Justice Movements. I will seek to draw on conversations with actors within the global justice movements present and the WSF process, my discussions and participation in Malmo, insights from informal conversations and a broad overview of the prevailing thoughts at this moment. This does not in any way presuppose to be a critical analysis of the global justice movement but a self reflection of my participation and a pan across the scope of the emerging issues. Other than informing, it is expected to generate further debate and discussions especially for many of us who are in the heart of this process.

Multiple Identities, Collage of Struggles.

I start off with reflections from a seminar panel I was on; "The Global Justice Movement. Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow." This seminar attracted a sizeable attendance of around 350 people. By any means not a mean feat considering that 6-9pm, the seminar time as WSFers will attest is burn out moment.

A panel from Eastern and Western Europe, Africa, Asia and Americas and the floor sought to address what are the experiences, the present situation and the future for the global justice/alter globalization movement? The need to look at the lessons learned, how to win the most important struggle today, the relationship between the global justice movement, social forums and what we do to win the long term struggle

Deciphering the global justice movement is no easy task. But in the general this can be described as the movements, organizations, institutions and groups that are mounting a struggle and challenge to the dominant enclosures of capital infused and driven neo-liberal policies. Thus a critic of the neo-liberal model is a

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unifying theme. Notions of sustainability, alternatives and new life worlds are recurrent corner stones. In essence the global justice movement is driven and energized by all those in their own formations; big or small who work to change the current way of global political, economic, cultural, social, environmental architecture. Those who interrogate the mainstream social construct and the relations thereof.

As such, the Global Justice Movement is diverse and it's this diversity that to most actors makes it a unique melting point of alternate world views that rallies under the banner of "Another World Is Possible!" the fitting brand name of the World Social Forum process. While it's difficult to measure or agree on a barometer of successes on how to construct this alternative world, it must be appreciated that the process of asserting the changes cannot be divorced from the realities of the dynamics of ongoing life processes. Veteran WSF actor, Kenyan Activist and Debt Campaigner, Wahu Kaara reckons;

"The Global Justice Movement is not an event. It's a process that is founded on the strength and energy of those who seek a better world. It's the fusion and linkages of these diverse groups and actors that rally under the banner of the WSF 'Another World is Possible.' This world is not only possible, but it's already in the making. The process of social change, transformation and action is protracted, but it's all underway as manifested across the world."

The jury is still out on how to construct and make this other world, but from the tapestry of the global justice movements, alter - globalization and anti-globalization facets the thread weaves on linking, delinking and seeking new alliances, networks and common planning.

Pushed further, Wahu points out to, "events in Latin America, Africa and Asia point out to this. As well as the ongoing global financial crises and the responses to this. The linkages are getting stronger and we are seeing a lot more of joint programmes of action across the board."

Whereas Wahu paints an optimistic picture of both the present and the future for the Global Justice Movement and the WSF shared by many, others are not so optimistic.

Is the Global Justice Movement in Retreat and is Neo-Liberalism Dead? Divergent views from Malmo.

Tadzio Muller from Germany opines that the Global Justice Movement is in retreat because "Neo-liberalism is dead and thus the Global Justice Movement no

longer has an enemy to focus on. As such it has become demobilized, fragmented and with a no clear sense of focus.”

Arguing that we need to look at the history and learn more, he continues, “in the past the mobilizations were massive. In Genoa, in Gothenburg, and in 2007 we mobilized over 10,000 against the G8 in Heildingham. Can this be said to be the case today?” he poses.

For Muller, the allure of engaging against the dominant edifice of capitalism is waning. A sense of hopelessness, defeat and despair is setting in. In other words, “there is no longer fire in the belly to engage.”

Of importance to his assessment is that the Global Justice Movement must have an enemy to confront. There must be an agenda that is vivid and tangible that is targeted to continue having the basis of an engagement process.

As such, it is critical that the Global Justice Movement re evaluates itself and comprehensively constructs the next target of joint targeted campaign and action. Failure to which, this “movement of movements” will decapitate to fragmented, disjointed, sectoral approaches that will reverse all the gains that have been made.

This position can be looked at from various angles. Coming from Africa, I am persuaded to take this to be a Euro centric perspective of the global justice movement. I don't agree with the assertion that neo-liberalism is dead. The system is still intact and dangerous than ever before. It will continue to reinforce the competition and its reach. As its tentacles reach deeper and further, the movements of essence must be more vigilant.

The crisis of the system does not necessary mean that its dead and this is a mistake that all in the global justice movement must focus on, interrogate, elaborate and counter plan a new for a solid engagement process. The ‘Boom-Bust’ cycles of the capitalist formation as shown through economic history have provided opportunities for the purveyors of the market paradigm to reconfigure their approaches and make adjustments to the capital sequencing. For me the enemy is there and still relevant. But of caution is that the enemy is “hydra headed” and entrenching its tentacles of exploitation, dispossession and disruption of life sequences.

Going back to the notion that neo-liberalism is dead and why this comes out a tad much as a crisis for the movement in Europe, I fast forward to the Saturday march through Malmo. Whereas this was generally a peaceful march of about 15,000 people, albeit with heavy police patrols and strategic positioning along the

route, an almost 24/7 police helicopter vigil, keeping close to the Black Bloc, Anti-capitalist segment, one could clearly see why such a feeling pervades especially among the European youth.

In my assessment, there is a heavy urgency for direct action as was in Genoa, Seattle, Gothenburg, Kananiskis and elsewhere. Actually those in this segment tried really hard to provoke the police and assumedly in lessons garnered from past overreactions and the resultant heat generated, the police did not fall for the bait. This in a sense got a large number of the youth vividly agitated and they kept throwing provocative slogans and the middle finger every time the cops were seen and wished for a reaction. At one moment some actually threw empty beer cans but the desired reaction was not elicited. And the march moved forward with the blaring energy from under underground hip hop rap and hard core rock blazing from the mega speakers mounted on the truck activating the energy that the police so far had managed to bottle up. Strong slogans like, "Keep the Police out of this Demonstration! We don't need the Police. We have our own security!" were echoed. And the more prevailing, "F#@k the Police! Anthem"

I argue that a perceived militant resistance to the exigencies of capital, codified as anti-capitalist, alter-globalization or plain anarchist seems to be a rite of passage in Europe, especially for the youth. The youth must go through it. Running battles, torching symbols of the capital edifice, MacDonald's, etc. are the true heroic baptism by fire. By singling out the police and been hell bent to engage, this for me is the closest it gets to leaving a mark on the symbols of capital and state repressive tools. You surely could see the nostalgia of Genoa, Seattle and all the other sites of action in the previous years. And for many here, they would get to hell and back for a single minute of a violent explosion and engagement. The basis of histories of organizing, mobilization and targeted action notwithstanding. Even a spontaneous reaction from an overzealous police or youth, if only it triggered the clash would be a welcome spark. The rest, we can get academic about later seems the foregoing argument. But the rite of passage we must have. The most dramatic, the best. So that long after all have moved on with their lives and others are the new actors, it's etched as a historical moment, anecdote; "I was in Genoa", "I was in Gothenburg", "Were you in Seattle?" and this would have been another opportunity to imprint "I was in Malmo!!!"

But in Africa, Asia and Americas this is not the case which offers the difference in approaches. In the Global South, the adverse effects of neo-liberalism are a daily encounter. Cuts in social services, privatization, a shrinking and repressive state, extra judicial killings, detention without trial, death from preventable diseases, attack on social workers rights, etc. As such, our engagement process looking at the success of the Global Justice Movement in the past say ten years is different.

We are alive to the fact that most of our states are hostage to the neo-liberal agenda. And as the political elite continue to entrench neo-liberal policies under the tutelage of the international financial institutions and other agencies of the global governance agenda, the people of the South are resisting and the state gets more repressive. As such, violent "IMF riots", "Food Riots", "Democracy and Governance Riots" are not mere "badges of honour or rites of passages", for us, but necessary engagement processes to assert peoples sovereignty and democratic capacity to exercise their will. In most instances, this stands at a critical juncture between of Life or Death.

Be it the struggles against commodification and privatization of basic services; water, electricity, etc, from Cocachamba to Soweto, or demonstrations against patents on drugs to free access for HIV/AIDS, from TAC Activists in Johannesburg to Bangkok, or the Food riots in Nairobi, Dakar or Haiti, or protests on stolen elections in Nairobi or Harare; before this explodes to what mainstream media beams to the North as violent conflagrations is a structural and systemic organizing.

In the South, it's clear that global systems are dangerous since they are based on the logic of power, domination, control and violence. An acute awareness that the local political elite is not only subservient but complicit in the continued oppression and repression of the popular masses sets the stage with the clarity that, each and every call to the streets, to a protest, will be violently repulsed and in its wake, there are dead bodies to be counted, bodies maimed, scores arrested and injuries to nurse. As such movement discipline of essence demands that you cannot just hit the streets on a perceived weak issue or divisive position. There is no space to make sacrifices out of the unnecessary, since it will be too late to make apologies and as the old adage goes, 'dead people don't talk!'

For me in a solidarity expression, Europe will of essence need to learn from Africa, Asia and the Americas in terms of their struggles. This will definitely not be a "cut and paste" adaptation, but as living realities and alternatives, this might just inform the capacity for future coordinated engagement.

New Energy, New Fusions. The Global Justice Movement Marches On.

The Malmo ESF, as is the continuing strength of the WSF process offered a site and space to continue with strengthening the linkages. There was a specific focus on the issue of Climate Change and Climate Justice, Transnational Corporations (TNCs), the European Union trade regime especially on the EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), on issues of Food Sovereignty, Corporate Europe, Debt Domination and Ecological Debt. Whereas these are just a

microcosm of the diverse activities going on at the ESF, other central issues revolved on Racism, Immigration, Fortress Europe, Labour, Trade Unionism, the Welfare State (especially this been in Malmo, Sweden), Language, Culture, Indigenous People, War, Terror and critical debates on Socialism, Marxism and Latin America's political resurgence especially towards a Socialism of the 21st Century.

Of keen note were the outcomes of several strategy sessions. One of these was on Global Europe and the Transnational Corporations and another on Global Europe and Free Trade Agreements.

There was a resolute and forceful reiteration that these campaigns need not only to be continued but broadened and deepened for maximum impact.

In terms of systemic paradigmatic alternatives it was noted that African governments are committed to regional alternatives and south-south alliances as a way of cutting dependency to the former colonial powers especially in the EU and this needs to be supported.

Cape Town based analyst and activist, Dot Keet, in reference to the EU push for EPAs with the ACP countries succinctly captured it, "the world is in a state of fluidity, paradigmatic and conjectural crisis. This is not the time to engage in neo-liberal agendas." For Keet, at this moment of strategic offensive, "China and Africa can found a strategic engagement that serves to heighten the contradictions in the neo-liberal system."

The need to use the Permanent Peoples Tribunal on Transnational Corporations as has happened in Latina America was recognized and capacities to move this to other regions so that people don't feel abandoned and disconnected from it were explored.

A focus on the legal framework of EU support for Global Europe was found to be an important angle for analysis as was the issue of the influence of corporate lobbying on the EU.

Campaigning on TNCs was found an important avenue since this makes the necessary convergence around sectoral networks and specifically to point out TNCs as a factor contributing to the impoverishment of millions across the world. By infusing and using the concept of external debt it's imperative to incorporate TNCs as a cause of the Debt crisis. This certainly will reinforce ongoing processes and campaigns like the ongoing South African Khulumani Group work on Reparations from corporations that abetted apartheid.

The need to make serious studies on the privatization process and the capacity of TNCs to terrorize sovereign states was underscored. Essentially a fusion of Social Science, Political Economy and Law needs to be expedited so as to found factual, well researched and relevant counter planning models.

Essentially on the issue of Debt, the main planks are management, illegitimate and odious debts and the role of International Financial Institutions. This connects to the issue of Climate Change with the need to link it Debt as a Climate Justice issue. On TNCs, more research, lobbying, documentation and networking is necessary as an economic governance issue.

There emerged a consensus on the need to found a radical Climate Justice movement with the necessary linkages to ongoing struggles. Herbert Docena, from the Manila-Bangkok based Focus on the Global South, opined that "Climate justice is a critical and strategic moment and space for movements. Solving the climate crisis is in itself a process of weakening of capitalism." Am in agreement that since it touches on the heart of capitalist survival and reproduction, natural resources, nature, extractive industries and the thermodynamics of production, this is an angle that must be strengthened. Docena continues that, "a key site for movement mobilization should be Copenhagen in 2009 at the Climate Change conference. The movement must make the paradigmatic shift from global annihilation to global resurgence." (The Danish Government heavy investment on this is echoed in "America unready for COP. The Copenhagen Post, 26/09/08, www.cphpost.dk, pg.7)

A caution for me on this is that capital ids also going green. The rise of Green capital needs to be countered and well argued and represented. Be it the new schemes on carbon trading, carbon footprints, credits, etc. These must be exposed for what they are. Capital sequencing for more money and profits from a disaster of its own creation. And as the next front for accumulation, actors in the movements'; researchers, analysts, scholars and activists' must move with speed.

More fundamental ecological-economic linkages must be made. And bigger, broader and deeper alliances' of red/green/feminist must be founded and strengthened as a way of visualizing alternative sustainable futures.

Whereas modest on successes, notable energy was drawn from past ground breaking outcomes like February 2003 mobilization against war, Our World Is Not For Sale (OWINFS), Seattle- Brussels Network, International Strategy Conference on Debt Repudiation organized in Nairobi by Kenya Debt Relief Network (KENDREN) in May 2006 and such other initiatives, meetings, conferences and actions that have served to not only unify the movement but offer space for strategizing and action planning.

Enroute to Belem.

The flyer circulated by the Belem organizers of the upcoming WSF in Belem, 27th January to 1st February, articulates that several activities self managed of the WSF must be carried around one of the ten following goals aptly named goals of action with the rider that they have been defined after ample public consultation to the several organization and participant entities of the WSF process.

- For the construction of world peace, justice, ethics and respect for different spiritualities, free of weapons especially nuclear ones;
- For the release of the world from domination by capital, transnational corporations, imperialist, patriarchal, colonial and neo-colonial domination and unequal systems of commerce, by cancelling the impoverished countries debt;
- For universal and sustainable access to the common property of mankind and nature, for the preservation of our planet and its resources, particularly water, forests and renewable energy sources;
- For the democratization and independence of knowledge, culture and communication for the creation of a system of shared knowledge and acquirement with the dismantling of Intellectual Property Rights;
- For the dignity, diversity, ensuring the equality of gender, race, ethnicity, generation, sexual orientation and elimination of all forms of discrimination and caste (discrimination based on descent);
- For ensurance (during the lifetime use of all people) of the economic, social, human, cultural and environmental rights, particularly the rights to food, health, education, housing, employment and decent work, communication and food security and sovereignty;
- For the construction of a world order based on sovereignty, self-determination and on peoples rights, including minorities and migrants;
- For the construction of a democratic, emancipatory, sustainable and solidarity economy, focused on every people and based on ethical and fair trade;
- For the construction and expansion of truly local, national and global democratic political and economic structures and institutions, with the participation of people in decisions and control of public affairs and resources;
- For the defense of the environment (amazonic and others ecosystems') as source of life for the planet earth and for the originary peoples of the world (indigenous, afro-descendant, tribal and riverine), that demand their territories', languages, cultures, identities, environmental justice and the right to live.

Thus the WSF in Belem is expected to have a central theme of indigenous peoples and showcase the struggles against corporate rape and plunder of their vital homelands.

A lingering question within the WSF process has been what to do or what is the place of political leaders especially those inspiring monumental alternatives especially in Latin America. The Chavez's, Morales, Correa and the resurgent Latin America left leadership. Whereas all these are in different shades of articulation, ideological subscription and transformative action, the rally under the banner of 21st Century Socialism.

This has been a vexed issue in the WSF process.

In a breakfast conversation with Chico Whitaker, one of the founders of the WSF, he strikes a more collected and realistic tone, "that of essence we have to be realistic. We cannot impede the participation of the political leaders in the context of today's dynamics. But again, the WSF is an autonomous space for civil society that we must guard. We can build alliance with them but not working below them."

He continues, "We don't want situations where their presence disrupts the process of the WSF. Where all people go to attend their political meetings. With them talking TO and not WITH the people. Leaving all the planned activities and events in a disarray."

Chico strikes a picture of a more reflective actor alive to the fact that no matter the guiding charter of principles of the WSF, a failure to redefine the context of popular political leaders' participation may be a step out of tune with majority of the grassroots people. He continues, "But as an open space, we cannot impede those organizations that want to invite the political leaders from doing so. But it will not be done by the WSF IC. This is the position that was consensually adopted and I think it's the step in the right direction."

I end with a gem I picked from the Copenhagen Post, In Brief Section, (www.cphpost.dk, pg.2, In Brief, 26/09/08) titled "Spying Cops, " up to 10 police officers from the Copenhagen police were involved in unofficial surveillance activities on Friday against activists participating in a socialist demonstration in the Swedish city of Malmo, according to Swedish paper Sydsvenskan. The officers in question and their purpose for travelling across the border have not been identified, but according to Sydsvenskan the Swedish police spotted the Danish officers and asked them to leave the area. A Danish activist taking part in

the demonstration of the 10,000 socialists from all over Europe told Danish daily Politiken that he recognized one officer taking notes from behind a tree.”

Interesting definition of what was going on in Malmo but it certainly brings to fore the foregoing influence of the Global Justice Movement, the differentiated opinions and definitions of what it is and its aspirations and the challenges that it faces. Real or imagined.

But all in all, from where I sit, the Global Justice Movement is alive and is going to be a key feature that shapes the discourse of our times. It may be too early to tell which way it moves or what conjectures it adopts but in the words of Durban, South Africa based commentator, Patrick Bond, “it must link, below, across and against.”